THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL BOARD BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SUPERINTENDENTS

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MLQ – Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

OSBA – Oregon School Boards Association

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine whether there was a statistically significant correlation between school board behaviors and characteristics, and a superintendent's use of a transformational leadership model. The study was grounded in four research questions: Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership? Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership? Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors? Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive-avoidant leadership?

All school boards in Oregon were surveyed about their behaviors through the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment, and all superintendents in Oregon were surveyed about their leadership styles through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Findings showed there was a statistically significant correlation between seven board behaviors and characteristics (with an emphasis on community engagement, the use of data, and cultural responsiveness) and the domain of inspirational motivation in transformational leadership, plus an overall correlation between the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and inspirational motivation. Implications for the study include a focus on the nexus between these seven characteristics and board/superintendent professional development programs, plus methods for hiring and

evaluating superintendents. Future research should expand beyond Oregon and include qualitative studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School boards make a difference. Since the turn of the 21st century, researchers have continually returned to the essential question: do school boards matter when it comes to student achievement? This question has driven a considerable amount of research that demonstrated school boards can make a measurable impact on student achievement, both positively and negatively (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Hollander, 2012; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). This research has shown time and again that the manner in which the board governs, the nature of the relationship between board members, and the positive or negative relationship the board shares with the superintendent result in a correlated impact on student achievement.

The relationship between board characteristics and behaviors and student achievement has been established through research, as has the relationship of the superintendency to student outcomes (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Hollander, 2012; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). However, a correlation between the board and its influence on the leadership style of the superintendent—particularly transformational leadership—has not yet been clearly demonstrated.

Scholarly and Social Constructs

The seminal lighthouse inquiry found boards governing high-achieving districts have created conditions that encouraged a positive district culture and aligned resources to advance progress toward the board's vision and goals (Rice et al., 2000). These

effective boards understand the systems through which the district measures student achievement and the data that result, and they hold the district accountable for those results by consistently monitoring data and collaborating with the superintendent to take corrective action when necessary.

Boards that positively influence student achievement have practiced collaborative and unified governance with their superintendents (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013). These boards have also intentionally engaged the community in two-way communication, fostered strong connections with district leadership, especially the superintendent, and avoided micromanaging by focusing instead on policy and governance. Conversely, low-performing boards have tended to adopt behaviors nearly the opposite of boards that govern high-performing districts (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016). These boards have conducted more disorderly meetings, spent much less time discussing student achievement and progress, sought to advance their own agendas and rule by anecdote, and engaged in micromanagement of the superintendent and other district administrators (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014).

The development of the relationship between the board and superintendent takes time, but the quality of the relationship can be a harbinger of district and student improvement or deterioration (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bowers, 2016; Bridges et al., 2019; Henrikson, 2019; Mountford, 2004; Reisenauer, 2016; Rice et al., 2000). Primarily, trust between the board and superintendent is paramount as a foundation to this relationship. A sense of trust between these partners increases the trust district staff and community members have in the leadership of the district and creates a climate in which students and teachers can thrive; higher student achievement, in turn, can increase trust.

By extension, trust between the superintendent and board leads to a respectful relationship, and a positive working relationship between the board and superintendent has been shown to raise student achievement (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Conversely, a mismatched or negative relationship between the board and superintendent can lead to negative student outcomes and/or politically motivated superintendent turnover (Alsbury, 2003).

Concurrently, transformational leadership in the education setting has been shown to foster greater job satisfaction; higher levels of trust, grit, commitment, and loyalty; and increased effectiveness among staff (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999; Bryant et al., 2016; Eagly et al., 2003; Hodge & Larwin, 2020; Klocko et al., 2019; Metz et al., 2019). Transformational leadership is a model that emphasizes collegiality among groups, creating trust among followers, acting as a role model, innovating, and looking to the future when making plans and setting goals (Bass, 1999). This model is divided into four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999). Idealized influence means acting as a role model and garnering trust and respect among followers. In inspirational motivation, the leader encourages others to share in the organization's vision and their high expectations inspire action toward that vision. Intellectual stimulation is the act of inspiring followers' creativity and innovation and encouraging them to challenge the status quo. Finally, individualized consideration involves coaching, advising, and acknowledging all followers as unique individuals with specific needs (Northouse, 2019).

The model of transformational leadership indicates a continuum in practice from transformational leadership through transactional leadership to laissez-faire or passive–

avoidant leadership (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Northouse, 2019). Transactional leaders focus on rewards and consequences for performance standards, allow issues to become problematic before addressing them, and are more passively involved in important decision making (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999). Transactional leadership can be divided into two components: contingent reward and management by exception. In contingent reward, followers exchange their effort for a reward from the leader. In management by exception, a leader provides negative feedback or assigns corrective action only after a problem materializes. In laissez-faire leadership, the leader is generally uninvolved, provides little to no feedback, and does not nurture growth and development in followers (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders, conversely, communicate high expectations and enthusiasm related to the values and goals of the organization, mentor followers, and break from the status quo to solve problems before they become crises (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999).

The transformational leadership model can produce wide-ranging organizational change, increase employee satisfaction, and have a positive impact on student achievement (Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Northouse, 2019). Perhaps most importantly, transformational leaders can advance equity, inclusion, and social justice in their school systems, all of which are predicates to increased student achievement (Shields, 2017). Hence, the transformational leadership model has been often recommended to district leaders as a way of improving system effectiveness and building a culture of inclusivity and partnership with faculty and students (Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Metz et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the degree to which there is a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership. Additionally, this study examined the degree to which there was a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional and passive-avoidant leadership behaviors.

Need for Further Study

As mentioned, a volume of research exists showing how critical school board characteristics and behaviors are, including their collaborative relationship with the superintendent (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Hollander, 2012; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). However, there has been a research gap between the board's relationship with the superintendent and the superintendent's likelihood of adopting a transformational leadership style, which has been shown to impact student achievement (Bird & Wang, 2013; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Klocko et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2010; Metz et al., 2019). Although the relationship between board leadership and student achievement has been established through research, as has the relationship of the superintendency to student outcomes, a correlation between the board and its influence on the leadership style of the superintendent—particularly transformational leadership—has not yet been clearly demonstrated. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine what impact board behaviors and characteristics have on superintendent leadership styles, particularly the likelihood that the superintendent will model transformational leadership.

Significance of the Study

Leadership at the top levels of a school district has a measurable impact on student outcomes, which cannot be overlooked or overstated (Blasko, 2016; Bridges et al., 2019). The current study was conducted in conjunction with aligned research on transformational leadership in superintendents and the impact they have on collective teacher efficacy and, thereby, student achievement. Practically, this study is meant to be used as a tool to guide professional development for both boards and superintendents as they pursue collaborative relationships that make the greatest positive impact on student achievement. Aligning this research with research focused on superintendents has the potential to create a continuum of impact from the board to superintendent to teacher to student. It can also be a guide for boards as they engage in the critical duties of hiring and evaluating their top educational leader; if transformational leadership has been correlated with a positive impact on student outcomes, then the board has an interest in seeking and nurturing this style in its superintendent.

Substantively, this research is meant to contribute to the literature in a manner that extends beyond what is already known about the board's impact on student achievement, and to truly focus on the board's impact on the superintendent and their ability to be a transformational leader, better serving all students. First, there have been limited studies using the balanced governance model (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). There has been no study directly tying school boards' behaviors and characteristics to a superintendent's transformational leadership style, and finally, no study has attempted to comprehensively assess and include all school boards and superintendents in Oregon.

Research Questions

Because of the nexus between the board and superintendent and the critical duties they share in leading the district, one of the most important things a board can do for its superintendent is to let them adopt a leadership style that increases student achievement and fosters improvement and inclusiveness across the entire district—transformational leadership (Bird & Wang, 2013; Henrikson, 2019; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Therefore, the research questions answered in this study were:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership?
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors which are contingent reward and management by exception?
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive–avoidant leadership?

Methodology Overview

This section describes the methodology used in this study, including the research design, site and instrument selection, and sample population. It also defines how data were collected and analyzed and lists some limitations of the study.

Research Design, Site Selection, and Sample Population

This study was a quantitative research study that examined a tendency for specific variables to influence each other (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The intended population for the study was all school boards in Oregon and all superintendents. The intention of surveying all board members and all superintendents was to complete a study fully representative of the diverse school districts in Oregon.

Definitions

The following terms and concepts are used throughout the paper:

Board governance: School boards are comprised of locally elected public officials who are entrusted with representing and advocating for their communities, adopting policies and budgets, establishing an organizational structure, evaluating the superintendent, and holding the system accountable for results (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Brennan, 2011), which are all components of board governance. Although they are meant to be politically neutral entities, a school board's willingness and ability to engage in a collaborative, democratic process for decision-making contributes to effective governance (Plough, 2014). School boards engaged in effective governance hold high expectations for student success, focus on policies over operations, build collaborative relationships with staff without engaging in micromanagement, embrace the use of data,

and enhance their own learning through professional development (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016).

Transformational leadership: Leaders who stimulate, challenge, inspire, and build a vision in which followers can invest are rewarded with trust, respect, and better performance from their followers are considered transformational leaders (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders devote energy to ensuring followers recognize their importance in the organization, provide professional development, and encourage self-improvement with autonomy as a goal (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Transactional leadership: Transactional leadership was first described by Burns (1978) in a political context where leaders exchange "jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions" (p. 3). This type of leadership constitutes either a formal or informal contract between supervisors and subordinates when rewards (e.g., financial or titular) are exchanged for meeting performance standards or set expectations.

Passive/avoidant or laissez-faire leadership: This term describes a style in which challenges and problems are avoided or not addressed in a systemic fashion. Passive leaders—also referred to as management-by-exception, no leadership, or laissez-faire leadership—"avoid specifying agreement, clarifying expectations, and providing goals and standards to be achieved by followers" (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 105). This style of leadership and management tends to have the worst outcomes with respect to employee satisfaction and effectiveness.

Instrument Selection

To measure board behaviors and characteristics associated with student achievement, the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment (Alsbury, 2015) tool was

used and administered to each board member (see Appendix A). This tool was developed based on research into the impact school boards have on student achievement (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Cooper et al., 2006; Delagardelle, 2008; Lorentzen, 2013; Saatcioglu et al., 2011). Each board received a link to the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment survey by email.

To measure superintendent leadership styles, The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This tool was developed to measure and assess a range of leadership styles, particularly those demonstrating the characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The tool has been commonly used in hiring, promoting, and training. It has been used and modernized over more than 35 years, and now includes the assessment of what the authors consider a full spectrum of leadership styles, including transactional leadership and passive/avoidant leadership, also known as laissez-faire leadership.

Data Collection and Analysis

The independent variable was each board's self-assessment using the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment (Alsbury, 2015). Boards rated their performance on 12 standards as accomplished, effective, developing, or ineffective. The dependent variable in this study was each superintendent's self-assessment of their own leadership style on a continuum from transformational leadership to transactional leadership, to laissez faire leadership using the MLQ (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Analysis of the data were conducted using (a) Somers's delta, which determines the strength and direction of an association between the dependent variable and the independent variable, both of which were in ordinal form, and (b) Pearson's product-

moment correlation, which measured the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables when they were continuous. A Jonckheere-Terpstra test helped determine whether there was a statistically significant monotonic trend between the independent variable and a dependent variable, both of which were in ordinal form, and a Kendall's tau-b determined the strength and direction of that trend.

Limitations

This study was limited by the population size because it only included school boards and superintendents in Oregon; laws regarding the governance structure of school boards in Oregon and their legal roles and responsibilities differ from those in other states. Additionally, because of the advent of COVID-19, the governor ordered that board meetings be held remotely per Oregon Executive Order Number 20-16, 2020 (Office of the Governor, State of Oregon, 2020), which may have impacted the ability of boards and superintendents to build and maintain collaborative relationships, thereby impacting board behaviors and characteristics and superintendents' transformational leadership styles. Finally, the rate of superintendent turnover increased from an average of 32 vacancies a year between 2018–2021 to 43 vacancies in the 2021–2022 school year (Miller, 2022). This turnover may have impacted how superintendents self-reported their leadership styles.

Ethical Considerations

No compensation was provided to any participant and all information was protected.

Summary

This dissertation began with an introduction to the concept of research-based behaviors and characteristics of school boards that measurably impact student achievement, as well as a theoretical framework of transformational leadership. Chapter 2 presents a review of current and foundational research that supports the need for the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, research design, and procedures used in this investigation. Chapter 4 details how the data were analyzed and provides both a written and graphic summary of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 is an interpretation and discussion of the results as it relates to the existing body of research related to this topic. The limitations of the study and calls for future research are components of the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on school boards, beginning with the seminal lighthouse study out of Iowa in 2000, has addressed the essential question of whether school boards make a difference in student achievement (Rice et al., 2000). Since then, many studies have demonstrated school boards can make a measurable impact on student achievement, whether positively or negatively (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Land, 2002; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). Far from the belief that school boards are too distant from the classroom to impact student outcomes, researchers on school boards have repeatedly concluded that the manner in which the board governs, the positive or negative relationship between board members, and the collaborative relationship the board shares with the superintendent results in a correlated impact on student achievement (Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Rice et al., 2000).

School Boards and Superintendents

School boards with the training, determination, and focus on student learning positively impact students in the classroom, and boards who bicker with each other, micromanage the superintendent, and carry their personal anecdotes and agendas into their decision making contribute to poorer student outcomes (Diem et al., 2015; Lee & Eadens, 2014). Research has shown the single belief that all students can learn, when shared by all school board members, can measurably impact student achievement and determine how a board allocates its resources, how it adopts policy and the focus of the

policies it adopts, and the level of collaboration with the district superintendent and reliance on their expertise in educational leadership (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Johnson, 2013; Plough, 2014).

The History of School Boards in the United States

The role of school boards in the United States has changed over time from a distanced, ineffective, and largely figurehead conglomerate to fulfilling the administrative role of a superintendent, to a more heavily involved governing body with a major role in setting the vision, direction, and strategic initiatives of the district (Honingh et al., 2020; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Land, 2002; Rice et al., 2000). The public perception of boards has also changed. An entity once considered a meritorious hallmark of the U.S. education system in the early days of school boards found itself beleaguered by criticism and accusations of bureaucratic ineffectiveness in the early 20th century (Land, 2002).

Massachusetts established the first state school board in 1837 in an effort to increase local control over education (Land, 2002). This board was meant to recognize the distinction between local school governance as a separate system from the governance of general state affairs. In the 1869–1870 school year, there were 116,312 public schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In 1891, still a trailblazer in the systemization of schools, Massachusetts passed legislation that gave each local district control of its own finances and management of its schools (Land, 2002). This model was the precursor of the local school board governance model still used today.

After 1891, more groups of schools began to assemble as local school districts, and school boards were heavily involved in the daily operations of schools, such as

employing staff, establishing the district administrative organizational structure, and adopting curriculum directly without the recommendation of professional educators (Plough, 2014). By the 2016–2017 school year, there were 13,598 school districts and 98,158 public schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; Plough, 2014).

Although education reform efforts and local and national politics have always influenced public education and the role of the school board, the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in the mid-20th century brought about intense scrutiny on the inadequacies of the U.S. school system (Curry et al., 2018; Land, 2002). At that time, many people believed the United States could be first in space if not for a poor education system that did not adequately prepare its students. Concurrently, disparities between student groups such as students of color, students with disabilities, and students whose first language was not English were becoming starkly evident in rates of graduation and other measures of student achievement (Curry et al., 2018). In response, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address these inequalities.

The passage of No Child Left Behind (2001), another landmark effort to improve schools at the national level, signaled the beginning of a period in which the federal government was more involved in public education than any other time in modern history (Curry et al., 2018; Land, 2002; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002; Plough, 2014). Districts were stripped of much of their local control and were subject to federal assessment standards, standardized reporting, and possible sanctions if performance expectations were not met (Curry et al., 2018; Feuerstein, 2009; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Although school boards still retained accountability for the financial

viability for the district, adopting curriculum and policy, and hiring and evaluating their superintendents, their lack of authority over the major typical measures of student achievement resulted in a question of whether school boards still impacted student outcomes anymore (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Rice et al., 2000), or if they had returned to the role of a figurehead government, largely distant from the rest of the district.

School funding has also played a role in the capacity of school boards to govern their district, particularly in a financial sense due to tax expenditure limits (Davis et al., 2016). In Oregon, two ballot measures—Measure 5 and Measure 50—significantly changed the changed the manner in which Oregon public schools were funded through the property tax system (Oregon Department of Revenue, 2009). Measure 5 passed by a narrow margin in 1990. Prior to this measure, each taxing district calculated its own property taxes based on the full market value of the property, though they were taxed at a 6% growth rate, unless voters approved an increase. Public schools were funded in large part by these property taxes. Measure 5 limited the property tax rate to $5 per $1,000 market value for public school taxes. Prior to Measure 5, the school tax limit was $15 per $1,000 assessed property value.

Passed in 1997, Measure 50 then differentiated assessed market value and real value and set limits on annual assessed value to 3%, which resulted in a disproportionate reduction in taxes, whereby the properties that saw the greatest value growth also benefited the most from the reduced tax rates (Oregon Department of Revenue, 2009). As a result of this measure, taxing entities—including public school districts—must pass local option levies to raise revenue for operations beyond this limit.

As a result of both measures, the State of Oregon was made responsible for compensating districts for any lost revenue due to reduced property taxes, which further constrained the state budget (Oregon Department of Revenue, 2009). Both Measure 5 and Measure 50 are memorialized in the Oregon Constitution (Or. Const. of 1957, art. XI, § 11 [1990]). Analyses of the impact of these measures 25 years after their implementation revealed school funding has been highly volatile due to the heavy reliance on income tax to make up for the limits on property taxes and has given more control of school funding to the Oregon legislature (Manning, 2016).

School board members became locally elected public officials who increasingly run for office with the support of special interest groups or for their own personal political aspirations (Alsbury, 2003; Land, 2002). These boards generally were modeled after the corporate board system: they were the holders of the budget, policy, and representative of community interests, and they employed a chief executive officer to manage the daily operations of the organization and provide expert advice (Land, 2002). School boards have been small (five or seven members), regardless of the size of the district they governed (Land, 2002), from just a few students in the smallest districts to nearly 1 million students in the largest district (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

As research in this area took shape, researchers have examined the changing roles that school boards played, and discovered, indeed, boards do have an influence on student achievement from their positions as governing bodies at a macro level (Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). High performing boards that focus on vision and goals, climate and resources, data and monitoring, cohesive teaming, stakeholder and community

engagement, and policy and accountability tend to positively influence student achievement and outcomes (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011; Rice et al., 2000).

School Boards in High-Achieving Districts

Beginning with the seminal lighthouse inquiry (Rice et al., 2000), research has shown boards that govern high-achieving districts set clear expectations for student achievement and staff performance communicated through an ambitious vision and goals meant to advance that vision (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). For the purposes of the lighthouse inquiry, the following indicators were used to define student achievement:

- Rankings of very high or very low for 3 consecutive years on Georgia's standardized achievement test. These rankings were determined by the state based on the percentage of students achieving proficiency in four subject areas on the standardized statewide test.
- How students performed on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in third, fifth, and eighth grade.
- The results of the Georgia High School Graduation Test taken by high school students (Rice et al., 2000).

The lighthouse inquiry found boards governing high-achieving districts created conditions that encouraged a positive district culture and align resources to advance progress toward the board's vision and goals (Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Rice et al., 2000). These effective boards understand the systems through which the district measures student achievement and the data that result, and they hold

the district accountable for those results by consistently monitoring data and collaborating with the superintendent to take corrective action when necessary (Delagardelle, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Ford & Ihrke, 2017; Johnson, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). Boards that positively influence student achievement have practiced collaborative and unified governance and shared the basic belief that all students can learn, which, in and of itself, has positively influenced student outcomes, given boards allocate resources and adopt policy aligned with that belief or lack thereof (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). These boards have also intentionally engaged the community in two-way communication; fostered strong connections with district leadership; and avoided micromanaging, focusing instead on policy and governance (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Feuerstein, 2009; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Plough, 2014).

In addition to the characteristics and behaviors that boards model as a team, individual factors impact the entire board's effectiveness (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011). Board members' knowledge of their appropriate roles, professional development, and personal agendas were found to impact student achievement (Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maharaj, 2020; Rice et al., 2000). Expert professional development for board members often includes education on the differences between the roles and authority of the superintendent and those of the board (Korelich & Maxwell, 2015), which is foundational knowledge that informs how the board operates within its role in a policy and governance capacity (Mountford, 2004). Eadens et al. (2020) found a statistically significant relationship between school board training or professional development and school achievement/student grades; and yet, many boards do not take

advantage of the opportunity to learn how to strengthen their effectiveness through training, which may contribute to the board's own poor performance and, relatedly, student achievement (Lee & Eadens, 2014; Senekal, 2019).

Personal agendas of individual board members—including reasons that board members run for office in the first place—often become entangled with overall policy discussions and influence the way individual board members approach their governance roles and how they vote on policy issues (Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Mountford, 2004). Lee and Eadens (2014) asserted advancing individual interests contributed negatively to the performance of the board, as it splintered the idea of the board as a collective body. Blissett and Alsbury (2018) furthered this research by noting, not only do personal agendas influence decision making, but an individual's personal identity "including gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, income, age, education level, political ideology, occupation, educators' union membership, and whether the individual had children in the district" (p. 462) necessarily influence a board member's approach to policy making and decision making.

Saatcioglu et al. (2011) and Saatcioglu and Sargut (2014) found the internal connections and relationships that the board cultivates (i.e., board bonding) and the external and community connections the board makes (i.e., bridging) impact not only student outcomes, but also district financial outcomes. This is a natural connection because boards make budgetary decisions based on their interests. When boards focus on student learning, they tend to direct the allocation of resources to initiatives meant to improve student learning and achievement. In both of these studies, board bonding was found to be the more significant of the two in terms of overall impact, highlighting the

importance of the board's internal relationship (Saatcioglu et al., 2011; Saatcioglu & Sargut, 2014).

Finally, one of the less-studied characteristics of boards is their level of self- and collective-efficacy. The limited research that exists on collective efficacy as it manifests on school boards has indicated it may be one of the factors influencing board performance (Senekal, 2019; Van Tuyle, 2015). Collective efficacy and its connection to student achievement was deeply studied in groups of teachers and found to be one of the most highly impactful elements influencing student performance (Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2000; Hattie, 2016). The components of self-efficacy and collective efficacy in individuals (i.e., past successes, vicarious success, performance feedback, and affective states; Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989) was shown to correlate strongly with increased student achievement when applied to teachers (Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2018; Goddard et al., 2000; Hattie, 2016). These components include:

- Mastery experiences, which are past successes likely to inform one's beliefs about future success. This was shown to be one of the strongest sources of self-efficacy.
- Vicarious experiences, in which an individual observes others' success in handling a situation the observer may be likely to face in the future.
- Verbal persuasion, which can be training or feedback from the superintendent, the principal, the community, or parents.

- Affective and physiological states, which are related to the anxiety and stress levels an individual experiences when performing or preparing to perform a task (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

The question becomes whether collective efficacy also increases the effectiveness of a school board and impact student achievement.

Senekal (2019) found board members with a higher self-efficacy were more motivated to improve their own performance and the districts in which they governed. However, Senekal's study also found a disconnect between these self-efficacy beliefs and the interventions and training they undertook, indicating traditional methods of training (i.e., technical skills and role differentiation between the board and superintendent) may not take into consideration one of the more adaptive and nuanced parts of board service: beliefs and self-confidence. Van Tuyle (2015), in studying the self-efficacy of school board presidents, determined knowledgeable board presidents who are well-versed in the board role and the superintendent/board relationship "can be a defining factor in a school district's success" (p. 56) when board presidents possessed a high level of self-efficacy. In a study about the link between self-efficacy in individual board members and collective efficacy as a board unit, Krishnan et al. (2016) found board members with higher levels of self-efficacy contributed to a higher level of board collective efficacy, which in turn produced more effective results when boards were faced with a challenging situation requiring strong convictions, perseverance, and high levels of performance. The implications of this research may include embedding board collective efficacy in the behaviors and characteristics of high-functioning boards.

School Boards in Low-Achieving Districts

On the other hand, low-performing boards tend to adopt behaviors nearly the opposite of boards that govern high-performing districts (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016). These boards conduct more disorderly meetings, spend much less time discussing student achievement and progress, seek to advance their own agendas and rule by anecdote, engage in micromanagement of the superintendent and other district administrators, and refer to external pressures as the main reason for the lack of student success (Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Hurley, 2006; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Rice et al., 2000; Williams & Tabernik, 2011).

Some researchers have found part of this issue may be because low-performing boards do not regularly engage in reflection and assessment of their own work (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Feuerstein, 2009; Lee & Eadens, 2014). This may lead to the board engaging in less training and professional development, which has been negatively correlated with student outcomes (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Eadens et al., 2020; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015). Additionally, low-performing boards tend to rely less on the superintendent as the educational leader and do not seek as much advice and support from them (Lee & Eadens, 2014; Maharaj, 2020). This lack of reliance is despite the fact that the board hires the superintendent to be the chief executive officer of the organization, the face of the district to the community (including parents and families, community partners, and the media), its political guide, and its educational leader (Blasko, 2016; Henrikson, 2019). Furthermore, most superintendents rise through the typical career ranks of other educators: teacher, principal, administrator, and superintendent (Tyack & Hansot, 1994); and yet, low-performing boards are less likely to

rely on their instructional leader to act as their advisor on educational issues, even given most board members in the United States have no professional experience in education (Land, 2002; Tyack & Hansot, 1994). This disconnect leaves school boards to make decisions in a vacuum, without the invaluable input of their chief educational expert.

Low-performing boards manage meetings poorly, allowing some individuals much more time than others: they digress from their agendas and lose focus, and do not engage in any meaningful way with staff (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Lee & Eadens, 2014). Also, an ineffective board can lead to politically motivated turnover of both board members and superintendents, and is negatively correlated with student performance (Alsbury, 2008).

Finally, Ford and Ihrke (2017) found conflict on the board is negatively correlated with district performance, especially on urban boards. If board teaming and bonding positively impact student outcomes (Saatcioglu et al., 2011; Saatcioglu & Sargut, 2014), board conflict can have the opposite effect (Land, 2002). Conflict between board members can fracture the board, erode trust, and leave board members vulnerable to the influence of special interest groups, some of which may not have interest in representing all students in the district (Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Conflict on the board, which is often observed by the community, can lead to disengagement between the community and the board, loss of trust that the board can successfully fill its role to oversee the education of all students in an apolitical fashion, and ultimately, lead to politically motivated turnover (Alsbury, 2008; Delagardelle, 2008; Diem et al., 2015; Johnson, 2010). In essence, the research has demonstrated that low-performing boards are less able to engage in the type of strategic and systemic activities and engagement that reflect their

proper role and resulted in a negative impact on student achievement (Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Feuerstein, 2009; Rice et al., 2000).

The seminal lighthouse inquiry identified seven conditions for school improvement and measured whether districts were moving "because student achievement was on the move and far above the norm" or stuck "because student achievement was relatively stable and below the norm" (Rice et al., 2000, p. 7). The seven conditions identified were:

1. Emphasis on building a human organizational system
2. Ability to create and sustain initiatives
3. Supportive workplace for staff
4. Staff development
5. Support for school sites through data and information
6. Community involvement
7. Integrated leadership. (Rice et al., 2000, p. 7)

Whether these districts were identified as moving or stuck helped the researchers determine whether they were functional boards that had a positive impact on student outcomes.

The History of the Superintendency in the United States

Although researchers have discovered much about how school board behaviors and characteristics influence student achievement, less is known about how these same behaviors and characteristics impact superintendent leadership styles and effectiveness,

particularly the ability of the superintendent to adopt a transformational leadership style (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Maranto et al., 2017).

The role of the superintendent—and their relationship to the board—has changed over time (Blasko, 2016; Henrikson, 2019; Kowalski, 2013; Tyack & Hansot, 1994). The position of superintendent was developed sometime between 1827 and 1850 when it became clear that an entity other than the board was needed to manage schools (Kowalski, 2013; Melton et al., 2019). In the late 19th and early 20th century, superintendents—especially those in small school districts—were considered "guardians of decorum and morality" (Tyack & Hansot, 1994, p. 177). They were universally men and were appointed by lay boards with little (if any) expertise in education, similar to current boards (Tyack & Hansot, 1994). Henrikson (2019) tracked the evolution of the superintendency from a titular head to a manager, and finally to a community and political leader. Henrikson's (2019) work characterized the progression of the superintendency through five major roles in this way: "a) teacher-scholar, b) organizational manager, c) statesman or democratic leader, and d) applied social scientist (Callahan, 1966). Kowalski (2005) added a fifth role that carries into our present day: superintendent as communicator" (p. 101).

These five roles have all remained part of the superintendent's position. The superintendency has been faced with a mix of higher-than-ever state and federal accountability, ever-decreasing financial and human resources, and political pressure from school boards and the community at large (Bell, 2019). Because of the politically motivated agendas that board members may carry into their roles, they can easily find themselves at odds with the interests of the superintendent, which, ideally, is the

advancement of all students' education (Alsbury, 2008; Bowers, 2016). These conflicts may influence the creation of the superintendent's contract and forthcoming evaluations of the superintendent's performance.

The Relationship Between the Board and Superintendent

One of the main sources of conflict between boards and superintendents has been role confusion (Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Henrikson, 2019; Maharaj, 2020; Mountford, 2004). This tension existed since the beginning of the superintendency (Henrikson, 2019). The lack of board member training is an identifiable factor that contributes to board members' ignorance of their roles (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Because of this lack of knowledge, many boards engage in power struggles with their superintendents, due to their perception of power and its appropriate place in the relationship with the superintendent.

Mountford (2004) found about half of board members in their study were motivated by power over their superintendents, while the other half are motivated by power with, which is a more collaborative approach. This dynamic causes the superintendent to constantly balance the needs and expectations of each board member instead of being able to work with the board as a collective and can create a situation in which maverick board members with an aggressive approach to holding the superintendent accountable are drawn to board service (Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Other factors causing conflict are ineffective decision making; poor communication skills; and a conflict over values, priorities, and the purpose of education itself (e.g.,

whether schools are meant to provide knowledge or make students into good community members; Bridges et al., 2019; Mountford, 2004).

To that end, superintendents often find themselves needing to train the board and take the lead in modeling what good governance looks like (Bridges et al., 2019). Often, these trainings consist of the technical aspects of board work such as public meetings law, school finance, ethics laws, school law, communication with staff and other stakeholders, and not the more adaptive elements of board work like collaboration, board culture, the relationship with the superintendent, and the impact of board behaviors and characteristics on student achievement (Eadens et al., 2020; Lee & Eadens, 2014). Even in states where board training has been mandatory, generally the maximum amount of training required was 6 hours, which often did not address the critical issues boards need to function at a high level (Lee & Eadens, 2014). Given professional development for boards can positively impact student achievement and mitigate some of the effects of board members' personal agendas on their decision making (Korelich & Maxwell, 2015), professionals in board training should provide this facilitation to the board, and not superintendents.

One way to overcome these potential pitfalls is for the board and superintendent to intentionally develop a positive, collaborative relationship (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Mountford, 2004; Rice et al., 2000). The development of this relationship takes time, but the quality of the relationship can be a harbinger of district and student improvement or deterioration (Bowers, 2016; Henrikson, 2019; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Primarily, trust between the board and superintendent is paramount as a foundation to this relationship (Bowers, 2016; Henrikson, 2019; Reisenauer, 2016). A

sense of trust between these partners increases the trust that both district staff and community members have in district leadership (Bowers, 2016) and creates a climate in which students and teachers can thrive and student achievement can increase (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Reisenauer, 2016; Rice et al., 2000). Trust between the superintendent and board leads to a respectful relationship (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Rice et al., 2000), and a positive working relationship between the board and superintendent was shown to raise student achievement (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Henrikson, 2019; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015). Conversely, a mismatched or negative relationship between the board and superintendent can lead to negative student outcomes and/or politically motivated superintendent turnover (Alsbury, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Williams & Tabernik, 2011).

Effective leadership characteristics demonstrated by the board–superintendent leadership team raise student achievement (Ellis & Muncie, 2016; Honingh et al., 2020; Johnson, 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009). In fact, Marzano and Waters (2009) named five collective responsibilities of the superintendent and board they directly linked to increased student outcomes:

- Ensuring collaborative goal setting. This includes collaboration between not only the board and superintendent, but also other stakeholders such as principals and other staff.
- Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction. Goals should be aspirational in nature, but certain goals must be nonnegotiable once identified. Marzano and Waters (2009) identified this responsibility as staff-

related and indicated these goals be focused on student achievement and classroom instruction.

- Creating board alignment with and support of district goals. Once the nonnegotiable goals are set, the board should align its work with and support the progress toward those goals through policy and budget. Marzano and Waters (2009) even stated, although "other initiatives might be undertaken, they must directly relate to these two primary goals" (p. 7).
- Monitoring achievement and instructional goals. Marzano and Waters (2009) identified this responsibility as primarily that of the superintendent and staff, but other researchers have indicated effective boards have a strong role in monitoring progress as well (Delagardelle, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Rice et al., 2000).
- Allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction. Although Marzano and Waters (2009) did not specify the board's role in this responsibility, one of a school board's primary sources of authority is to allocate resources at a high level, and boards should align their support of student achievement and nonnegotiable goals with the resources they have at their disposal (Delagardelle, 2008; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Rice et al., 2000).

Although these responsibilities are meant to be shared between the district and the superintendent, many of them overlap with the previously identified behaviors and characteristics of effective boards (Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). Therefore, because of the nexus between the board and superintendent and the critical duties they share in leading

the district, one of the most important things a board can do for its superintendent is let them adopt a leadership style that increases student achievement and fosters improvement and inclusiveness across the entire district.

School Leadership and Student Achievement

In developing this study, several leadership theories were consulted and considered, namely authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, inclusive leadership, and transformational leadership. The goal of investigating multiple models of leadership was to determine which model was best suited for applying to the superintendency when examining how school board behaviors and characteristics impact the leadership style of the district's top executive.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a relatively new area of leadership study, arising after the attacks of 9/11 when uncertainty about leadership arose from prevalent corporate corruption, an unstable economy, and increased anxiety about societal turmoil (Northouse, 2019). In general, this leadership model includes four main components: self-awareness, balanced informational processing, transparency, and authentic behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, because scholars have not yet accepted a current formal or single definition, Northouse (2019) summarized the various definitions of authentic leadership as falling into one of three approaches: an intrapersonal perspective, an interpersonal process, and a developmental perspective.

In an intrapersonal perspective, the focus is on the leader as an individual—their ability to self-reflect, self-regulate, and lead from their own convictions and life experiences (Northouse, 2019). In an interpersonal process, the emphasis is on the

relationship between the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2019). This requires reciprocation between the two parties, and each impacts the other. From a developmental perspective, leadership can be grown and cultivated. It is not a fixed trait, and can develop over a lifetime, sometimes influenced by major events in the leader's life (Northouse, 2019).

When enacted, authentic leadership demonstrates personal benefits such as higher self-esteem, more optimal performance, and friendliness. Authentic leaders are aware of their impacts on others; they prioritize communication; and they consider multiple perspectives and sources of data when making decisions (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021). Embedded within the framework of authentic leadership is the inclusion of a moral perspective, or an alignment between core values and personal actions (Northouse, 2019). An authentic leader's actions have been described as being "based on truth and what is right" (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2011, p. 10). Although there is overlap with transformational leadership in the authentic leadership model, Walumbwa et al. (2008) argued that leaders embodying an authentic leadership model root their leadership in their own values and core beliefs that inform their actions and engagement with their followers.

Authentic leadership is measured by the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which contains a self-reported version and a version in which followers can assess the leader (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Because authentic leadership is grounded in morals and values, the assessment tool has been criticized for being culturally narrow and subjective, with particular deference to the dominant culture (Cervo et al., 2016; Owusu-Bempah et al., 2011). Additionally, a practical approach to servant leadership has not yet been

empirically validated, and how this style of leadership might benefit the organization is not yet clear (Northouse, 2019). Therefore, this style of leadership was not selected for this study.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was developed by Robert K. Greenleaf, a former AT&T employee who was interested in how organizations could more positively contribute to society and how the people within them could engage with each other in a supportive capacity (Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders focus on the well-being of their followers. Northouse (2019) indicated, as with authentic leadership, there has been no single agreed-upon model of servant leadership. Some models have been based on trait theory, while others have described the process as behaviorally based. Other research has noted five indicators: love, vision, trust, empowerment, and humility (Imaduddin et al., 2022).

Servant leaders develop their followers, emphasize a positive workplace culture, provide feedback and recognition, and imbue collaboration into their practice (Kainda & Mandagi, 2023). Followers of servant leaders develop a sense of camaraderie and a foundation of trust and show increased job satisfaction. In fact, a study by Imaduddin et al. (2022) indicated servant leadership in the context of education can positively influence student outcomes, with the most influential component being love.

However, the theory development of servant leadership has continued. In a meta-analysis, Eva et al. (2019) noted current research was in the third phase of model development, wherein a plethora of studies have been done on the theory, but a holistic picture has not yet been formed. Additionally, a common interpretation of servant leadership that emphasizes leaders putting followers first can conflict with other critical

areas of leadership (e.g., vision creation and communication, the ability to direct followers, goal setting), causing confusion (Northouse, 2019). Because the concept of servant leadership was promising but still evolving, this model was not selected for this study.

Adaptive Leadership

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) described the adaptive leadership model as one in opposition to the method of problem-solving through technical strategies. For instance, where a technical solution is to provide a discrete solution to a well-defined problem, an adaptive approach might be to identify the core challenge and pose questions about the issue. Although a technical model might require maintaining norms and order in the interest of smooth functioning, an adaptive leader might embrace conflict as an opportunity for growth, and challenge norms that may be outdated or no longer serve the mission of the organization (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Adaptive leadership prepares people for change in multiple dimensions: self-change, organizational change, community change, and societal transformation (Northouse, 2019). According to Northouse (2019), there are six leadership behaviors in the adaptive model: getting on the balcony, identifying the adaptive challenge, regulating distress, maintaining disciplined action, giving work back to the people, and protecting leadership voices from below. In the description of this model, getting on the balcony means stepping back to see the bigger picture and develop perspective. When a leader identifies the adaptive challenge, they differentiate between the technical and the adaptive in identification of the problem. Regulating distress involves creating conditions such that neither the leader nor the followers are overwhelmed by the stress that change can cause.

Maintaining disciplined action means the leader insists on focused, disciplined attention to the work involved in managing the challenge without slipping into avoidance. When a leader gives work back to the people, they appropriately distribute leadership throughout the organization, imbuing in their followers a sense of both support and accountability. Finally, protecting leadership voices from below indicates the leader considers multiple perspectives in decision making, including those voices which have been marginalized or previously unsought (Northouse, 2019).

Adaptive leaders challenge the status quo, seek change to address challenges, embrace productive discomfort, and promote leadership at all levels of the organization (Heifetz et al., 2009). In education, an adaptive approach can lead to more collaboration in decision making, build trust, and promote a positive school culture (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

However, gaps in the research have remained, particularly with respect to character development of the leader (Noble, 2021). Additionally, even though the adaptive model has been in practice for more than 20 years, very little empirical research can validate its claims (Northouse, 2019). Finally, the conceptual framework and its components described previously have been criticized as being too broad and abstract, lacking clarity and specificity (Northouse, 2019). Therefore, this model was not selected for this study.

Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership is grounded in the idea that the leader takes multiple perspectives into account—particularly from followers—before decision making, and distributes leadership opportunities throughout the organization (Hollander, 2012). An

inclusive leader is self-aware, transparent, respectful, values diversity, and works to ensure all students are represented in the school environment (Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023). In education, inclusive leadership has been promoted as a mechanism to ensure success for all students, particularly by ensuring equitable resources are directed toward those who have been historically underserved (Ainscow, 2020; Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023).

Inclusive leadership is meant to reduce and eliminate barriers to access for students, embrace diversity, and emphasize equity and justice, and is grounded in the belief that education is a basic right (Ainscow, 2020). Adopting a systemic intercultural framework can provide opportunities for staff, students, and other stakeholders to develop a richer understanding of racial and social inequalities, thereby paving the way to disrupt these attitudes and foster a more equitable environment for all students (Elias & Mansouri, 2023).

However, inclusive leadership that is value-driven but poorly defined is not able to be sufficiently measured and, thus, difficult to achieve (Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023). Inclusive leadership has the potential to be limited by political, technical, and financial concerns, which can inhibit its promising impacts on student outcomes. Additionally, leadership models can be heavily influenced by the culture in which they were developed and may not only manifest differently but can also be interpreted and valued differently based on the culture and lived experience of both the leader and their followers (Northouse, 2019). Although the intent of inclusive leadership is to reduce barriers to access for followers (and, in education, for students; Ainscow, 2020; Elias & Mansouri, 2023; Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023), inclusive leadership may not yet

account for the many ways in which inclusion and leadership are viewed in various cultures from around the world. For instance, according to the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research study (House et al, 2001), the most desired leadership traits in Eastern Europe were autonomous leadership and self-protective leadership, while the most desired traits in Latin America were charismatic/values-based leadership and team-oriented leadership. In sub-Saharan Africa, the most desired trait was humane-oriented leadership (Northouse, 2019). The inclusive leadership model may not yet define inclusion within diverse cultural norms, even within the United States. Therefore, this model of leadership was not selected for this study.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has appeared to be the most frequently self-identified leadership model followed by superintendents in the education setting and has one of the most comprehensive bodies of research in both theoretical and practical application (Bird & Wang, 2013). Therefore, transformational leadership was selected as the leadership model for this study. In his seminal work in the mid-20th century, Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership, contrasting this style with transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Bass (1999), another major researcher in this area, summarized this spectrum by stating, "[T]he transformational leader emphasizes what you can do for your country; the transactional leader on what your country can do for you" (p. 9). In other words, transformational leadership emphasizes collegiality among groups, creating trust among followers, acting as a role model, innovating, and looking to the future when making plans and setting goals (Bass, 1999; Eagly et al., 2003).

Although transactional leadership focuses on rewards and consequences for performance standards, allows issues to become problematic before addressing them, and is more passively involved in important decision making, transformational leaders communicate high expectations and enthusiasm related to the values and goals of the organization, mentor followers, and break from the status quo to solve problems before they become crises (Avolio et al., 1999; Eagly et al., 2003; Hodge & Larwin, 2020). Transformational leadership emphasizes behaviors such as building relationships, fostering trust, and creating vision over traditional trait-based leadership theories that underscore more static and inherent personality characteristics (Northouse, 2019).

In response to this theory, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed in the late 20th century to identify where leaders fell on the spectrum from transformational leadership to laissez-faire leadership, with transactional leadership falling in between (Bass & Avolio, 1990), and has continued to be used. The leadership factors measured were originally "charisma, inspirational, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire leadership" (Avolio et al., 1999, p. 441). Later, charismatic and inspirational leadership were combined, reducing the measured factors to six (Avolio et al., 1999).

In their popular work meant to be a primer for the implementation of transformational leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2017) articulated five practices of the transformational leader: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. These practices were developed to reflect the components of transformational leadership that encourage empathy, collaboration, support, and deep levels of trust from followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). From these

practices came another tool used to measure transformational practices: the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Transformational leadership in the education setting tends to foster greater job satisfaction; higher levels of trust, grit, commitment, and loyalty; and increased effectiveness among staff (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999; Bryant et al., 2016; Eagly et al., 2003; Hodge & Larwin, 2020; Klocko et al., 2019; Metz et al., 2019). Although women tend to demonstrate transformational leadership qualities more often than men and tend to implement this style differently (Eagly et al., 2003), the implications of the research on this leadership style have been wide-ranging and broadly applicable to all leaders, including in the field of education. Transformational leaders gain stronger commitment from their followers and cultivate greater job satisfaction (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In fact, because transformational leaders focus more on their followers and the collective good than on their own immediate needs, followers tend to prefer to work with them (Bryant et al., 2016). Followers see these leaders as symbols of the values, vision, and culture of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993), which can have meaningful implications for educational leaders, followers, and students.

The research on student outcomes as related to leadership style has been mixed (Almarshad, 2017; Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2018; Leithwood, 1992; Windlinger et al., 2020). Some research has demonstrated school leaders who adopt transformational leadership practices tend to impact student achievement positively as long as the implementation is authentic (Bird & Wang, 2013), while other research has noted a leader's transformational leadership style can increase collective teacher efficacy, which is known to raise student achievement (Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2018; Leithwood

et al., 2010). Windlinger et al. (2020) found a direct connection between the transformational leadership of principals and teachers' attitudes and practices, both of which are components of collective teacher efficacy. Northouse (2019) noted the transformational leadership model can produce wide-ranging organizational change, increase employee satisfaction, and have a direct positive impact on student achievement (Fenn & Mixon, 2011). Perhaps most importantly, transformational leaders can advance equity, inclusion, and social justice in their school systems, all of which are predicates to increased student achievement (Shields, 2017). Hence, the transformational leadership model has been often recommended to district leaders as a way of improving system effectiveness and building a culture of inclusivity and partnership with faculty and students (Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Metz et al., 2019).

Conversely, when studying the effects of transformational, distributed, and instructional leadership on student achievement, Almarshad (2017) found no distinguishable variance between those three types of leadership with respect to student academic outcomes. This inconsistency in the literature seems to suggest a need for future study in this area.

Superintendents and Transformational Leadership

Although research has been done connecting school and principal leadership to teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, much less is known about how superintendents' transformational leadership styles impact student achievement (Bird & Wang, 2013; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Klocko et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2010; Metz et al., 2019). If communication, collaboration, vision, transforming people, modeling behavior, and relationship building have been central to studies linking principals' use of

transformational leadership to student outcomes (Metz et al., 2019), then the dearth of research on the superintendent's influence on students through the same leadership model should signal a need for study in this area, especially if superintendents' pinnacle goal is to improve student outcomes. Additionally, the tenets of transformational leadership—emphasizing relational and motivational cornerstones as opposed to solely administrative and technical tasks—are well primed to connect with the relational requirements of increasing social justice and equity in schools (Brown, 2004). Some researchers have called for an adaptive response to challenges (e.g., transformational leadership) to facilitate this need for social change (Shields, 2017). Perhaps of utmost importance, superintendents most often self-identify as having a transformational leadership style (Bird & Wang, 2013; Hodge & Larwin, 2020), which should indicate a need for future study regarding the impact of this leadership style on other staff closer to the classroom, such as principals. Research into how this leadership style may impact student outcomes should also be undertaken.

Although Waters and Marzano (2009) found superintendent leadership has been linked to increased student achievement, Fenn and Mixon (2011) limited their study to whether there was a connection between superintendents' transformational leadership style and district size, years of teaching experience, self-reported transformational leadership style, and years of superintendent experience; they concluded a transformational leadership style can positively impact organizational effectiveness. Even when directly studying transformational leadership and superintendents, Wooderson-Perzan and Lunenberg (2001) noted, "Large populations of economically disadvantaged students can succeed when the school district has strong and purposeful leadership" (p.

20), bypassing any direct reference to transformational leadership. More recent research into education's higher leaders has focused on the mental well-being of the transformational leader's followers, but not on any relationship between this leadership style and student outcomes (Bryant et al., 2016).

The Board-Superintendent Relationship

The relationship between the school board and the superintendent matters (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Henrikson, 2019; Lorentzen, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). Decades of research has reinforced that the better, more collaborative, and more trusting the relationship between a board and superintendent who remain in their respective roles, the better the function of the district and the outcomes for students.

The Board's and Superintendent's Mutual Influence on Each Other

The Superintendent's Influence on the Board

Given transformational leadership at the school level can directly impact student achievement, a reasonable connection could likely be drawn between a superintendent's transformational leadership style and the positive impact it would have on their followers, which would translate into student achievement, though further research in this area is needed. One promising study found three superintendent transformational leadership strategies significantly impacted the work of their principals: clarity about expectations, a high level of accessibility, and strong support (Hodge, 2020). More research in this area is needed to help validate this finding and provide more information to superintendents on how to improve their leadership practices. With relation to school boards and the superintendent, however, no research has investigated the link between school board

characteristics and behaviors and the likelihood of a superintendent adopting a transformational leadership style, which, again, has been shown to be effective in public education (Maranto et al., 2017; Webner et al., 2017; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

However, more research has indicated superintendents influence boards more than boards influence superintendents (Bridges et al., 2019; Hodge, 2020; Melton et al., 2019; Mountford, 2004). Superintendents tend to train their boards and onboard new members (Bridges et al., 2019). A superintendent's conception of power, on a spectrum of authoritative to collaborative, influences the relationship with their boards; and yet, because of mounting federal and state accountability measures and political pressure, superintendents have less time to spend with their board members overall (Mountford, 2004). This finding may indicate superintendents' training efforts may fall short or be insufficient for what board members require to become acclimated to their work.

Yet, superintendents are expected to manage their school boards and act as the juncture between the board and the rest of the district (Hodge, 2020). Boards tend to feel "helpless to change their role" (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014, p. 43) when the superintendent is not actively working to strengthen the board's leadership role. Superintendents have an enormous amount of control in the information they provide to the board, and what they do not, and the type and quality of data brought to board meetings, and superintendents are usually key contributors to creating board meeting agendas (Melton et al., 2019; Reisenauer, 2016). Finally, although board members often run for office on personal interests and agendas, superintendents have their own personal and professional interests that often influence their decision making and their relationship

with their boards, especially if these interests conflict with their boards' interest (Mountford, 2004).

The Board's Influence on the Superintendent

Although a plethora of research in the 21st century has focused on the board's influence on student achievement through its beliefs, behaviors, and characteristics (Alsbury, 2008; Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Rice et al., 2000), until recently, less was known about the types of direct influence the board may have on the superintendent, particularly with regard to leadership style, and the results have been mixed. Some limited recent research, however, has demonstrated school boards may have influence on district superintendents, especially related to productivity and job satisfaction (Bell, 2019; Henrikson, 2019; Maranto et al., 2017; Melton et al., 2019).

One of the board's most critical duties is the hiring of a high-quality superintendent, and subsequent evaluation of them (Johnson, 2010; Land, 2002; Mountford, 2004; Richard & Kruse, 2008). However, the high turnover rate for superintendents in the United States may reflect political conflicts, the pressures of the position, increasing accountability with fewer resources, and the nature of the board–superintendent relationship (Melton et al., 2019). How the board interacts with the superintendent between evaluations can vary and has a great deal of impact on the board/superintendent relationship. Bell (2019) found, although job satisfaction for superintendents decreased more than 15% since 2010, the relationship between the board and superintendent was the single most important factor in superintendents' job satisfaction. In fact, Bell's study found a correlation between superintendents reporting a

positive relationship with their boards and the likelihood they would choose to become superintendents again if given the chance.

Melton et al. (2019) found, even greater than the influence of parents and the greater community, school boards had the highest level of influence on a superintendent's decision making, particularly when a superintendent felt pressured by board members' personal agendas or the influence of special interest groups on board members. Invariably, superintendents frequently find themselves in politically fraught situations, having to navigate various interests and pressures—including from the board—while trying to make decisions that benefit the most students (Melton et al., 2019).

Another area of influence the board claims is in the evaluation process and ongoing support of the superintendent, which can lengthen or end a superintendent's tenure in their district (Henrikson, 2019). According to Henrikson (2019), "The primary cause of superintendents exiting their position is due to poor relationships and conflict between themselves and their board" (p. 107). Henrikson found this relationship is often reflected in the evaluation process, when board members who generally lack educational expertise and training in evaluation determine the effectiveness of their educational leader, whose management role they usually do not directly witness. In Henrikson's study, superintendents reported the only time their boards took the evaluation process seriously was when it was likely to be negative and used to end the superintendent's contract. This power wielded by the board can be either motivational or discouraging to a superintendent, perhaps hindering their performance.

Boards' Perceptions of the Superintendent and Calls for Further Research

Although both boards and superintendents can influence each other's behaviors and decision making, one may wonder if these mutual influences can shape the superintendent's leadership style and if boards can encourage a superintendent to adopt a transformational leadership style or hinder and prevent it. Thus, further research on school boards' expectations and perceptions of superintendents' leadership style is needed (Hodge, 2020; Person et al., 2021; Reisenauer, 2016; Richard & Kruse, 2008; Webner et al., 2017). Since at least 2008, Richard and Kruse (2008) have called for empirical studies on the school board's perceptions of superintendents' leadership styles, noting this understanding was fundamental to the relationship between the two parties. But as recently as 2020, there was still a lack of study in this area.

Hodge and Larwin (2020) noted, "[U]nderstanding the styles of leadership and the impact that transformational leadership has on an organization . . . might assist in candidate screening, interviewing, and selection" (p. 19). That is, if board members better understood the connection between transformational leadership and organizational outcomes, they may be better positioned to look for these qualities in future superintendent candidates. Additionally, superintendents often rise from the ranks of other central office administrator positions and do not receive explicit training in the political, managerial, and other skills the superintendency requires (Richard & Kruse, 2008). This lack of training, combined with the board's lack of knowledge about the aspects of leadership that may positively influence student achievement, may be another source of the conflict and misunderstandings that can plague a board–superintendent

relationship. Webner et al. (2017) echoed this sentiment, calling for targeted training for both school boards and superintendents in their respective and collective roles.

Person et al. (2021) determined both board presidents and superintendents found the most critical leadership qualities in a superintendent were trustworthiness and excellent communication skills, both of which are elements of transformational leadership. These researchers also called for further study into what correlation may exist between these leadership traits and overall district success. Another scholar found boards believed superintendent leadership style impacts the longevity of their position, indicating the board's perception of superintendent leadership style plays an influential role in whether the superintendent has a long or short tenure (Reisenauer, 2016). These findings call for future research in identifying more of these influences, which may result in higher quality professional development for the board/superintendent team (Reisenauer, 2016).

Conclusion

The research has been clear that the board–superintendent relationship is critical to the success of the school district and its students (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bowers, 2016; Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Lorentzen, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). Studies have also pointed to the fact that transformational leadership can result in a positive impact on teachers who, in turn, directly influence student achievement (Almarshad, 2017; Dussault et al., 2008; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018; Shields, 2017; Windlinger et al., 2020). Given the critical nature of the board–superintendent nexus, one may ask how board members can seek out and recognize the traits of a transformational leader when

hiring a superintendent. Additionally, one may ask whether the board can influence—positively or negatively—the likelihood of a superintendent adopting or employing a transformational leadership style. Although the relationship between board leadership and student achievement has been established through research (Blasko, 2016; Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Rice et al., 2000), as has the relationship of the superintendency to student outcomes, a correlation between the board and its influence on the leadership style of the superintendent has not yet been clearly demonstrated. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine what impact board behaviors and characteristics have on superintendent leadership styles, particularly the likelihood that the superintendent will model transformational leadership.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research has been clear that the board–superintendent relationship is critical to the success of the school district and its students (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bowers, 2016; Delagardelle, 2008; Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Lorentzen, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). In addition, transformational leadership can result in a positive impact on teachers who, in turn, directly influence student achievement (Almarshad, 2017; Dussault et al., 2008; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018; Shields, 2010; Windlinger et al., 2020). This study was a quantitative research analysis in which a tendency for specific variables to influence each other was sought (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019); specifically, the tendency of board behaviors and characteristics to influence the likelihood of superintendents to exhibit a transformational leadership style.

Research Questions

Given the critical nature of the board/superintendent nexus, and the demonstrated impact of transformational leadership of student achievement, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership?
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership which are idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration?

3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors which are contingent reward and management by exception?
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive–avoidant leadership?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the degree to which there was a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership. Additionally, this study examined the degree to which there was a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional and passive–avoidant or laissez-faire leadership behaviors.

Participants

There were 197 school districts in Oregon at the time of this study (Oregon Department of Education, 2022). Each of these school districts had a locally elected school board composed of five, seven, or, in one case, nine members. Each school district employed one superintendent. In some small, remote districts, the superintendent also functioned as the school principal or was employed only part time.

The intended population for the study was all school boards in Oregon and all superintendents. The intention of surveying all board members and all superintendents was to complete a study fully representative of the diverse school districts in Oregon. Each board received the survey described in the next section, as did each superintendent. In addition to the survey materials each board and superintendent received, each participant was asked demographics questions to better understand the population of survey participants in Oregon. Demographic areas included the following: race/ethnicity, gender, age, education level, current district, years as superintendent, years at current district, and previous district as superintendent, if applicable. All demographics questions were optional. No compensation was provided to any participant.

Research Design and Methodology

This section of the paper describes the variables and instrumentation used in this study.

Variables

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study was each board's self-assessment using the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment (Alsbury, 2015). Boards rated their performance on 12 standards as *accomplished*, *effective*, *developing*, or *ineffective*.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was each superintendent's self-assessment of their own leadership style on a continuum from transformational, to transactional, to laissez faire using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Instrumentation

School Board Governance

School boards govern when they make policy, adopt budgets, approve programs, set a vision for the district, monitor results, and intervene when appropriate (Honingh et al., 2020; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Rice et al., 2000). As school boards are public entities, deliberations and decisions related to these roles must happen at public board meetings. Although boards may meet in closed sessions in rare occasions to discuss certain issues, called executive sessions, these meetings have been rigidly defined by law and boards must strictly adhere to the topic related to the provision which allowed them to have the executive session (Rosenblum, 2019). Therefore, the vast majority of a board's governance happens in public, and the behaviors and characteristics the board exhibits during its deliberations and decision making influence not only the relationship the board has with itself and its superintendent, but also the impact it has on student achievement and outcomes (Alsbury, 2008; Bridges et al., 2019; Johnson, 2010; Mountford, 2004; Williams & Tabernik, 2011).

Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

To measure board behaviors and characteristics, the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment tool was used. This tool was developed based on research into the impact that school boards have on student achievement (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Cooper et al., 2006; Delagardelle, 2008; Lorentzen, 2013; Saatcioglu et al., 2011). The Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment required each board member to rate the full board on 12 standards of performance through 80 questions meant to determine the board's proficiency in each standard.

Results were then compiled and presented on a continuum from *accomplished* to *ineffective* as per the description of the independent variable.

The Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment has been used with school districts in Pueblo County, Colorado, Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada, Ft. Collins, Colorado, Oregon, and Southwest Region School District, Alaska. Its author, Alsbury (2015), and the tool have been referenced or included in publications from the National School Boards Association, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, and the Programme for International Student Assessment (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Shober et al., 2014). An alignment of the standards in the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and research-based board member behaviors and characteristics in high-performing boards is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Alignment of Balanced Governance Standards to Research-Based Board Qualities

Balanced governance standard	Lighthouse (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Rice et al., 2000)	Essential board leadership practices (Johnson, 2010, 2013)	Characteristics of effective school boards (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016)
Vision-directed planning	Set clear expectations and goals	Create a vision	Commit to a vision of high expectations and set goals toward the vision
Community engagement	Build public will	Engaging with the community	-
Effective leadership	Create conditions for success	-	-
Accountability	-	Monitoring progress and taking corrective action	Focus on policy instead of operations
Using data for	Hold the system	Using data to hold	Embrace and

Balanced governance standard	Lighthouse (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Rice et al., 2000)	Essential board leadership practices (Johnson, 2010, 2013)	Characteristics of effective school boards (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016)
continuous improvement and accountability	accountable	the system accountable	monitor data
Cultural responsiveness	-	-	Collaborative relationship with community; strong engagement structure
Culture and climate	-	Creating a positive climate	Strong shared beliefs and values about all students
Learning organization	Learn together as a board team	Providing professional development	-
Systems thinking	-	Developing policy with a focus on student learning	-
Innovation and creativity	-	Creating awareness and urgency	-
Board member conduct, ethics, and relationship with superintendent	-	Practicing unified governance	-
Budgeting and financial accountability	-	-	Align and sustain resources to meet goals

MLQ

The MLQ was developed to measure and assess a range of leadership styles, particularly those demonstrating the characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The tool has been used commonly in hiring, training, and promoting to a leadership position. It has been used and modernized over more than 35 years, and includes assessment of what Avolio and Bass (2004) considered a full

spectrum of leadership styles, including transactional leadership and passive–avoidant leadership—also known as laissez-faire leadership. The MLQ has been used internationally in direct application and as a research tool (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Since its initial development, Avolio and Bass have undertaken substantive developmental revisions and updates to the tool based on criticism, feedback, new research, and usage. A study by Antonakis et al. (2003) demonstrated the MLQ had a high degree of construct validity and interrater reliability, with the caveat that "context should be considered in theoretical conceptualizations and validation studies" (p. 283).

The tool used for this study (i.e., MLQ 5X) was a 45-item questionnaire meant to measure leadership traits on a spectrum from transformational leadership to laissez-faire leadership as described in the following section. Traits are measured through 32 observable behaviors. Participants rated themselves as exhibiting each behavior with the following frequency: 0 = *Not at all*, 1 = *Once in a while*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Fairly often*, and 4 = *Frequently*, *if not always*.

Transformational Leadership. Leaders who stimulate, challenge, inspire, and build a vision in which followers can invest are rewarded with trust, respect, and better performance from their followers (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders devote energy to ensuring followers recognize their importance in the organization, provide professional development, and encourage self-improvement with autonomy as a goal (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Transactional Leadership. Transactional leadership was first described by Burns (1978) in a political context where leaders exchange "jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions" (p. 3). This type of leadership constitutes either a formal or

informal contract between supervisors and subordinates where rewards (e.g., financial or titular) are exchanged for meeting performance standards or set expectations.

Passive–Avoidant Leadership. This term describes a style in which challenges and problems are avoided or not addressed in a systemic fashion. Passive leaders (also referred to as management-by-exception, no leadership, or laissez-faire leadership) "avoid specifying agreement, clarifying expectations, and providing goals and standards to be achieved by followers" (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 105). This style of leadership and management tends to have the worst outcomes with respect to employee satisfaction and effectiveness.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Validity and Reliability

To produce meaningful results, each measurement instrument used in this study required a high degree of reliability and validity. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), an instrument of measurement is reliable when it produces consistent scores when administered multiple times over a period of time. Validity, then, occurs when the interpretation of the data aligns with the proposed purpose of the test (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

In the case of this study, results from both the MLQ and the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment were interpreted by another observer to negate any bias of a single observer and improve interrater reliability (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Additionally, the same version of each test was administered once to each participant, which created internal consistency reliability.

Both the MLQ and the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment demonstrated validity through evidence based on the content of the instrument and the evidence based on the process of responding. The content of both instruments measured what they were intended to measure. As discussed, the MLQ has been used internationally in direct application and as a research tool for over 35 years and has been revised as a result of feedback and criticism (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment has been administered in districts throughout the United States, referenced in national conferences, and has been grounded in research on the characteristics and behaviors school boards exhibit that have a measurable impact on student achievement (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Cooper et al., 2006; Delagardelle, 2008; Lorentzen, 2013; Saatcioglu et al., 2011).

Additionally, both instruments measured what they were designed to measure. Randomized spot interviews were conducted with individuals taking both exams to ensure their experience matched the intent of the exam. Likewise, an additional observer of the process and the resulting data was interviewed to determine if there was consistency in the administration of the exam and the participants' response to the exam.

Data Collection

The intended population for the study was all school boards and all superintendents in the state of Oregon. Each board received a link to the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment survey by email. The intention of surveying all board members and all superintendents was to complete a study fully representative of the diverse school districts in Oregon. Returns from districts were analyzed by geographic

location, district size, and student demographics to examine generalizability of the findings when applicable.

Questions from the board self-assessment were ordinal in nature on a 4-point scale. Each board member rated their observed overall performance of the board on indicators under each standard described previously on a Likert scale. When compiled, each standard fell into one of the following proficiency levels: distinguished, proficient, developing, or growth required. The survey was distributed through SurveyMonkey, and aggregate data were collected on that platform. Follow-up reminders were made by email.

The Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) has used and administered the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment in its work with school boards across Oregon. When a school board takes the self-assessment, OSBA collects and analyzes the data, and presents a report to the board. These reports become public documents at the time they are presented; thus, these reports were used for this study when available. When a self-assessment report produced by OSBA was used, that board was not surveyed again in order to avoid duplication of data and effort.

Each superintendent received a link to the MLQ survey by email administered by David Williams, a fellow doctoral student. Mr. Williams conducted a study of superintendent leadership for his dissertation as measured by the MLQ, which he agreed to share for the benefit of this study. Questions from the MLQ were ordinal on a 5-point scale. Each superintendent ranked the frequency of their self-observed leadership behaviors using the following ratings: 0 = *Not at all*, 1 = *Once in a while*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Fairly often*, and 4 = *Frequently*, *if not always*. The survey was distributed through

the Transform Survey Hosting Tool and data were collected on that platform. Follow up reminders were sent by email. All participants were informed their data would be used in both studies.

Data Analysis

Data were downloaded for the MLQ from the Transform Survey Hosting Tool and downloaded from SurveyMonkey for the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment. All data were analyzed using the statistical software platform IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.1. This program allows the user to conduct advanced analytics, manage data, and run descriptive statistics.

The data were first analyzed using Somers's delta (Somers's *d*), which determines the strength and direction of an association between a dependent variable and an independent variable, both of which were ordinal (Laerd Statistics, 2024c). Somers's *d* is a nonparametric measure and is used when the following assumptions can be made:

- Both the independent and dependent variables are ordinal.
- There is a monotonic relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Next, the data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. This test helped determine the strength and direction of an association between a dependent variable and an independent variable, both of which were continuous. Pearson's product-moment correlation can be used when the following assumptions can be made:

- Both the independent and dependent variables are continuous.
- The variables are paired.
- There is a linear relationship between variables.

- There are no significant outliers.
- There is bivariate normality.

Additionally, the data were analyzed using the Jonckheere-Terpstra test (Laerd Statistics, 2024a), which is a nonparametric test that can help determine if there is a statistically significant monotonic trend between an independent variable and a dependent variable, both of which are ordinal. The following assumptions must be true to use this test:

- One dependent variable must be continuous or ordinal.
- One ordinal, independent variable should consist of two or more ordinal, independent groups.
- No participant should be in more than one group.
- The order of the groups of the independent variable must be predicted before the test is run.
- The direction of the alternative hypothesis must be predicted before the data are consulted.
- It must be determined whether the distribution of scores for each group of the independent variable has the same variability.

This data analysis tested the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and determined the strength of the association and whether there was a statistically significant monotonic trend.

Finally, the data were analyzed using Kendall's tau-b (Laerd Statistics, 2024b), which is a nonparametric test meant to measure the direction and strength of a

relationship between two variables that are at least ordinal. The following assumptions must be true to use this test:

- The two variables are at least on an ordinal scale.
- The two variables are paired observations.
- Although this is not a requirement, it is preferable if the data show a monotonic relationship, as Kendall's tau-b determines whether this relationship exists.

Participant Confidentiality

Both the MLQ and the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment were anonymous for each participant. No personal identifiers were sought, and all data were used in aggregate. Participants were informed of this in their initial invitation to participate and at the time the survey was distributed via consent form. Data from the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment were stored within Survey Monkey, and only the researcher had access to this account. The data will be retained by the researcher on a local hard drive for potential use in future research on school board behaviors and characteristics. Participants were informed of this on the consent form.

Summary

A quantitative study of school boards' characteristics and behaviors and the likelihood of those factors to influence the adoption of a transformational leadership style addressed practical concerns as well as academic questions. Using both the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and the MLQ provided insights into the governance models of school boards and the transformational leadership traits of superintendents.

The study design was intentionally constructed to address whether there was a correlation between those two factors.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the study testing whether a statistically significant relationship exists between school board behaviors and characteristics using the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership?
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors which are contingent reward and management by exception?
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive–avoidant leadership?

This study was a quantitative study as it described a research problem through trends in variables, its data were measurable and observable, results could be compared to past research, and reporting could be done through objective and unbiased methods (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This first part of this chapter provides a broad description of both the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and the MLQ. The second part describes the data collection procedures. The third part describes the statistical analysis of the relationship between school board behaviors and characteristics and superintendents' use of transformational leadership styles using Pearson's correlation, Somers's *d*, and the Jonckheere-Terpstra test with Kendall's tau-b.

Survey Instrumentation

Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

The Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment is a self-reported assessment comprised of 80 questions grouped into 12 standards meant to measure school board performance and characteristics on research-based practices that impact student achievement (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Cooper et al., 2006; Delagardelle, 2008; Lorentzen, 2013; Saatcioglu et al., 2011). The name and summary description of each standard is listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Identification and Description of Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment Standards of Performance

Standard	Standard title	Standard description
Standard 1	Vision-directed planning	The board clearly articulates and develops a vision, strategic goals, and values for the district in consultation with the superintendent and community stakeholders.
Standard 2	Community engagement	The board ensures that multiple perspectives from across the community are considered and develops relationships with other external partners.
Standard 3	Effective leadership	Board members are knowledgeable about district initiatives and efforts, visible in the community, and align decisions to strategic priorities.
Standard 4	Accountability	The board monitors performance of itself, of the superintendent, and of strategic priorities and holds the system accountable to the expectations set.
Standard 5	Using data for continuous improvement and accountability	The board uses multiple, high-quality, disaggregated sources of data in decision-making that are aligned to the stated strategic priorities.
Standard 6	Cultural responsiveness	The board welcomes and celebrates diversity in all facets and makes policy decisions that reduce barriers to access and success for all students.
Standard 7	Culture and climate	The board models relationships of high expectations, respect, trust, and ensures a safe, welcoming environment for all students.
Standard 8	Learning organization	The board encourages professional development and learning across the system and creates an environment of cooperation and personal growth.
Standard 9	Systems thinking	The board views the district as a system instead of a collection of individual parts and takes a deeper problem-solving approach over an easy fix.
Standard 10	Innovation and creativity	The board employs flexibility, creativity, and new kinds of strategic thinking in its problem-solving approaches.
Standard 11	Board member	The board understands how its role differs from

Standard	Standard title	Standard description
	conduct, ethics, and relationship with the superintendent	that of the superintendent, comes to meetings prepared to engage, and follows policy, law, and applicable rules and agreements.
Standard 12	Budgeting and financial accountability	The board is a capable steward of district funding and makes budgeting decisions aligned to the district's strategic priorities.

MLQ

The MLQ is a 45-item questionnaire meant to measure leadership traits on a spectrum from transformational leadership to laissez-faire leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Traits are measured through 32 observable behaviors organized into five components of transformational leadership, two components of transactional leadership, and passive–avoidant (or laissez-faire) leadership. Participants rate the frequency of their exhibited leadership behaviors on the following 0–4 scale: 0 = *Not at all*, 1 = *Once in a while*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Fairly often*, and 4 = *Frequently*, *if not always*.

A summarized description of each component of transformational leadership (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and transactional leadership (i.e., contingent reward and management by exception) is provided in Table 3. Laissez-faire leadership (i.e., passive–avoidant) has no subparts.

Table 3

Description of MLQ Leadership Styles

Leadership style	Attribute	Definition
Transformational leadership	Idealized influence	Holds power and influence over followers due to being viewed in an idealized fashion. Inspires confidence and trust in the vision
	Inspirational motivation	Ability to articulate shared goals and inspire others to action. Creates understanding for what actions must be taken to achieve the mission
	Intellectual stimulation	Encourages self-reflection and promotes innovation in problem-solving. Allows space for questioning the status quo
	Individualized consideration	Treats each follower as a unique individual with their own valid needs. Provides opportunities for personal and professional growth
Transactional leadership	Contingent reward	Focuses on objectives and compensation for achievements
	Management by exception	Focuses on problem prevention and correction
Passive–avoidant leadership	Passive–avoidant	Likely to engage only in a crisis or not at all

Data Collection Procedures

Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

In January 2023, an initial link to the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment was sent via SurveyMonkey to all board members across 197 school boards in Oregon with an email describing the study and its purpose. Subsequent reminders were sent in February and March of 2023 to ensure comprehensive participation.

Each participant anonymously responded to the survey, and their responses were kept confidential. Each question was assessed on a 4-point continuum: 4 = *Accomplished*, 3 = *Effective*, 2 = *Developing*, and 1 = *Ineffective*. The generated report aggregated total

scores within each predefined domain: accomplished, effective, developing, and ineffective. To quantify these domains, point values were assigned as follows: 3 = *Accomplished*, 2= *Effective*, 1 = *Developing*, and 0 = *Ineffective*.

All scores were added for each question, then averaged by the number of board members that answered the question to create the raw scale score. To transform the scores into ordinal data for the Somers's *d* and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests, each raw score was placed in a category as follows:

- 2.26–3 = 3
- 1.51–2.25 = 2
- .76–1.50 = 1
- 0–.75 = 0

Some school boards had also taken the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment through the OSBA as a contracted service. The results of those assessments become public record when they are presented to the board. Publicly available self-assessment survey data from OSBA were gathered and added to the dataset, resulting in a total of 28 fully completed surveys, representing boards with a quorum of members, at minimum, which is defined as half of the membership plus one. Therefore, for a board with five members, three constituted a quorum; for a board with seven members, four constituted a quorum. Additionally, data collected via SurveyMonkey yielded complete responses from nine more boards, each meeting the criterion of at least a quorum.

MLQ

Concurrently, a fellow doctoral student, David Williams, conducted a study measuring the relationship between superintendents' use of transformational leadership

and teacher collective efficacy. His study used the MLQ self-rater as a tool for assessing superintendent leadership. Data from that study from 180 current superintendents were used in the current study. A data-sharing agreement to this effect is included in Appendix B. Williams sent an initial link to his study, which was distributed by email through the MindGarden, Inc. survey system called Transform in December 2022. For the next several months, occasional follow-up emails were sent, and one email encouraging participation of superintendents in the MLQ was sent by the researcher for the current study in February 2023. The MLQ survey was closed at the end of March 2023. A total of 79 responses to the MLQ were obtained from superintendents, which was a 43.9% response rate. To ensure unified results that could undergo statistical analysis, only instances where both a quorum of the board and the superintendent were used, resulting in a set of 20 unified responses that were used in this analysis.

Participants rated themselves as exhibiting each behavior with the following frequency: 0 = *Not at all*, 1 = *Once in a while*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Fairly often*, and 4 = *Frequently, if not always.* Scores were averaged to create a total score for each component. In order to transform the scores into ordinal data for the Somers's *d* and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests, each raw score was placed in a category as follows:

- 3.3–4 = 4
- 2.5–3.2 = 3
- 1.7–2.4 = 2
- .9–1.6 = 1
- 0–.8 = 0

It was noteworthy that 32 boards provided responses representing fewer than a quorum of members. These results, even when accompanied by superintendent responses, were excluded from the analysis. This approach was implemented to maintain the integrity of the dataset and represent only boards for which a majority responded to the self-assessment.

Although there are 80 questions on the self-assessment itself, additional questions about individual demographics were included. These were:

- Gender: How do you identify? (Male; Female; Prefer not to answer)
- Which race or ethnicity best describes you? Please select all that apply. (Hispanic/Latino origin; White/European American; Black/African American; Asian; American Indian/Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; Aboriginal; Other)
- What is your age? (18–30; 31–40; 41–50; 51–60; 61-–70; 71–80; 81–90; 91+)
- How many years have you served on your current school board (in whole numbers)?

However, due to the fact that the surveys administered by OSBA did not include demographic information and approximately half of the included surveys in this study were gathered from OSBA as public records, the demographic information returned to the researcher was not used.

Statistical Analysis

To determine if a relationship existed between school board behaviors and superintendents' use of transformational leadership, a quantitative analysis using inferential statistics was necessary. Such an analysis serves to determine the significance,

strength, and direction of the relationship between these two variables. What follows is a detailing of the results of this analysis.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations of MLQ With Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

Pearson's product-moment correlation is a statistical measure that quantifies the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). It produces a value between -1 and +1, where +1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship, -1 indicates a perfect negative linear relationship, and 0 indicates no linear correlation or relationship. Three assumptions must be met to use a Pearson's product-moment correlation, all of which were met:

- The two variables should be continuous.
- There is one value for each variable.
- To produce a valid result, the two variables should demonstrate a liner relationship, there must be no significant outliers, and there should be bivariate normality, meaning, together, there is a combination of two normal distributions.

A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment standards and the MLQ assessment standards of transformational leadership. Twenty boards and superintendents participated.

As shown in Table 4, a statistically significant, strong positive correlation was found between Balanced Governance Standard 6 (i.e., cultural responsiveness) and inspirational motivation, $r(18) = .499$, $p < .05$. There was a statistically significant, strong

positive correlation between Balanced Governance Standard 5 (i.e., using data for continuous improvement and accountability) and inspirational motivation, $r(18) = .485$, $p < .05$. A statistically significant, strong positive correlation also existed between Balanced Governance Standard 2 (i.e., community engagement) and inspirational motivation, $r(18) = .458$, $p < .05$. Table 4 represents the relationships between each of the 12 standards of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment in their raw score form and the five indicators of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ.

Table 4

Pearson's r Correlation and p Values for 12 Balanced Governance Standards and Five Indicators of Transformational Leadership

Standard	IIA	IIB	IM	IS	IC
Standard 1	.164(.488)	.124(.602)	.426(.061)	-.015(.819)	.088(.711)
Standard 2	.265(.259)	.055(.818)	.458(.042)*	.212(.370)	.065(.784)
Standard 3	.028(.907)	.169(.475)	.382(.096)	.004(.987)	.150(.528)
Standard 4	.084(.726)	.276(.240)	.396(.084)	-.058(.808)	.165(.486)
Standard 5	.153(.520)	.345(.137)	.485(.030)*	.160(.500)	.221(.349)
Standard 6	.004(.986)	.194(.412)	.499(.025)*	-.074(.758)	-.059(.806)
Standard 7	.001(.998)	.028(.907)	.250(.287)	-.207(.382)	-.038(.874)
Standard 8	.109(.647)	-.018(.938)	.311(.181)	-.198(.403)	-.079(.741)
Standard 9	-.053(.823)	.019(.935)	.161(.499)	-.244(.300)	-.068(.775)
Standard 10	.041(.864)	.184(.436)	.268(.254)	-.155(.514)	.059(.804)
Standard 11	-.070(.770)	-.167(.482)	.107(.653)	-.297(203)	-.168(.478)
Standard 12	-.078(.743)	-.015(.949)	.192(.418)	-.185(436)	-.048(.840)

Note. * $p = < .05$. IIA = idealized influence attributed (raw score); IIB = idealized influence behavioral (raw score); IM = inspirational motivation (raw score); IS = intellectual stimulation (raw score); IC = individualized consideration (raw score).

Conversely, no statistically significant correlation was found between any of the Balanced Governance standards and either of the MLQ standards for transactional leadership. There was no statistically significant correlation between any of the Balanced

Governance standards and the MLQ standard for passive–avoidant leadership. Table 5 represents the relationships between each of the 12 standards of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment in their raw score form and the three indicators of transactional leadership and laissez-faire as measured by the MLQ.

Table 5

Pearson's r Correlation and p Values for 12 Balanced Governance Standards and Three Indicators of Transactional Leadership and Laissez-Faire

Standard	CR	MBEA	MBEP	LF
Standard 1	-.013(.957)	-.055(.817)	-.320(.169)	-.109(.649)
Standard 2	.078(.744)	-.030(.901)	-.186(.434)	-.191(.421)
Standard 3	-.136(.567)	-.012(.959)	-.218(.356)	.030(.901)
Standard 4	-.096(.686)	.171(.471)	-.329(.156)	.040(.867)
Standard 5	.083(.727)	.204(.389)	-.334(.149)	-.048(.842)
Standard 6	.122(.609)	.350(.130)	-.255(.279)	-.148(.535)
Standard 7	-.152(.523)	.001(.998)	-.188(.427)	-.054(.821)
Standard 8	-.108(.649)	.019(.935)	-.250(.287)	.103(.667)
Standard 9	-.167(.481)	.155(.515)	-.180(.447)	.073(.759)
Standard 10	-.194(.413)	.154(.517)	-.247(.293)	.089(.708)
Standard 11	-.183(.441)	-.051(.830)	.001(.997)	.022(.927)
Standard 12	-.208(.378)	.023(.923)	-.009(.969)	-.109(.648)

Note. CR = Contingent Reward (raw score); MBEA = Management by Exception A (raw score); MBEP = Management by Exception P (raw score); LF = Laissez-faire.

Somers's *d* Correlations of MLQ With Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

Somers's *d* is a nonparametric statistic that assesses the strength and direction of the relationship between two ordinal variables. Somers's *d* ranges from -1–1, where 1 indicates a perfect positive association, 0 indicates no association, and -1 indicates a perfect negative association (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). There are two assumptions that

must be true to determine whether a Somers's *d* test can be used, both of which were met in this study:

- There is one ordinal dependent variable and one ordinal independent variable.
- A monotonic relationship must exist between the dependent and independent variables such that a change in the direction of one variable is associated with a change in the same direction of the second.

Somers's *d* was run to determine the association between the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment standards and the MLQ assessment standards of transformational leadership and validate the findings from the Pearson's product-moment correlation. As shown in Table 6, a medium correlation was measured between the overall Balanced Governance standards and the MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant ($d = .369$, $p < .05$). There was a strong, positive correlation between Balanced Governance Standard 6 (i.e., cultural responsiveness) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant ($d = .475$, $p < .05$). A medium positive correlation existed between Balanced Governance Standard 2 (i.e., community engagement) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant ($d = .393$, $p < .05$). There was a medium positive correlation between Balanced Governance Standard 8 (i.e., learning organization) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant ($d = .378$, $p < .05$). A medium positive correlation was found between Balanced Governance Standard 4 (i.e., accountability) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant ($d = .372$, $p < .05$). There was a medium positive correlation between Balanced Governance Standard 3 (i.e., effective leadership) and MLQ standard

inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant (d = .366, p < .05). A medium positive correlation existed between Balanced Governance Standard 5 (i.e., using data for continuous improvement and accountability) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant (d = .364, p < .05).

There was a medium positive correlation between Balanced Governance Standard 1 (i.e., vision-directed planning) and MLQ standard inspirational motivation, which was statistically significant (d = .357, p < .05). No statistically significant correlation was measured between the overall Balanced Governance standards and the overall MLQ standards (d = .262, p > .05). Table 6 represents the relationships between each of the 12 standards of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment as ordinal data and the five indicators of transformational leadership as measured by the MLQ according to the Somers's d analysis.

Table 6

Somers's d Correlation and p Values for 12 Balanced Governance Standards and Five Indicators of Transformational Leadership

Standard	IIA	IIB	IM	IS	IC
Standard 1	.217(.212)	-.165(.206)	.357(.028)*	-.043(.837)	.026(.889)
Standard 2	.282(.150)	-.094(.407)	.393(.006)*	.256(.245)	.009(.964)
Standard 3	.00(1.0)	.00(1.0)	.366(.045)*	.183(.476)	.183(.323)
Standard 4	.071(.709)	.071(.541)	.372(.027)*	.150(.467)	.168(.349)
Standard 5	.132(.475)	-.066(.298)	.364(.018)*	.058(.793)	-.058(.794)
Standard 6	.109(.592)	.152(.335)	.457(.022)*	.152(.524)	.065(.784)
Standard 7	.160(.442)	-.019(.711)	.245(.138)	.047(.851)	-.066(.723)
Standard 8	.198(.321)	-.117(.346)	.378(.012)*	.027(.900)	-.045(.819)
Standard 9	.036(.907)	-.024(.664)	.133(.477)	-.133(.651)	-.289(.125)
Standard 10	.096(.658)	.035(.749)	.263(.129)	-.044(.835)	-.114(.521)
Standard 11	.000(1.0)	-.137(.133)	.176(.384)	-.049(.825)	.049(.807)
Standard 12	.095(.631)	-.172(.114)	.190(.299)	-.017(.935)	-.138(.438)
Overall	.107(.596)	.019(.711)	**.369(.023)***	.262(.282)	.058(.764)

Note. * $p = < .05$. IIA = idealized influence attributed (raw score); IIB = idealized influence behavioral (raw score); IM = inspirational motivation (raw score); IS = intellectual stimulation (raw score); IC = individualized consideration (raw score).

There was no statistically significant correlation between any of the Balanced Governance standards and either of the MLQ standards for transactional leadership. No statistically significant correlation existed between any of the Balanced Governance standards and the MLQ standard for passive–avoidant leadership. Table 7 represents the relationships between each of the 12 standards of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment as ordinal data and the three indicators of transactional leadership and laissez-faire as measured by the MLQ according to the Somers's *d* analysis.

Table 7

Somers's d Correlation and p Values for 12 Balanced Governance Standards and Three Indicators of Transactional Leadership and Laissez-Faire

Standard	CR	MBEA	MBEP	LF
Standard 1	.035(.859)	.009(.967)	.209(.155)	.087(.461)
Standard 2	-.034(.873)	.00(1.0)	-.222(.087)	-.077(.348)
Standard 3	-.204(.471)	-.065(.805)	-.183(.250)	.00(1.0)
Standard 4	-.186(.389)	.195(.331)	-.142(.353)	.133(.155)
Standard 5	.083(.683)	.281(.231)	-.149(.286)	-.041(.719)
Standard 6	.261(.301)	.469(.099)	-.109(.502)	.065(434)
Standard 7	-.321(.117)	-.066(.730)	-.264(.103)	-.123(.346)
Standard 8	-.162(.404)	.036(.865)	-.054(.763)	.099(.436)
Standard 9	-.193(.387)	.193(389)	.048(656)	.036(.659)
Standard 10	-.123(.590)	.193(.280)	-.228(.138)	.026(.833)
Standard 11	-.314(.178)	-.225(.269)	-.078(.637)	.029(.830)
Standard 12	-.121(.607)	.250(.209)	.034(.813)	-.052(.682)
Overall	-.136(.585)	.078(.775)	-.194(.178)	-.029(.708)

Note. CR = Contingent Reward (raw score); MBEA = Management by Exception A (raw score); MBEP = Management by Exception P (raw score); LF = Laissez-faire.

Jonckheere-Terpstra correlations of MLQ With Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment

The Jonckheere-Terpstra test is a nonparametric test used to analyze a trend or systematic ordering across groups. Six assumptions must be met to use this test, all of which were met:

- The dependent variable must be continuous or ordinal.
- One ordinal, independent variable must consist of two or more independent, ordinal groups.
- There must be an independence of observations in that no participants are in more than one group.
- The order of the groups must be predicted prior to running the test. That is, the data and results cannot inform how the groups are ordered after the fact.
- The direction of the alternative hypothesis must be predicted before the data are examined.
- The distribution of scores for each group of the independent variable must be determined.

Given the complexity of the Jonckheere-Terpstra test and the number of variables involved in this study, the test was applied only to outcomes that exhibited positive correlations in both the Pearson's correlation and the Somers's *d* analyses, namely, Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 6.

The median score was determined to demonstrate any pattern of differences between the ratings of groups related to the independent variable. Additionally, any direction in trend of the scores for the independent variable can be identified by analyzing the median. It was hypothesized that the median score for inspirational motivation would increase as the ratings for the Balanced Governance Standard 2 increased from developing to accomplished. Table 8 reflects that the median inspirational motivation scores for Balanced Governance Standard 2 were 3 for the developing group (n = 3), 4 for the effective group (n = 11), and 4 for the accomplished group (n = 6).

Table 8

Jonckheere-Terpstra Inspirational Motivation Median Scores for Balanced Governance Standard 2

Standard 2 components	*n*	Median
Developing	3	3.0
Effective	11	4.0
Accomplished	6	4.0
Total	20	4.0

It was hypothesized that the median score for inspirational motivation would increase as the ratings for the Balanced Governance Standard 5 increased from developing to accomplished. Table 9 reflects that the median inspirational motivation scores for Balanced Governance Standard 5 were 3 for the developing group (n = 7), 4 for the effective group (n = 10), and 4 for the accomplished group (n = 3).

Table 9

Jonckheere-Terpstra Inspirational Motivation Median Scores for Balanced Governance Standard 5

Standard 5 components	*n*	Median
Developing	7	3.0
Effective	10	4.0
Accomplished	3	4.0
Total	20	4.0

It was hypothesized that the median score for inspirational motivation would increase as the ratings for the Balanced Governance Standard 6 increased from developing to accomplished. Table 10 reflects that the median inspirational motivation scores for Balanced Governance Standard 6 were 3 for the developing group ($n = 4$), 4 for the effective group ($n = 14$), and 4 for the accomplished group ($n = 2$).

Table 10

Jonckheere-Terpstra Inspirational Motivation Median Scores for Balanced Governance Standard 6

Standard 6 components	*n*	Median
Developing	4	3.0
Effective	14	4.0
Accomplished	2	4.0
Total	20	4.0

Kendall's tau-b

Although the Jonckheere-Terpstra test assesses whether a monotonic trend exists, it does not determine effect size or the strength of the trend. Kendall's tau-b is meant to determine the strength and direction of a relationship between two ordinal variables

(*Kendall's Tau-b*, n.d.). There are three assumptions that must be met to use this test, all of which were met:

- There must be two variables that are measured on an ordinal scale, at least.
- The two variables are paired observations, meaning that there is an observation for a pair of variables for each participant.
- It is preferable if there appears to be a monotonic trend in the data, as Kendall's tau-b determines whether there is a monotonic relationship.

To complement the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, a Kendall's tau-b test was run to measure the relationships between Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 6 with the transformational leadership domain of inspirational motivation.

An increase in the level of transformational leadership exhibited by a superintendent when the performance of the board on each standard of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment increased was hypothesized. This hypothesis was tested for Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 6 and inspirational motivation. A Jonckheere-Terpstra test determined a statistically significant increasing monotonic trend in the transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited (p = .017). Kendall's tau-b between board performance on Standard 2 and the transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited was .464, demonstrating a strong relationship.

A Jonckheere-Terpstra test determined a statistically significant increasing monotonic trend in the transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited (p = .023). Kendall's tau-b between board performance on Standard 5 and the

transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited was .436, demonstrating a strong relationship.

A Jonckheere-Terpstra test determined a statistically significant increasing monotonic trend in the transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited (p = .016). Kendall's tau-b between board performance on Balanced Governance Standard 6 and the transformational leadership trait inspirational motivation exhibited was .478, demonstrating a strong relationship. Table 11 reflects the strength of the relationships between Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 5 and inspirational motivation.

Table 11

Kendall's tau-b for Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 6 With Inspirational Motivation

Standard	*Tau(p)*
Balanced Governance Standard 2	.464(.017)
Balanced Governance Standard 5	.436(.023)
Balanced Governance Standard 6	.478(.016)

Note. p = <. 05. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Summary

Chapter 4 presents the results of a study that examined the relationship between school board behaviors and characteristics and superintendents' use of transformational leadership. The study was designed to answer four questions.

Research Question 1 asked, is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of

transformational leadership? The data did not show a statistically significant relationship between board behaviors and characteristics and an overall application of transformational leadership approaches.

Research Question 2 asked, is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership? The data uncovered relationships between certain Balanced Governance standards and a particular aspect of transformational leadership: inspirational motivation. A Somers's *d* analysis demonstrated, individually, 7 of the 12 Balanced Governance standards were correlated with increased levels of inspirational motivation, and, most importantly, the instrument as a whole was correlated with inspirational motivation. A Pearsons' *r* analysis revealed Balanced Governance Standards 2, 5, and 6 were strongly correlated with inspirational motivation, and both a Jonckheere-Terpstra test and a Kendall's tau-b analysis confirmed this correlation. Of all the standards, Standard 6 (i.e., cultural responsiveness) appears to be most strongly correlated with inspirational motivation.

Research Question 3 asked, is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behavior? The data did not reveal correlations between any of the Balanced Governance standards and transactional leadership.

Research Question 4 asked, is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive-avoidant leadership? The data did not reveal correlations between any of the Balanced Governance standards and passive–avoidant leadership.

Chapter 5 further discusses these findings and provides a more thorough interpretation of the results. A call for future research board behaviors and characteristics and their impacts are presented, as well as a discussion of this study's specific limitations. Finally, Chapter 5 describes implications for practice and recommendations for current and future use of this study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and interpret the results described in the previous chapter, while integrating them into the existing field of literature to compare and contrast findings in other research studies. This chapter also explores the contributions and limitations of the study and how the limits could be remedied in future research. Finally, practical implications for the results of this study are provided, and future directions for research are discussed.

Purpose and Research Questions

For decades, researchers have found the quality of the relationship between the board and the superintendent can influence student achievement, whether positively or negatively (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bowers, 2016; Bridges et al., 2019; Henrikson, 2019; Mountford, 2004; Reisenauer, 2016; Rice et al., 2000). Similarly, transformational leadership in the educational setting has been shown to increase employee satisfaction, create trust, foster commitment and loyalty between staff and leaders, and positively impact student outcomes (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1999; Bryant et al., 2016; Eagly et al., 2003; Hodge, 2020; Klocko et al., 2019; Metz et al., 2019; Northouse, 2019). How, then, might the board–superintendent relationship influence a superintendent in adopting a leadership style known to impact student achievement? This quantitative study sought to determine whether a relationship exists between school board behaviors and superintendents' use of a transformational leadership style. In other words, can a school board encourage or discourage a superintendent in their application of transformational leadership? To explore this, the following research questions were used:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership?
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors which are contingent reward and management by exception?
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive–avoidant leadership?

The study used the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment to measure school board behaviors and characteristics. This assessment is a self-reported survey comprised of 80 questions grouped into 12 standards. It measures school board effectiveness on research-based practices that impact student achievement (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Blasko, 2016; Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Cooper et al., 2006; Delagardelle, 2008; Lorentzen, 2013; Saatcioglu et al., 2011). Each board member completed the survey individually, producing a raw score that was averaged by the number of board members to create a raw scale score for use in a Pearson's product-moment correlation

test. Each raw score was then categorized to create ordinal data for Somers's *d,* Jonckheere-Terpstra, and Kendall's tau-b tests.

To measure transformational leadership, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was administered to superintendents. The MLQ is a 45-item survey that measures 32 observable leadership traits organized into five components of transformational leadership, three components of transactional leadership, and passive–avoidant (or laissez-faire) leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Four statistical analyses were used to determine whether there was a relationship between board behaviors and characteristics and superintendents' application of a transformational leadership style: (a) Pearson's product-moment correlation, which quantifies the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables; (b) Somers's *d*, which assesses the strength and direction of the relationship between two ordinal variables; (c) the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, which analyzes a trend or systematic ordering across groups; and (d) Kendall's tau-b, which examines the strength of an association between two ordinal variables.

Findings of the Study

The study found a school board's adherence to research-based behaviors and characteristics impacts student achievement and influences how a superintendent leads. As demonstrated by Pearson's product-moment correlation, Balanced Governance Standard 2 (i.e., community engagement), Standard 5 (i.e., using data for continuous improvement and accountability), and Standard 6 (i.e., cultural responsiveness) had the greatest correlation to the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership. With significance levels less than .05 for each, Standard 2 was .458, Standard 5 was .485,

and Standard 6 was .499. When analyzing the trend of median scores between inspirational motivation and Standards 2, 5, and 6, each rating showed an increasing trend from a rating of developing to accomplished. Kendall's tau-b demonstrated the effect size and strength of that trend. With significance levels less than .05 for each, Standard 2 was .464, Standard 5 was .436, and Standard 6 was .478.

A Somers's *d* correlation illustrated that several more Balanced Governance standards were positively correlated to inspirational motivation in addition to Standards 2, 5, and 6. Table 12 summarizes the relationships between the positively correlated standards and inspirational motivation.

Table 12

Positive Correlations Between Balanced Governance Standards and Inspirational Motivation

Balanced governance standards	Inspirational motivation	
	Pearson's correlation *r*(*p*)	Somers' *d* correlation *d*(*p*)
Standard 1	.426(.061)	.357(.028)*
Standard 2	.458(.042)*	.393(.006)*
Standard 3	.382(.096)	.366(.045)*
Standard 4	.396(.084)	.372(.027)*
Standard 5	.485(.030)*	.364(.018)*
Standard 6	.499(.025)*	.457(.022)*
Standard 8	.311(.181)	.378(.012)*
Balanced governance overall		.369(.023)*

Note. *p = < .05.

In addition to a relationship between inspirational motivation and Standards 2, 5, and 6, a Somers's *d* analysis found a correlation between inspirational motivation and Standard 1 (i.e., vision-directed planning), Standard 3 (i.e., effective leadership),

Standard 4 (i.e., accountability), and Standard 8 (i.e., learning organization). Most notable, this analysis demonstrated a correlation between the entire Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and inspirational motivation.

To summarize, the research questions can be answered in the following ways:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' overall use of transformational leadership? Based on the data in this study, there was not.
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of the individual components of transformational leadership which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration? Based on the data in this study, there was a statistically significant correlation between seven board behaviors and characteristics and the domain of inspirational motivation, plus an overall correlation between the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and inspirational motivation.
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of transactional leadership behaviors which are contingent reward and management by exception? Based on the data in this study, there was not.
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between board behaviors and characteristics and school district superintendents' level of passive–avoidant leadership? Based on the data in this study, there was not.

Impactful Standards and Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is a domain of transformational leadership wherein a leader positively influences others and encourages action through a clear articulation of a shared vision (Avolio & Bass, 2004). A motivating leader forges a path that allows others to take independent action to achieve that vision and thereby positively impacts the performance of their followers. Examples of inspirational motivation might include developing a strategic plan with an aspirational vision for students; demonstrating leadership through involvement with community, advocacy, or other external organizations; or encouraging individual goal setting to align with the vision and strategic priorities of the district.

Because a positive correlation between Standards 2, 5, and 6 and inspirational motivation were replicated across four statistical analyses, a closer examination of each of these standards is warranted. Standard 2 is community engagement. When a board is engaged with its community, it ensures multiple perspectives are considered from all stakeholders: families, staff, students, and community partners. The board responds to feedback from the community and actively seeks input as it develops its vision for the district (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Examples of this may include providing multiple avenues for community comments (e.g., written, at board meetings, listening sessions); actively seeking partnerships with community-based and governmental organizations, including student representatives on the board; or supporting the creation of advisory committees on issues such as policy, boundary adjustments, budget, and long-term facility planning.

Standard 5 uses data for continuous improvement and accountability. A board that is data savvy relies on multiple sources of high-quality data to inform its decisions. Board members expect such data produced measurable results and prioritizes needs and goals based on the results of the data. A board using data for continuous improvement also ensures data are disaggregated and representative of student demographics to highlight any gaps in performance and opportunities so more strategic goals can be set in collaboration with the superintendent (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Examples of this may include articulating what types of data are used in monitoring progress on the district's strategic plan, receiving large-scale data reports from the superintendent on both summative and formative assessments used by the district, or ensuring the use of data that inform progress on goals is part of budgetary discussions.

Standard 6 is cultural responsiveness. A board that is culturally responsive recognizes and celebrates the many types of diversity that exist in the district—both in the student body and on staff. Cultural responsiveness includes creating a safe, welcoming, caring environment for students, free from bias and discrimination. A culturally responsive board partners with the superintendent to help activate and involve diverse groups of students and parents that are representative of the student body, and it ensures the superintendent holds high expectations for each and every student's learning (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Examples of cultural responsiveness may include using an equity lens when making decisions about policy, budget, or program adoption and intentional outreach to marginalized and historically underserved family and student groups for input and recommendations on district initiatives and supporting student affinity groups.

One may ask how better school board performance on each of these standards might increase the ability of the superintendent to adopt an inspirational motivation style. When a school board is more engaged with the community and encourages the superintendent to do the same, the superintendent may engage more with local government and community organizations, thereby gathering support for major district initiatives. The superintendent might form advisory committees for help with administrative initiatives directed by the board, and this interest in community feedback may inspire district administrators and teachers to proactively consider involving other staff, students, families, and community members when implementing all manner of actions—from long-term facilities planning where families and community could be part of visioning sessions to classroom lesson plans where teachers could organize field trips to community-based organizations or host guest speakers from local government agencies.

When a school board uses high-quality data in its decision making, the superintendent may be more likely to employ methods that use multiple sources of data to measure progress and success in district strategic initiatives. This might become an expectation that all staff measure student growth and progress in numerous ways, resulting in a richer, more comprehensive picture of district performance using data that can be disaggregated to show gaps in achievement and opportunity for all students. Accountability and clarity of progress on strategic initiatives may improve as a result of monitoring that data and taking corrective action when necessary (Rice et al., 2000).

When a school board is focused on cultural responsiveness in its practices, it may expect the superintendent to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the student body

and families in the district. This may lead the superintendent to expect that staff are more ethnically and racially representative of the students they serve; students see themselves in the curriculum used by the district; and barriers to educational access based on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender expression, sexuality, and socioeconomic status are eliminated. Most importantly, a focus on cultural responsiveness may inspire the superintendent and their staff to create an equity lens used by the district when faced with major decisions. An equity lens is a theoretical framework—usually a list of questions asked before a decision—meant to ensure (a) multiple perspectives are considered, (b) unintended consequences for historically marginalized groups are mitigated, (c) student and family voice are heard, (d) conscious and unconscious biases are addressed, and (e) traditional norms and values are challenged (Stansberry Brusnahan et al., 2023).

Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the literature by aligning the principles of the research-based balanced governance approach to school board leadership with the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership in superintendents as measured by the MLQ, an internationally used instrument. To date, no other study has been found that correlates board behaviors and characteristics with principles of transformational leadership in superintendents.

For decades, research has consistently demonstrated the board's leadership and its relationship with its superintendent influence student achievement, whether positively or negatively (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Hollander, 2012; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000).

Boards practicing good governance have a collaborative relationship with their superintendents, stay away from micromanagement, and enjoy a relationship built on trust and respect, even in times of disagreement (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Johnson, 2010, 2013; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015).

Furthermore, transformational leadership has been shown to positively impact student outcomes in circumstances where it has been authentically applied (Bird & Wang, 2013). This style of leadership has been shown to increase collective teacher efficacy, and can produce overall improved employee morale, equity, inclusion, and social justice in the school system (Almarshad, 2017; Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2018; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Shields, 2017; Windlinger et al., 2020).

However, the research has been minimal regarding superintendents employing a transformational leadership style and its impact on student achievement. Some previous promising research indicated superintendent leadership was correlated with increased levels of student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009), and one study demonstrated transformational leadership strategies employed by the superintendent positively impacted their principals (Hodge, 2020). Other studies on superintendent leadership either included a link between transformational leadership and district size, teaching experience, and superintendent experience (Fenn & Mixon, 2011), or focused on general leadership in superintendents, but not transformational leadership (Bryant et al., 2016).

However, no other study has linked the relationship between a school board and a superintendent who is a transformational leader. This study adds to the literature as it demonstrates research-based best practices undertaken by boards can influence leadership styles shown to impact student outcomes in superintendents.

Limitations of the Study

The Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment survey was distributed to all board members in 197 school districts in Oregon, which was approximately 1,180 board members. The MLQ was distributed to all 197 superintendents. For a district to be used in the study, a quorum of board members from that district was required to respond. A quorum is defined as half the membership plus one. In other words, for a five-member board, at least three members must have responded; for a seven-member board, at least four members must have responded. The survey distributed in this study yielded nine qualifying boards. Publicly available self-assessment data collected by the Oregon School Boards Association produced 28 fully completed surveys. Together, these two sources of data totaled 37 usable responses, which was 18.7% of the districts in Oregon.

However, completed board surveys could only be used if they could be matched with completed MLQ surveys from their superintendents. A fellow doctoral student, David Williams, collected 79 responses from superintendents in Oregon, which was a 43.9% response rate. Twenty of the 37 completed board surveys matched with superintendents and were used in the study. This was approximately 10% of districts in Oregon, which was a low return rate. This study was conducted in Oregon only and could have benefitted from a multistate data set. Because of the time bound nature of the study, there were limited opportunities for follow-up, with the initial survey sent in January and reminders sent in February and March. Additionally, this study was reliant on data from another study, and required matching data from the survey in this study to data from another survey in order to qualify for usage.

Additionally, both the MLQ and the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment are self-reported instruments. Boards and superintendents rated their own performance, which could have contributed to self-reporting bias. Self-reporting results may not have necessarily aligned with the experience of those who worked most closely with the survey participants.

Finally, this study was conducted shortly after the COVID-19 global pandemic. Because board meetings were required to be held virtually by order of the governor during this time (Oregon Exec Order Number 20-16, 2020), boards may have found more difficulty in building and maintaining collaborative, productive relationships with each other and with their superintendents. This may have influenced how boards rated their own performance on the self-assessment.

Implications for Practice

School board training impacts student achievement. Boards that engage in professional development are more motivated to improve their own performance (Senekal, 2019), have higher levels of self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Krishnan et al., 2016), and can positively impact student outcomes (Lee & Eadens, 2014). Boards undertaking less professional development leads to poorer performance and has been negatively correlated with overall student outcomes (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016; Eadens et al., 2020; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015). Although some states have required school boards to be trained in their roles and responsibilities, this training has often involved the rudimentary and technical aspects of the role of a school board member and may not have addressed the more adaptive elements that have been shown to impact student learning (Eadens et al., 2020; Lee & Eadens, 2014).

With evidence that a transformational leadership style can positively impact student learning and achievement (Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Northouse, 2019), and the current study, which demonstrated the school board can influence the superintendent's use of a transformational leadership style, school boards and their superintendents can undertake a professional development program that emphasizes the power and goals of transformational leadership: collegiality, trust, role modeling, innovating, and creating a shared vision (Bass, 1999). More specifically, the board and superintendent should focus on the Balanced Governance standards of board performance that have been shown to correlate most strongly with the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership: community engagement, using data for continuous improvement and accountability, and cultural responsiveness. Boards that focus on these standards may deepen and enrich their engagement with all parts of their district's community, particularly those that have been historically underserved, and may become more knowledgeable about how the district is measuring student success. They may incorporate the use of data in monitoring progress on strategic goals and may employ an equity lens when making broad-reaching decisions to ensure multiple perspectives are considered and negative unintended consequences are mitigated. Boards with these standards as the basis of their training could refine their desired qualities and qualifications when hiring a new superintendent and develop an evaluation tool that reflects an expectation that their superintendent exhibit practices aligned with the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership.

Implications for the superintendency could include different expectations during the hiring process, if a board were seeking a leader who could develop or maintain a

transformational leadership style. If a board were specifically focused on developing those standards for itself, which impacted inspirational motivation as part of transformational leadership and the relationship between the board and the superintendent was trusting and collaborative, a superintendent may expect to be evaluated on their leadership in community engagement, the use of data to inform instruction throughout the district, and the overall level of cultural responsiveness and awareness in each school. The board might encourage the superintendent to pursue their own professional development opportunities in these areas and, in turn, staff evaluations could also come to incorporate elements of these standards.

Because both board governance and transformational leadership have an impact on student outcomes (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Bridges et al., 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Fenn & Mixon, 2011; Hollander, 2012; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maranto et al., 2017; Northouse, 2019; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000; Shields, 2017), potential implications for students are positive. When the board is actively working to engage the community, use data, create a culturally responsive welcoming environment, and has high expectations of its superintendent to be a motivational leader, the possibilities for students are encouraging. Students could see themselves and their families—as critical members of the community—engaged in decision making through focus groups and committees. They could be exposed to both positive and negative district performance data and give input on identifying and eliminating achievement and opportunity gaps. Finally, they could see themselves and their families represented in the curriculum and in the staff and find abundant spaces and opportunities to celebrate the many types of diversity that exist in all schools and communities, while feeling welcome and safe.

Unexpectedly, the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment did not correlate with any component of transformational leadership other than inspirational motivation. This may be because inspirational motivation appears to be most tightly associated with the standards of the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and with the functions of board governance. Inspirational motivation includes sharing goals, inspiring others to action, and creating understanding with followers for achieving a shared vision (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This aligned closely with the work of the board to establish expectations, create and share a vision, and effectively lead the district through clear goals and objectives (Alsbury & Gore, 2015).

Although the other components of transformational leadership are all key in forming a comprehensive system of leadership, they may not be as directly connected to board work and, therefore, did not correlate to the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment standards in this study. For instance, although idealized influence includes inspiring trust and confidence in a vision, the leader is also seen as powerful and influential and viewed in an idealized fashion, which is not associated with a board's good governance (Avolio & Bass, 2004). In the intellectual stimulation component, the leader encourages questioning of the status quo and promotes innovative problem solving. Although this is not unlike the work a board does, it may be at a more granular level and less broad than the component of inspirational motivation. Finally, the leader engaged in idealized consideration encourages professional development for each follower and treats them as a unique individual with specific needs (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This is highly specific to direct management and not closely related to the broader work of the board.

Recommendations for Practice

All too often, responsibility falls to superintendents to train their boards, which can result in superintendents conveying the technical aspects of board work (Bridges et al., 2019). Given the nature of this proposed training is meant to be grounded in research with a focus on student outcomes and transformational leadership, it should be delivered by a professional trainer with expertise in facilitation and a broad knowledge of the literature demonstrating correlations between board behaviors and characteristics and student outcomes. Additionally, the superintendent should be included in the training as a collaborative partner with the board rather than being relied upon to deliver professional development. Finally, because training in how board performance can impact a superintendent's leadership style and this may influence how a board evaluates them, it would be prudent to have a neutral third party deliver the training.

Given the entire Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment was found to be correlated with the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership, boards could undertake training in all 12 balanced governance standards to further enhance and deepen its understanding of its roles and responsibilities to students. The board's knowledge and practical application of these standards could then be evaluated on an annual basis by the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment, and further goals could be set to undertake additional professional development the next year.

Table 13 outlines a proposed professional development series for boards and superintendents on the 12 balanced governance standards and the inspirational motivation domain of transformational leadership. This series has a specific focus on Standards 2, 5, and 6.

Table 13

Sample Professional Development Plan for School Boards and Superintendents on the Balanced Governance Standards and Inspirational Motivation

Module	Description
Module 1	Introduction to the board's roles and responsibilities and relationship with the superintendent as evidenced by research Overview of the 12 Balanced Governance standards and their impact on student achievement Introduction to transformational leadership
Module 2	Balanced Governance Standard 2: Community Engagement. ● Develop a plan to enlist the community and students in developing and/or refining the board's strategic priorities ● Develop a plan to engage with advisory committees on major initiatives such as budget, policy, curriculum adoption, long-term facilities planning, etc. ● How a focus community engagement may enable the superintendent and their team to better engage with students, staff, and the community at the school and district level using surveys, listening sessions, data presentations, and roundtable discussions
Module 3	Balanced Governance Standard 5: Using Data for Continuous Improvement and Accountability ● Develop a plan to monitor progress on strategic priorities and initiatives using multiple sources of data ● Develop a plan to integrate data related to strategic priorities into budgetary discussions and decisions ● How a focus on data may enable the superintendent and their team to use and produce relevant, high-quality disaggregated data from multiple sources that better inform instruction, the budget, policy, and progress on strategic initiatives
Module 4	Balanced Governance Standard 6: Cultural Responsiveness ● Develop an equity lens to use when making large-scale decisions related to budget, program adoption, and policy ● Develop a plan to ensure diverse communities are represented in community outreach efforts and cultural celebrations ● How a focus on cultural responsiveness may enable the superintendent and their team to celebrate multicultural family events, hire staff to better align with student demographics, and develop an equity lens for use in district- and school-based decisions
Module 5	Superintendent hiring and evaluation, board self-evaluation ● Develop a hiring process that includes qualities and qualifications

Module	Description
	reflecting the 12 balanced governance standards with a focus on Standards 2, 5, and 6. ● Develop a superintendent evaluation process that includes balanced governance standards with a focus on Standards 2, 5, and 6. ● Develop a plan to take the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment annually and set professional development goals
Module 6	Add aforementioned plans to annual board calendar Wrap up, conclusions, discussion, and commitments to future action and professional development

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was conducted only in Oregon, with a limited sample size due to low participation rates. Future research could take a multistate approach and could look at the data in both aggregate form and disaggregated by state. Additionally, with a higher number of responses, more demographic data could be gathered, and correlations between transformational leadership strategies employed by superintendents and race or gender, for example, could be studied.

This study was a self-reported study. All board members and superintendents reported on their own performance, and the study was exposed to self-reporting bias. Future research could include a superintendent's direct reports taking the MLQ to reflect on their superintendent's employment of a transformational leadership style. Furthermore, superintendents and district cabinet members who work closely with their boards could take the Balanced Governance Board Self-Assessment and rate their boards. The data from these assessments could be compared to the data gathered from the self-reported data for additional perspectives on board and superintendent performance.

Finally, qualitative case studies could be conducted to support this quantitative study. Although the time limitations of this study prevented it, a more comprehensive

study could have included two or three qualitative case studies of boards who rated themselves both positively and negatively on the self-assessment. These qualitative case studies could have included observations of the board's meetings, analysis of their agendas and annual calendar, and informational interviews with board members and the superintendent. It could also include an analysis of governing and evaluative documents such as the strategic plan, any board or board/superintendent operating agreements, any board self-assessment process in place, and the superintendent evaluation framework.

Conclusion

The work of the board matters. When a board engages in behaviors and employs strategies that positively impact student achievement, the likelihood of a superintendent to inspire their followers to action toward a shared vision as a transformational leader increases. And transformational leadership effects staff, who impact students (Dussault et al., 2008; Hodge, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020).

Specifically, when a board focuses on vision-directed planning, community engagement, effective leadership, accountability, using data for continuous improvement and accountability, cultural responsiveness, and being a learning organization, the board has the greatest impact on their superintendent being an inspirational, motivational leader. Boards should pay particular attention to community engagement, using data for continuous improvement and cultural responsiveness because these factors have the greatest connection to transformational leadership.

A board interested in its own professional development is likely to have a positive impact on students (Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Eadens et al., 2020; Korelich & Maxwell, 2015; Maharaj, 2020), and undertaking training in research-based methods that can be

practically implemented and used to monitor strategic initiatives and engage in conversations about student outcomes in partnership with the superintendent is likely to raise student achievement. Just as boards assess the performance of their superintendent, however, the board should also assess its own effectiveness annually and set goals for improvement based on the results of that self-assessment. This study demonstrated a board can affect the likelihood of its superintendent being a transformational leader using the 12 balanced governance standards; as such, boards should use that framework as a model for improvement.

Students benefit when the adults around them are effective in their roles. School boards primarily lead through policy, budget, and program adoption, and one of their most important duties is the hiring and evaluation of a superintendent—the district's educational and academic leader. Therefore, the board should prioritize and elevate its relationship with the superintendent, recognizing each influences the other, and doing the best for students means fulfilling the promise of public education through trust, collaboration, and a shared vision of student success. The board has tremendous influence over the direction of the district and, therefore, a critical responsibility to do the best it can for each student, every day. The board owes students more than a promise; it owes them action.

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APPENDIX A

BALANCED GOVERNANCE BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Please indicate the district for which you serve on the school board: _____

Gender: How do you identify?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to not answer

Which race or ethnicity best describes you? Please select all that apply:

- Hispanic/Latino origin
- White/European American
- Black/African American
- Asian
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Aboriginal
- Other: _____

What is your age?

- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- 81-90
- 91+

How many years have you served on your current school board (in whole numbers) _____

All questions below are multiple choice. As you consider the performance of your school board, please rank each question as “Accomplished”, “Effective”, “Developing”, or “Ineffective”.

Standard 1: Vision-Directed Planning

The Board engages community and staff in the development of a shared vision focused on student learning. The Board ensures that the vision is the foundation of the mission and strategic goals that direct board policy-making, planning, resource allocation and activities.

1. The board collaborates with the community to articulate core values and beliefs for the district
2. Board members can clearly articulate the vision and strategic goals of the district
3. The board collaborates with the superintendent to develop long-range strategic goals for improving student learning
4. The board regularly monitors the progress of strategic goals focused on improving student learning
5. The board adopted a budget that aligned resources to the district vision and strategic goals
6. The board establishes and models a culture of high expectations for all students
7. The board promotes a vision and expectation for excellence beyond the present performance

Standard 2: Community Engagement

The Board recognizes that all members of the community are stakeholders in the success of their schools. The Board engages the community using a reciprocal advocacy process that creates and sustains meaningful conversations, system connections, and feedback loops across the breadth of their community. The Board supports collaborative partnerships and new types and levels of community participation in schools.

8. The board promotes practices that solicit input and involvement from all segments of the community
9. The board ensures that vision and goals are collaboratively developed with input from staff, parents, students, and the broader community
10. The board recognizes and celebrates the contributions of school and community members to school improvement efforts
11. The board is responsive and respectful to community inquiry and feedback
12. The board advocates for public policy that supports education through relationships with community leaders, city, and county government officials and state legislators

Standard 3: Effective Leadership

The Board practices and supports leadership that is proactive, integrated, and distributed. The Board establishes focus, direction, and expectations that foster student learning. Across the education system, the board ensures the development and implementation of collaborative leadership models and practices guided by student learning goals. Within the district, the board ensures the alignment of authority and responsibility so that decisions can be made at levels closest to implementation.

13. Board members are visible in the community
14. Board members develop professional community relationships to improve student learning and opportunities for students
15. Board activities, analysis, and decision-making are aligned to vision and strategic goals
16. The board solicits input from multiple sources to assist in making informed decisions
17. The board establishes and sustains relationships with community leaders, city, and county government officials, and state legislators
18. Board members model an empowering leadership style
19. The board enacts strategic goals and policies to define hiring practices that ensure employees fit into the culture and core values of the district
20. Board members promote change through dialogue and collaboration
21. Board members understand and are knowledgeable about school improvement initiatives and their role in supporting those initiatives

Standard 4: Accountability

The Board holds high expectations for the learning of each and every student and holds themselves and the District accountable for reaching those results. The board provides strategic direction in the development of the District's mission, vision, and goals. The Board adopts policy and resources that align with the District's strategic vision and goals. The Board monitors and holds accountable the superintendent to implement the District's strategic vision and goals.

22. The board ensures funding to implement accountability measures

23. The board regularly reflects on its performance and makes substantive change based on the results of self-evaluation
24. The board models a culture of high expectations throughout the district
25. The board's priority and focus are on the student learning and student success in alignment with the district's strategic goals
26. The board ensures the budget aligns resources based on student learning priorities
27. The board supports rewards, consequences, and recognition systems to encourage advancement of the district's strategic goals
28. Disaggregated student results and growth are measures against expectations set by district strategic goals
29. The board conducts an effective superintendent evaluation focused on monitoring progress on the district's strategic goals
30. The board regularly establishes performance goals for itself
31. The board ensures the superintendent and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in creating and supporting a culture of high expectations throughout the system

Standard 5: Using Data for Continuous Improvement and Accountability

The Board uses meaningful quality data and information, from multiple sources and in various formats, to identify areas for improvement, set priorities, and monitor improvement efforts. At the same time, they support even better ways to do things the organization is already doing well.

32. The board uses, and expects the superintendent to use, a variety of types of relevant data in decision-making

33. Programs approved by the board have effective data collection requirements and measurable results
34. The board uses data to identify discrepancies between current and desired outcomes
35. The identifies and addresses priority needs based on data analysis
36. The board communicates to the public how policy decisions are linked to student learning data
37. The board creates a culture that encourages the use of data to identify learning needs throughout the system
38. The board ensures data used in decision-making is disaggregated, culturally representative, and provides the ability to monitor the district's strategic goals

Standard 6: Cultural Responsiveness

The Board recognizes cultural diversity in its many facets including social, economic, political, religious, geographical, generational, linguistic, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, gender identification, and students with special needs. The Board develops an understanding of this diversity and applies perspectives responsive to the cultures in their community in policy and program approvals. The Board supports effective community engagement and expectancy strategies to build on the strengths of a community's cultural diversity.

39. Board outreach and community engagement activities accommodate cultural differences in values and communication
40. The board actively encourages and expects the superintendent to facilitate the participation of culturally diverse groups

41. The board has a process to review policies for cultural responsiveness and bias
42. Board members approach decision-making considering the many facets of cultural diversity including those indicated in the cultural responsiveness standard
43. The board ensures district employees are representative of the values and culture of the community
44. A climate of caring, respect, and the valuing of students' cultures is established through board policies and goals
45. The board ensures the superintendent holds all employees accountable for high standards and expectations for each and every student

Standard 7: Culture and Climate

The Board creates a climate of expectation that all students can learn at their highest level. The Board supports policy and procedures that foster a positive and safe learning environment. The Board models professional relationships and a culture of mutual respect with staff and community. The Board models and establishes an organizational culture of service.

46. The board models relationships built on trust and respect
47. The board takes time to reflect and improve internal and external relationships
48. The board regularly assesses, holds the district accountable, and provides support for the improvement of the district culture and climate
49. The board creates a system in which high levels of student learning are expected.
50. The board establishes policies and ensures practices to foster a safe, positive learning climate for students

51. The board models and holds the district responsible for improving a culture of service

Standard 8: Learning Organization

The Board ensures the District functions as a self-renewing professional community that supports reflection, discovery, learning, improvement, and success by staff at all levels. The Board encourages professional development that empowers staff and nurtures leadership capabilities across the organization.

52. Board policies nurture leadership capabilities across the organization
53. The board creates and pursues opportunities to learn about research-based strategies that ensure continuous improvement for the next generation of learners
54. Board members promote positive change through dialogue and collaboration
55. The board encourages professional development that increases learning and empowerment
56. The board fosters and environment of mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth throughout the organization

Standard 9: Systems Thinking

The Board practices and supports systems thinking in its deliberation and approval of policy, programs, and procedures. The Board practices an integrated view of education within and across systems and levels (e.g., K-12, ESD, community college, and university). The Board seeks out collaborative local, state, and national partnerships, coordinated programs, and shared resource models to improve student learning.

57. The board works to avoid policy decisions that shift problems from one part of the system to another

58. The board encourages an organizational structure that enables creative processes
59. The board engages in process thinking, seeing beyond the immediate situation and easy solutions
60. The board analyzes issues for their impact on other parts of the system
61. The board team is solution-oriented
62. The board work collaboratively with other agencies to encourage dialogue that fosters continual growth

Standard 10: Innovation and Creativity

The Board encourages innovation and creativity as assets to the process of development and change, leading to new types of thinking and better ways of meeting student needs. The Board supports innovation and creativity that support district vision, values, and goals throughout the organization; engages collaborative partnerships; and encourages dialogue, new ideas, and differing perspectives.

63. Board members create time and opportunities for their own creative thinking
64. Board members partner with community and educational organizations to remove real and perceived barriers to creativity and innovation
65. The board sets meeting agendas that allow it to proactively identify and explore strategic issues
66. The board incorporates flexibility into its future plans to enable the district to look and move in unforeseen directions in response to unexpected events
67. The board recognizes the risk inherent in creativity and innovation and promotes employee knowledge, awareness, creativity, self-initiated action, and experimentation

Standard 11: Board Member Conduct, Ethics, and Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board recognizes that it is essential to have a clear, mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and the superintendent. The Board supports and practices team building as an essential part of this relationship.

68. Each member of the board understands and respects the distinction between the board's responsibilities and the superintendent's duties
69. The board and superintendent trust and respect one another
70. Board members represent the interests of the entire district
71. Board members preserve the confidentiality of items discussed in executive session
72. Board members do not use their office for personal gain or advancement
73. Board members do not attempt to individually speak on behalf of the entire board or commit the board
74. Board members direct complaints and requests to the superintendent rather than attempting to solve them directly
75. The board and superintendent agree on the information needed by the board, and when and how the board receives that information
76. The board and superintendent participate in learning opportunities as a team
77. Board members come to the meeting familiar with the agenda and prepared to discuss, ask questions, and take action on agenda items

Standard 12: Budgeting and Financial Accountability

The Board ensures that strategic educational goals of schools are translated into reality through effective alignment with the budget and make sure the school district is fiscally sound. The Board utilizes fiscal resources based on student needs and district policy and strategic goals.

78. Board members are knowledgeable of the district budgeting process
79. Budgeting decisions are based on student needs, adopted district policy and goals, and the district's financial ability to meet those needs
80. Board members have a basic understanding of district revenues and expenses
81. The board reviews monthly financial statements provided by the superintendent and understand their role in the oversight of the budget

APPENDIX B

DATA-SHARING AGREEMENT

This agreement details the terms of use for a sharing of data between the primary researcher (David Williams) and a secondary researcher (Kristen Miles).

Data to be Shared

The primary researcher will provide to the secondary researcher all results from the primary researcher's administration of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The data will be used by the secondary research for the purpose of conducting a quantitative analysis of school board behaviors' possible impact on superintendent leadership. The data are solely to be used for the purpose of completing a doctoral dissertation by the secondary researcher.

De-Identification

The data will be de-identified prior to being shared with the secondary researcher. All names and email addresses will be removed from the data set to be shared. A key sheet will be provided in physical form that will allow the secondary researcher to pair each respondent's MLQ results with the corresponding school board in the secondary researcher's own data set. The secondary researcher will retain the key sheet only in physical form. All data will be reported on in the aggregate or in an anonymized manner.

Data Security

Prior to completion of the secondary researcher's dissertation, the shared data set will be stored solely on a password protected personal computer. Upon completion of the secondary researcher's dissertation or not later than September 1, 2023 all shared data shall be erased from the personal computer and the key sheet shall be shredded. Should the secondary researcher require additional time for completion, extensions of 90 days will be granted with express written permission of the primary researcher.

Constraints on Use of the Data

The secondary researcher shall comply with all terms of service outlined by Mind Garden, Inc regarding reporting on the results of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The secondary researcher will only be using data that the primary researcher is allowed to disclose. The pertinent clarification from Mind Garden is as follows:

Transform Survey Hosting is a data license for research purposes only. This license grants you permission to collect and disclose (a) item scores and scale scores, (b) statistical analyses of those scores (such as group average, group standard deviation, T- scores, etc.) and (c) pre-authorized sample items only, as provided by Mind Garden, for results write-up and publication.

This language can be found on the Mind Garden website at: https://www.mindgarden.com/multifactor-leadership-questionnaire/224-mlq-self-transform- survey-hosting.html#horizontalTab1

Further, the instrument items, directions, manual, individual report, group report, and any other descriptive information available through Mind Garden is the intellectual property of the copyright holder and can be used only with purchase or written permission from Mind Garden. As such, should the secondary researcher want to include any such intellectual property, she will be required to purchase or obtain written permission for such use.

Data Transfer

At the discretion of the primary researcher, when sufficient response rate has been achieved through the primary data collection, the data file will be downloaded as a .csv file and placed on a fingerprint protected thumb drive to be physically transferred to the secondary researcher. Once the data file has been placed on the secondary researcher's password protected personal computer the thumb drive shall be returned to the primary researcher. There will be no cost for the secondary researcher's use of the data.

All parties agree to adhere to the terms contained herein.

David Williams
Primary Researcher
11/6/2022

Kristen Miles
Secondary Researcher
11/6/2022