

THE IMPACT OF FISCAL LIMITATION ON SUPERINTENDENTS' ROLE AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

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Associate Professor Ann Myers, Ed. D.  
Doctoral Research Committee Chair  
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Gary Furman

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Gary Furman

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Date of Signature

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Dr. Ann Myers  
Associate Professor  
Dissertation Chair

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Date of Signature

## **Abstract**

Federal stimulus funding expired in 2011-12. NCLB performance mandates approached the 2013-14 deadline. The ESEA waiver became an option with first year of implementation, 2012-13. This convergence of forces and timeline provided the opportunity for this study.

The study sought to explore whether or not superintendents from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont had already taken and/or would take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or whether these responsibilities would be delegated to other district personnel and/or outside agencies to ensure that structures were in place and were effective in supporting student achievement.

This mixed method descriptive study was used to gather data. One hundred superintendents completed the survey. Survey data was collected through SurveyMonkey and analyzed using SPSS v. 20. The study showed that superintendents have taken a greater role and more responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment due to fiscal limitations. In addition, two-thirds of responding superintendents had yet to establish nonnegotiable goals for student achievement. The study encountered two categories of superintendents: those with and those without district level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Data from the respondents showed that there were differences among the states. The following are a few of the findings from the study. Respondents from Connecticut had the greatest percentage reporting that principals had shared responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Respondents from Massachusetts had the greatest percentage reporting that superintendents had increased involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the previous two years. Respondents from New York had the greatest percentage reporting an

anticipated budget shortfall for 2012-13. Respondents from Vermont had the greatest percentage reporting a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Key words: changing superintendent responsibilities, fiscal limitations, budget, curriculum, instruction, assessment

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I leave you then with these wishes: May you know yourself well; may you know and honor the persons in your community and the passions they seek to embody; may you envision good work together; may your school/district be more like family. (Hagstrom, 2004, p.173)

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The United States (US) is facing a precarious time in education. Global economic competition from emerging countries, a lingering recession, and repeated comparisons of children in the US to children in other economically developed countries on international tests, such as Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have resulted in greater scrutiny of public education. The concern from politicians and business leaders is that American students will not be able to sustain the prosperity of our country due to the current educational system. The number of charter schools continues to increase causing additional fiscal issues for public schools. An extreme example of this is the Chester Upland School District in Pennsylvania, now bankrupt after the proliferation of charter schools (Samuels, 2012). Superintendents of school districts throughout the country are charged with implementing state and federal educational regulations and policies, while increasing student achievement with diminishing fiscal and district resources.

### **Problem Statement**

The board of education for each school district is responsible for establishing the policies and fiscal management of the district. The school superintendent works directly for the board of education to implement its policies and follow its direction for fiscal management. Therefore, the superintendent is often perceived by the public as the person in charge (Houston & Eadie, 2002). For this study, the student researcher utilized this perception in designating the superintendent as the person responsible for ensuring that federal and state policies and regulations were being implemented.

In the past fifty years, events have radically changed education beginning with Sputnik in 1957. The launching of Sputnik created an avalanche of change initiated at the federal level. A

litany of federal education legislation began with the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which was followed by the War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983, Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1993, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Race to the Top (RTTT) funding in 2009, and the ESEA waiver. Each of these has had or will have a direct impact on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent. The role of the superintendent has been transformed from a manager to an educational leader, who knows curriculum and instruction in conjunction with how to use data to improve student achievement (Dillon, 2010; Houston, 2007; Karbula, 2009; Nykl, 2009; Pease, 2009; Stitt, 2010). The superintendent as educational leader became even more important as school districts faced increasingly fiscal limitations, which have and will continue to impact educational equity for students.

In the fall of 2008, the US was hit hard by the financial downfall of the banking system, major insurance companies, and the auto industry, sending the country into a significant recession. Many of these companies were bailed out by the federal government. State governments lost billions in revenues, which meant less funding for education. School districts have been forced to cut educational programs, teachers, administrators, and other staff as a response to the loss of state education funding. To prevent catastrophic losses in educational funding, President Obama and Congress approved the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009, which provided \$100 billion over two years for education, including \$4.35 billion for competitive RTTT funds and an additional \$10 billion in August of 2010 through the Education Jobs Fund (EJF) Act. The additional funding prevented thousands of teaching and administrative positions from being eliminated. However, about 300,000 educational positions across the nation have been eliminated since August 2008 (Oliff & Leachman, 2011).



Superintendents were faced with the *perfect storm*. The federal stimulus money ended in June 2012. The recession continued to affect state finances and educational funding. School expenses continued to increase. School districts have eliminated teaching and administrative positions and cut educational programs. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and a new teacher/principal evaluation system that incorporates student achievement on state tests were stipulations of the RTTT funding that must be implemented by superintendents. RTTT funds have been awarded to states such as Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Accountability for student achievement has increased. Yet, superintendents are expected to implement state and federal mandates, continue to improve student achievement, and run their school districts with fewer financial and personnel resources.

Superintendents in the 21st century have significant responsibilities related to student achievement in addition to their many other functions necessary to successfully operate the school district, especially given the recent fiscal limitations. The accountability for student achievement will continue to pressure superintendents to provide the systems and supports essential for effective instruction and data analysis to improve learning for all students. This study sought to examine the decision making and planning of school superintendents related to their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the midst of fiscal limitations.

The superintendent of schools fulfills many roles and responsibilities to ensure the successful operation of a school district. Every day these roles and responsibilities compete for the superintendent's time and attention. Hanks (2010), Houston (2006, 2007), Nykl (2009), and Scheichter (2011) believed the superintendent's position had become more difficult and challenging in recent years due to the increased accountability for student achievement and

competing demands of the day-to-day operations of the school district. Meanwhile, there have been greater economic stressors placed upon school districts due to the recent recession, which requires more attention from the superintendent to focus on school budgetary concerns.

In the past ten years, NCLB has dramatically increased the accountability of school districts, and ultimately, the superintendent of schools. This accountability was defined as increasing student achievement on annual state assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and narrowing achievement gaps of minority students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. The lack of success subjects school buildings and personnel to the punitive measures of NCLB, such as school closures, removal of administrators and teachers, and possible reduction of Title I funding (Andes, 2009; Anthes, 2002; Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Decman, Badgett, Randall, Parmer, & Coryat, 2010; Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Johnstone, Dikkers, & Luedeke, 2009; Karbula, 2009; Pease, 2009; Reed, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Stitt, 2010; Terry, 2010; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The increased scrutiny for student accountability associated with NCLB has been a catalyst for superintendents to increase their involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure that the current structures are effectively improving student learning and achievement (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose 2007; Dillon, 2010; Elmore 2005; Hanks, 2010; Lamkin, 2006; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Taylor, 2010).

Many states have been successful in their application for the ESEA wavier. In these states, superintendents have become the unequivocal leader within the school district most associated with student achievement on state assessments. Thus, it is essential for the superintendent to be involved in and to be knowledgeable of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that take place in the school district, whether through direct involvement or

communication systems that inform the superintendent on the effectiveness of these practices on student learning and achievement (Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Dillon, 2010; Lashway, 2002; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007). This knowledge allows the superintendent to make informed decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to meet the accountability demands of NCLB, CCSS, and ESEA waivers, especially in times of fiscal limitations.

### **Prior Studies**

There have been many studies completed on the impact of effective educational leadership on student achievement. The educational leadership of superintendents has become more important due to the increased accountability of school districts for student achievement resulting from NCLB and fiscal limitations. Research on effective educational leadership has determined that educational leaders who establish firm goals for instructional practices and student achievement communicate their vision for education clearly and transparently, develop the capacity of teachers and administrators, work collaboratively to improve instruction and student achievement, implement effective data analysis to monitor goals and student achievement to develop targeted interventions, allocate resources to support goals and student achievement, and model their behavior to support their vision have a positive impact on student learning and achievement (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2010; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; Huerta, 2006; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2004, 2009; Taylor, 2010). Superintendents must know the structures within the organization necessary to support the practices to improve student achievement. Superintendents will need the knowledge to evaluate these structures as

their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment continue to evolve as a result of fiscal limitations.

Nykl's (2009) research found that fiscal limitations and tangential concerns resulted in superintendents spending more time on budget-related and less time with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Andes (2009) examined the collaboration of financially-strapped, rural school districts with colleges and businesses to develop school leaders that would be able to continue to improve the educational systems of the rural school district. Long (2010) studied the impact of finances, teacher certification, technology, and community values on system leaders' decision making on high school course offerings in rural school districts located in the New York State Adirondack Park. Long (2010) concluded that these variables act in concert with one another as the system leader makes informed decisions for the academic opportunities given to students. Steele (2010) researched the leadership roles of superintendents in rural school districts with fiscal limitations and scarce resources while considering school reorganization, such as consolidation and school district merger with nearby schools. Using the work of Bolman and Deal, Doyle (2010) did not find a significant relationship between the superintendent's leadership style and the fiscal condition of the school district.

Ginsberg and Multon (2011) explored the effects of fiscal limitations on the health and well-being of principals and superintendents. In October of 2011, the New York State Council of School Supervisors (NYSCOSS) published *At the Edge*, which detailed the results of their survey of New York State school superintendents (New York State Council of School Superintendents [NYCOSS], 2011). The report revealed that superintendents believed that state aid reductions, increasing educational costs, and reductions in teachers, administrators, and educational programs would significantly impact students, especially those students who need

additional support. These studies did not examine the impact of fiscal limitations on the superintendent's role and responsibilities for implementing and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student learning and achievement.

Oliff and Leachman (2011) raised concern with the decrease in education funding for school districts while needing to improve student achievement. Bredeson and Kose (2007) emphasized the need for educational leaders to examine the allocation of resources to support key instructional programs during times of budget constraints. Authors, such as Berry and Wysong (2010), Crampton (2010), Fahy (2011), Huerta (2006), Jordan and Verstegen (2009), Odden, Picus, and Goetz (2010), and Slater and Scott (2011), examined the progress made in state funding of school districts located in economically disadvantaged, urban, and rural areas as a result of fiscal equity court cases in education over the past 40 years, only to find that there still exist inequities in the funding of these schools districts, resulting in the continued increase of the education gap for students in these schools compared to students in more affluent school districts. The funding of school district studies shed important light on the need to financially support school districts that have greater educational need due to the demographic background of their students in order to narrow the achievement gap. Although these studies highlighted the inequities in state education funding of school districts, the superintendent's role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment have not been examined in relation to the funding issue.

### **Gap/Deficiencies in Studies**

There has been extensive research and literature compiled on NCLB accountability for school superintendents and educational leaders, qualities of educational leaders which positively impact student achievement, and the educational inequities caused by state funding of education.

However, the research and literature were limited with regards to the impact of fiscal limitations resulting from declining state education funding on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to continue to achieve or raise student achievement to meet the accountability levels set forth by NCLB. State education departments have received approval for the ESEA waiver, which superintendents need to implement while facing fiscal limitations as a result of the continuing economic recession. Thus, superintendents' oversight of curriculum, instruction, and assessment has become vital for the continued improvement of student achievement. This study investigated that shift in role and responsibilities. The influence of NCLB accountability and fiscal limitations has impacted the instructional leadership role of superintendents. Thus, the effective qualities of educational leaders, as identified in the research, were examined in this study of superintendents in their role and responsibilities for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to improve student learning and achievement.

For the past three years, superintendents have developed school budgets with decreased state funding and increased educational costs. Although the federal government intervened with stimulus money from ARRA and EJP to minimize the financial impact to school districts, superintendents constructed budgets that included cuts to programs and staff. For the 2012-13 school year, superintendents needed to develop school budgets that no longer included ARRA and EJP monies. The loss of these funds, coupled with the continued inequities in state education funding, required superintendents to make difficult decisions to produce a school budget that would be supported by taxpayers who have been affected by the lingering recession. These decisions impact curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Studies have examined superintendents and fiscal limitations (Andes, 2009; Doyle, 2010; Nykl, 2009; Steele, 2010). However, these studies have not examined the instructional leadership role of the superintendent with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The increased accountability stemming from NCLB and the additional requirements of the CCSS and student achievement results linked to teacher and principal evaluations for states who have won RTTT funding required superintendents to establish systems of support necessary to examine and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to improve student learning and achievement.

This study sought to examine the decision making and planning of school superintendents related to their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the midst of fiscal limitations. This study intended to identify the systems and structures that superintendents had used and anticipated to implement in order to support student learning and achievement while facing fiscal limitations. As school districts continue to face fiscal limitations, superintendents needed to identify the available resources and systems that would help them maintain educational programs to improve student learning and achievement.

### **Significance of this Study**

There has been little research related to the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. School districts have encountered financial limitations due to the leveling or reduction of state funding, the ending of the federal ARRA and EJF, and increased educational costs. Educational expenses have continued to surpass the financial resources. School districts have used their fund balances to limit reductions in educational programs, teachers, and administrators while keeping property tax increases at a minimum.

Meanwhile, superintendents are required to implement the CCSS for ELA and mathematics and a professional evaluation system linking student achievement to teacher and administrator performance. The increased accountability for student performance mandated by NCLB and the ESEA waiver has created a new environment for leaders. The superintendent must assume responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; delegate these responsibilities to remaining administrators; or hire outside education agencies and/or consultants. This study investigated those options. This study examined the actions of superintendents during this era of shifting responsibilities due to fiscal limitations and increased accountability for education mandates. This study resulted in recommendations for superintendents, policy makers, and superintendent development programs.

### **Purpose statement**

The intent of this mixed method study was to explore the ways in which budget limitations had already or were expected to impact the functions of school superintendents and chief education officers in school districts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The study sought to examine how superintendents currently used district personnel to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The study sought to explore whether or not superintendents had already taken and/or would take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, or whether these responsibilities had been and/or would be delegated to other district personnel and/or outside agencies to ensure that the structures were in place and were effective in supporting student achievement.

### **Research Questions**

The role and responsibilities of superintendents have changed due to the increased accountability for student achievement set forth by NCLB. There is growing financial



uncertainty coupled with increasing education costs. Superintendents may encounter additional reductions in staff and programs. Yet, superintendents are expected to lead school districts to meet the regulations and mandates established by the state and federal governments while their resources have and will continue to diminish. Five questions were developed to determine the impact that current and future financial constraints had on the role and responsibilities of superintendents pertaining to the evaluation and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments in school districts to improve student achievement.

1. Due to budget limitations, will the superintendent take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or will these responsibilities be given to other district personnel and/or outside agencies?
2. In what ways do superintendents perceive the responsibilities of personnel within the district for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
3. How would anticipated budget limitations affect the superintendents planning for the use district personnel to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
4. What resources do superintendents perceive are necessary to support district personnel for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
5. What are the similarities and differences by superintendents among various states in their decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment when facing budget limitations?

## **Definition of Terms**

*Educational Insolvency:* School districts are no longer able to meet the mandated educational courses as required for student graduation and course of study.

*Fiscal Insolvency:* School districts do not have the fiscal resources to meet the educational expenses of the school district.

*Superintendent:* "hands-on direction and oversight of the educational, administrative, and operational functions of the school system" (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. 19).

*Superintendent's role:* Develop and maintain the systems and structures to provide curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improved student achievement (Bredeson & Kose, 2007).

*Superintendent responsibilities:* Implementation of: 1) nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 2) targeted use of resources to support nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 3) collaborative goal setting; 4) continuous monitoring and evaluation of the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; and 5) principal autonomy for implementing nonnegotiable goals (Marzano and Waters, 2009).

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

A major limitation of the study was the April and June time frame that the survey was sent to superintendents. Over 2,000 superintendents from six states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) received an invitation to participate in the survey. Yet, 150 superintendents, 4.4%, participated in the survey. The Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, responded in an April 16, 2012 email prior to the survey being sent to superintendents, "Just a little warning about your expectations. We recently encouraged our members to complete a survey on arts in education and pushed it

quite hard... I believe the survey had only about 25 responses out of 500 school districts” (personal communication).

Another limitation may have been the method for delivery of the survey to the superintendents in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Superintendents were invited to participate in the survey via the superintendents’ association electronic newsletter for each state. This may have decreased the number of respondents. The survey was sent in an organization’s monthly electronic newsletter. It may be possible that the request for participation was lost among the other information in the newsletter. Two superintendents from New York informed the researcher through conversation that the request for participation was at the end of the electronic newsletter (personal communications, June 1, 2012).

A delimitation of the study was limiting the research to superintendents in six northeastern states. There were many superintendents in every state of our country who were facing significant fiscal limitations requiring the elimination of educational programs, teachers, administrators, and other staff.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The landscape of education continues to change in the second decade of the 21st century. Superintendents have had to take greater accountability for student achievement due to federal and state education mandates to increase student achievement and eliminate the achievement gap among students. Educational costs continue to increase. The lingering economic recession resulting from the 2008 financial collapse has resulted in state governments losing billions of dollars in revenues resulting in significant reductions in educational spending to support school districts. State governments were eager to replace lost revenues by obtaining federal funding through programs such as RTTT, which has additional stipulations. These stipulations must be implemented by school districts, that is, under the leadership of the superintendent of schools. Superintendents must be adept in developing school budgets necessary to provide the quality of education, instructional supports, and financial/educational resources that will allow all students to meet the increased proficiency levels for achievement as measured by state exams.

The increased state focus on standards and accountability, which has been driven from the national level, requires that school districts be able to demonstrate the impact of the educational structures, interventions, and supports that have been implemented to improve student achievement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; Dillon, 2010). In the next few years, superintendents will need to address the CCSS and the corresponding assessments, continued professional development related to CCSS, increasing educational costs, financial limitations, new teacher and principal evaluations linked to student achievement, revisions to ESEA, and increased accountability for student college and career readiness. These initiatives will be added to the already long list of superintendent responsibilities. Meanwhile, superintendents will continue to be held accountable for increasing student achievement, which

will require them to have an increased role in curriculum, instruction, and assessment while maintaining fiscal and educational solvency.

This study investigated superintendents' role and responsibilities in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The study explored how superintendents had taken ownership, developed support structures within and external to the school district, delegated and shared responsibility, provided time to analyze data, and established effective communication systems for the effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the school district to support student learning and achievement. The literature review examined the following forces that had necessitated that the superintendent become an educational leader: 1) the evolution of the superintendent role as educational leader, 2) the financial limitations that impact the development of budgets and educational/supportive resources to provide equity in education for all students, and 3) the superintendent responsibilities that support student achievement.

### **Superintendent Accountability for Student Achievement**

Scheichter (2011), Hanks (2010), Houston (2006, 2007), and Nykl (2009) indicated the difficulty and challenge of being a school superintendent due to the myriad of demands, increased accountability for student achievement, and changing dynamics of school district demographics due to population, poverty, and mobility. The role of the superintendent has been transformed from a manager to an educational leader, who knows curriculum and instruction in conjunction with data to improve student achievement (Dillon, 2010; Houston, 2007; Karbula, 2009; Nykl, 2009; Pease, 2009; Stitt, 2010). Superintendents must be cognizant of the factors impacting student learning and achievement as demonstrated through their actions and communications with administrators and teachers. This goes beyond the increased accountability set forth by state and federal education guidelines to increase student

achievement. Superintendents of low performing public schools are faced with the possibility of schools being closed and re-opened as charter schools (Crampton, 2007; DuFour, & Marzano, 2011; Morse, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). The accountability stakes have risen substantially in the past ten years. Superintendents are under great pressure to ensure student learning and achievement to meet the rigors and demands set forth by NCLB, RTTT, and ESEA wavier.

Although the attention placed on student achievement has been most intensive in the past ten years, superintendents did not assume this increased accountability for student achievement overnight. The process began almost 30 years ago with studies and legislation that would bring the state of education in America to the forefront of national attention. With each report or legislative act, there was a corresponding increase in accountability for the superintendent of schools, which has evolved to the current state of the superintendency.

According to Padalino (2009), accountability systems enacted by state and federal government have “significantly changed the role of and the stressors placed on public school superintendents forever” (p. 8). The superintendent position in education originated in the mid-19th century as an instructional leader (Karbula, 2009; Pease, 2009). Other studies identified those early responsibilities as clerical and managerial (Sharkey, 2010). Over time, with increasing district size, the role of superintendent has changed many times reflecting the needs of the society during that particular time period (Kowalski, 1999; Sharp & Walter, 1997). The launch of Sputnik by the Soviets in 1957 and the consequent National Defense Education Act of 1958 began a return to instructional focus (Karbula, 2009; Pease, 2009).

In the 1960s, the War on Poverty brought about new accountability for superintendents with the passage of ESEA in 1965, which focused on providing financial and instructional resources to disadvantaged students. Improving teaching and learning continued to be a major

task confronting superintendents in the 1970s (Pease, 2009). World and national circumstances impacted the education programs and policies that school superintendents were responsible for implementing in their schools. The National Defense Education Act and ESEA began the transformation of the superintendent's role to become the educational leader of the school district.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) (1983) published *A Nation at Risk*. This report brought to light the inadequacies of public education, the need for school accountability in student achievement, and an increased role for the federal government in education (Björk, Kowalski, and Young, 2005; Dillon, 2010; Elmore, 2004; Karbula, 2009; O'Rourke, 2011, Pease, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). The plight and disparities of education had once again been brought to national attention 30 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and almost twenty years after Johnson's War on Poverty. *A Nation at Risk* connected student achievement with the future success of the nation's economy, citing that America's failing schools would result in a faltering national economy, reducing America's power and influence on the global stage (Björk et al., 2005; Houston, 2007; Karbula, 2009; NCEE, 1983; O'Rourke, 2011; Pease, 2009; Ravitch, 2010).

*A Nation at Risk* called for increased academic rigor and graduation rates, examination of instruction and learning practices, establishment of education goals, and mobilization of effective education leadership to improve schools (Björk et al., 2005; NCEE, 1983; Ravitch, 2010). The federal government responded with the creation of school improvement task forces charged with developing educational reform plans to improve student learning and achievement in schools throughout the country (Björk et al., 2005; O'Rourke, 2011; Pease 2009; Ravitch, 2010). According to Elmore (2004), there was little evidence that the educational reforms resulting from

*A Nation at Risk* resulted in any significant change in the quality of education. Nevertheless, superintendents began to have a greater role in the educational process pertaining to student achievement due to the sheer magnitude of the publicity generated by *A Nation at Risk*. The reforms suggested by the report required superintendents to be more involved in the factors influencing student achievement, such as curriculum and instruction. Thus, *A Nation at Risk* further reinforced the transformation of the superintendent role to one of educational leader.

Continuing on the coattails of *A Nation at Risk* and the 1989 Education Summit, President Clinton brought about the educational initiative Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000) in 1994. Six of the eight goals established in Goals 2000 were directly from the work of the 1989 Education Summit, which President Clinton had participated as the then Governor of Arkansas (Dinges, 1994; Finn, 1995; Heise, 1994; Ohanian, 2000; Ravitch, 1996, 2010). Goals 2000 signified an increased role of federal government into education, which had always been the oversight of each state. The federal government attached \$105 million to Goals 2000 to help states defray the cost for accepting national standards or developing state standards and for measuring student achievement through standardized tests at grades 4, 8, and high school (Dinges, 1994; Finn, 1995; Heise, 1994; Odland, 1993; Ohanian, 2000; Ravitch, 1996, 2010). The superintendent of schools would ultimately have the responsibility of ensuring the standards were taught and the tests given.

The reforms enacted in the 1980s did not have the intended effects, as American students' performance on international tests continued to lag behind other industrialized nations (Dinges, 1994; Finn, 1995; Heise, 1994). Goals 2000 set ambitious goals. By the year 2000, students would rank first in the world in math and science, enter school ready to learn, demonstrate mastery of content in the core subject areas (English, math, science, and social



studies), and 90% of students would graduate from high school (Dinges, 1994; Finn, 1995; Odland, 1993; Ravitch, 1996, 2010). The federal government established a systemic approach for school improvement by establishing committees to develop state improvement plans, which focused on the quality of teacher instruction and an increase in student learning (Dinges, 1994; Elmore, 2004; Finn, 1995; Heise, 1994; Karbula, 2009; Odland, 1993; Ohanian, 2000; O'Rourke, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). Through the school improvement committees, the federal government provided state education departments with information and suggestions needed to elicit such change in academic performance and teacher instruction. As the state education departments rolled out their plans to achieve Goals 2000, superintendents were responsible for communicating this information to their administrators, teachers, and the public.

Goals 2000 led to other educational changes as well. In 1996, the New York State Board of Regents decided to eliminate the tracking system of regents and non-regents curricula, requiring all students to pass five regents examinations (Watson, Semel, & Sadovnik, 2010). However, there were many who believed that Goals 2000 would not achieve its proposed impact on student achievement due to the short time frame and lack of articulation in planning required to attain the enormous transformation in education purported by the intended outcomes of Goals 2000 (Finn, 1995; Heise, 1994). Yet, superintendents were at the forefront in their school districts, leading the effort to implement curricular, instruction, and assessment changes that aligned to either the state or national standards proposed in Goals 2000. The transformation toward educational leadership for superintendents continued to develop and grow as school districts throughout the country made efforts to implement Goals 2000.

Each educational initiative increased the role of federal government more than its predecessor. The election of President George W. Bush brought education another

comprehensive educational reform, NCLB (Anthes, 2002; Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Hanks, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; O'Rourke, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Reed, 2010; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Terry, 2010; Umpstead, 2007). Similar to Goals 2000, NCLB gave states a deadline to have all of its requirements met. NCLB required that, by 2014, all students in grades 3-8 and high school students, prior to graduating, achieve proficiency in ELA and mathematics based on a standards-based state assessment. The superintendent's role and responsibilities for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment for student learning and achievement had become more important.

At the start of the 21st Century, NCLB dominated education, increased pressure on school districts, and brought tremendous focus on school districts from the government, the public, and the media to quickly improve student achievement based on standardized testing (Fullan, 2010; Hanks, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; O'Rourke, 2011). With the passage of NCLB, the federal government established clear educational policy. All children, no matter their socio-economic status or the location of their school, would be provided the quality of education and instruction that would allow them to achieve minimum proficiency on state exams in ELA and mathematics based on state academic standards (Andes, 2009; Anthes, 2002; Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Brimley, Verstegen, & Garfield, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2006, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Johnstone et al., 2009; Karbula, 2009; Pease, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Reed, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Stitt, 2010; Terry, 2010; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The language of NCLB focused on student achievement based upon state educational standards that had been developed during

Goals 2000. Each state, with approval from the US Department of Education, determined proficiency levels for student achievement in ELA and mathematics.

NCLB brought much attention to the achievement gap that existed among students based upon factors such as socio-economic and race. In addition to closing the achievement gap, NCLB focused on developing high quality assessments, curricula, and instruction aligned to standards; accountability to improve student achievement as measured by standardized tests; turning around consistently underperforming schools; improving teacher preparation and professional development; using effective researched-based instructional strategies; and distributing resources to school districts with the greatest needs (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2001). Under NCLB, each state department of education was required to submit an education accountability plan/application in order to be eligible to receive Title I funding. As part of the plan, each state needed to include language addressing the accountability system for meeting and monitoring student performance on federally approved state standardized tests that would ensure all students achieve proficiency by the 2013-14 school year. This accountability system had to be applied uniformly to each school district, also known as the Local Education Agency (LEA), across the state. Therefore, each LEA was held accountable to the measures set forth by the State Education Department and approved by the US Department of Education (NCLB Act of 2001).

The unprecedented levels of federal and state accountability required in NCLB for all school districts nationwide were the first piece of legislation that had substantive powers to ensure that superintendents would follow through on the regulations to improve student achievement and reduce the achievement gaps among various subgroups of students (Anthes, 2002; Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Johnstone et al., 2009; Ravitch, 2010;

Sherman, 2007; Terry, 2010). The leadership role of the superintendent evolved once again due to NCLB. Superintendents became responsible for ensuring that students achieved these proficiency levels.

School districts not achieving the required level of proficiency, referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), for the overall student population, as well as each student subgroup, were placed on a list of schools needing improvement, which required school districts to develop intervention plans to address students who were not achieving proficiency (Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Dillon, 2010; Doyle, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; Morse, 2006; O'Rourke, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Reed, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Terry, 2010; Umpstead, 2007). With each successive year not achieving AYP, school districts faced greater levels of accountability and state oversight. In New York, school districts were paired with educational support centers. Staff from the support centers worked with school districts on the development and oversight of the school improvement plans to ensure that the measures written into the plan were being implemented. The support centers ensured the active role of the superintendent in the development, implementation, and follow through of the school improvement plan by all teachers and administrators. The realization for the level of accountability attached to NCLB for school districts and school personnel was evident by the role and authority of the educational support centers involvement in the educational programs and processes of the school district.

School districts that had schools not achieving AYP faced another mandate that came with NCLB: school choice. Schools in need of improvement due to not achieving AYP were obligated to offer parents the opportunity to choose to have their children attend a different school that was not in need of improvement. In school districts with one elementary, one middle school, and one high school, school choice was not an option. Districts with multiple school

buildings at each level did need to offer school choice to parents, with priority given to students deemed to have the most need, which was based on academic levels and socio-economic status. School choice gave rise to the increase in the number of charter schools as options for parents (Crampton, 2007; Lashway, 2002; Morse, 2006; Ravitch, 2010; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004).

The implementation of NCLB resulted in superintendents facing increased pressure to improve student achievement through student performance on annual standardized tests in ELA and mathematics (Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2007; O'Rourke, 2011; Sherman 2007; Terry, 2010). The use of test scores to measure student performance paralleled the thinking of the business model to measure employee performance based on production (Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Senge et al., 2000). Each student has strengths and weaknesses in her/his knowledge and skills. Student performance on state standardized tests determined whether or not school districts became identified for not achieving AYP. The implementation of NCLB led to the superintendent, as the designated leader of the school district appointed by the board of education, being increasingly accountable for student achievement, as measured by annual state standardized tests in ELA and mathematics and graduation rates of all students (Anthes, 2002; Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Johnson and Uline, 2005; Johnstone et al., 2009; Karbula, 2009; Pease, 2009; Reed, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Stitt, 2010; Terry, 2010; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Under law, the board of education for each school district is responsible for establishing district policies. The school superintendent works directly for the board of education and is consequently seen as the person in charge by the public (Houston & Eadie, 2002). Therefore, superintendents have emerged as the focus of accountability for leading change in school

improvement efforts designed to increase the achievement of all students and to reduce the achievement gap for student subgroups, such as students with disabilities, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005). In order for this to happen, superintendents must be knowledgeable about data to identify gaps in student performance related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment and must have skills to clearly communicate this information to teachers and administrators (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Fullan, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; Lashway, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Reeves, 2002, 2006, 2009; Schlechty, 2002; Schmoker, 2006; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). As NCLB continues to raise the bar for student achievement to meet the 2013-14 goal of all students being proficient in ELA and mathematics, superintendents need to be knowledgeable on the impact of their districts' curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student learning and achievement through the effective use of data.

The level of accountability tied to NCLB has forced the role of the superintendent to become one of an educational leader. Superintendents must take a lead role in school improvement efforts as instructional leaders who are knowledgeable and competent about classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment necessary to guide student learning and achievement (Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Dillon, 2010; Hanks, 2010; Lashway, 2002; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007). Superintendents who take the instructional leadership role are more likely to establish the collaborative practices necessary to student success such as collective accountability and responsibility along with the sharing of best instructional practices and shared curricular understandings (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Fullan, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; Lashway, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Reeves,

2009; Sherman, 2007; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Taylor, 2010). In order to improve student achievement, superintendents must be educational leaders.

With the passage of NCLB, the role and responsibilities of superintendents have increased significantly in regard to the implementation and evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose 2007; Elmore 2005; Lamkin, 2006; Sherman, 2007; Taylor, 2010). Superintendents are expected to be competent instructional leaders who provide the educational structures and knowledge to administrators and teachers necessary to improve academic achievement for all students. The ultimate responsibility for reducing the achievement gap and improving student achievement lies with the superintendent. Therefore, superintendents must have a sound understanding of data in order to drive conversations on effective instructional practices, curricula aligned to standards, and quality assessment practices needed to inform instruction and curriculum to increase student achievement (Anthes, 2002; Decman et al., 2010; Lamkin, 2006; Lashway, 2002).

In the Fall of 2008, the country experienced a major financial collapse in the banking, insurance, and automotive businesses. The ripple effects from these businesses were felt by everyone throughout the country. This was the start of an economic recession resulting in billions of lost revenues to state governments. Due to the loss in revenues, state governments considered various measures to balance their budgets, such as significant cuts to education funding, which would have resulted in mass layoffs of teachers and administrators. These layoffs would have impacted the quality of education for students. To prevent losses in educational funding, President Obama and Congress approved ARRA, which provided \$100 billion dollars over two years for education, including \$4.35 billion for competitive RTTT funds (Fullan, 2010; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; US Department of

Education [DOE], 2009). Despite the strings that were attached to RTTT funding, states eagerly completed the application process for RTTT in hopes of making up for lost revenue.

Tied to RTTT funding were requirements for states to adopt the CCSS, develop data systems to track student progress on standardized state tests, improve teacher and principal quality by including student performance on standardized state tests into teacher and principal evaluations, increase the number of charter schools, and turn around the lowest performing schools (Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Ripley, 2010; US DOE, 2009). Due to the time constraints for implementation of the RTTT protocols, states who won RTTT funding required school districts to implement systems which had little to no guidance.

Fullan (2010) argued the RTTT mandate did not have a strategy for developing the capacity of teachers and administrators, which was essential for successfully accomplishing the type of change being sought. In New York, superintendents stated that the RTTT funding their school districts received would not cover the costs to implement the RTTT mandates, making RTTT another unfunded mandate for which school districts must absorb the costs (NYSCOSS, 2011). Whether or not state governments chose to compete for RTTT funding to improve student achievement and/or to acquire additional funding to make up for lost revenue, the superintendents of school districts were responsible and accountable for seeing to fruition the tenants of RTTT. RTTT created additional momentum for the superintendent to be an education leader and to have a greater role and responsibilities with curriculum, instruction, and assessment for improving student learning and achievement.

The 2013-14 school year is quickly approaching. This is the year that NCLB set for all students to achieve proficiency levels on standardized state assessments in ELA and



mathematics. The realization for many politicians, superintendents, educators, and others was that not all students are going to be proficient. Since Congress had not reauthorized ESEA to change this deadline, Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education, allowed states to apply for an ESEA waiver. Each state interested in the ESEA waiver must complete an application based upon the criteria set forth by the US Department of Education.

The ESEA waiver, also known as *A Blueprint for Reform*, was similar to the tenants of RTTT. States applied for the ESEA waiver needed to provide plans that addressed how the educational system would prepare students to meet college and career readiness standards, provide school districts with competent and effective teachers and leaders, provide rigorous and equitable opportunities for all students to learn and achieve college and career ready standards, raise the level of expectations for all students to achieve post-secondary educational opportunities in K-12 education, and develop innovative programs to address persistent achievement gap issues through competitive funding opportunities and community collaboration (US DOE, 2012). The ESEA waiver addressed the achievement gap and student achievement through student growth over time. The student growth measure related to the RTTT requirement for states to develop a data system to track student performance on state standardized tests. For each state that received approval for the ESEA waiver, school districts were held accountable for implementing all of the stipulations that had been written into the plan submitted by its state's education department. As the educational leader designated by the board of education for the school district, the accountability and responsibility for implementing the tenants of the ESEA waiver fell upon the superintendent. Since the ESEA waiver focused on the academic achievement of all students, superintendents needed to have even greater involvement pertaining

to their role and responsibilities for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment for student learning and achievement.

The position of superintendent has transformed from a leader who managed a school district to an educational leader (Dillon, 2010; Houston, 2007; Karbula, 2009; Nykl, 2009; Pease, 2009; Stitt, 2010). This transformation can be attributed to the educational legislation resulting from *A Nation at Risk*, Goals 2000, NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver. The role and responsibilities of superintendents for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment for improving student learning and achievement have increased with each reauthorization of ESEA. The accountability of superintendents for student achievement on state standardized tests required superintendents to take on a greater role in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Although the superintendent has multiple responsibilities that need to be addressed on a daily basis, those associated with educational leadership must be more prevalent for superintendents as school districts continue to implement educational initiatives while facing significant fiscal limitations. Superintendents who are educational leaders will have the knowledge to make the best financial decisions that will provide the necessary resources to improve student learning and achievement.

### **Fiscal Limitations**

Educational costs for school districts increase each year. School districts have limited sources of revenue to meet the cost of education. These sources of revenues, for the majority of school districts, consist of property taxes, local funding, state funding, federal funding, and grant monies (US DOE, 2005). Despite the fiscal ability of school districts to supply the educational programs and supports necessary to meet the needs of their students, all students are expected to obtain the state-determined levels of proficiency in ELA and mathematics. Fullan (2010)

emphasized that the US has a higher per pupil expenditure than other developed nations, yet has the greatest disparity in educational achievement among students. Darling-Hammond (2007) and Glenn (2009) referred to the continuous achievement gap based on socio-economic status and the inadequate funding that leads to inequities in education for students as the greatest injustices of the public school system in the US. Superintendents from significantly different demographic school districts are held to the same accountability standards for student achievement on state standardized tests.

Historically, education has been the constitutional responsibility of the states. Yet, the federal government has included educational mandates and accountability measures that local school districts were expected to implement. The main reason for schools to abide by these federal mandates was the federal education funds that were attached. The federal government would withhold federal education funds if a state failed to enact the mandates associated with the federal educational initiative.

There have been numerous lawsuits filed in state court systems throughout the country challenging the methods and formulas that state governments use to provide educational funding to schools (Brimley et al., 2012; Berry & Wysong, 2010; Crampton, 2010; Fahy, 2011; Glenn, 2006, 2009; Huerta, 2006; Jordan & Verstegen (2009); Morse, 2006; Odden et al., 2010; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004; Springer, Liu, & Guthrie, 2009; Umpstead, 2007). In many of these lawsuits, the state courts ruled that the methods for funding education were not equitable and resulted in disparities in the quality of educational opportunities afforded to students, especially students in low socio-economic school districts.

The rationale behind state funding of public education is to provide the necessary level of educational programs, resources, and supports for all students to achieve the minimum state

proficiency levels to prepare students to be productive and participatory citizens (Brimley et al., 2012; Glenn, 2006, 2009; Morse, 2006; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004; Springer et al., 2009). The level of supports needed to provide the necessary educational programs for at-risk student populations to achieve proficiency levels established by each state are greater, and thus require more financial support, compared to school districts who have fewer at-risk students.

School districts throughout the US have experienced significant budgetary issues since the economic downturn in the fall of 2008. School districts across the country have lost billions in education funding due to budget shortfalls at the state level. Many schools are operating with less state funding than prior to the start of the recession (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Slater & Scott, 2011). Slater and Scott (2011) stated “[t]he Great Recession of 2008-2010 has put even more pressure on states to provide adequate resources to educate an increasingly diverse population” (p. 52).

A study conducted by Odden et al. (2010) concluded that overall funding for K-12 education in the US needed to increase between 6% and 11% to provide adequate funding to ensure all students have adequate access to education. In 2011-12, 37 states provided less funding for K-12 education compared to the 2009-10 school year (Oliff & Leachman, 2011). For the 2012-13 fiscal year, McNichol, Oliff, and Johnson (2012) revealed that: state revenues continued to be below pre-recession levels; K-12 and college enrollments are expected to increase; and 30 states projected a combined \$49 billion shortfall in revenue, which add to the previous four year shortfall of \$530 billion.

These fiscal limitations have had a significant impact on rural and poor school districts, which have limited means to raise revenues via property taxes (Doyle, 2010; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Patterson, Koenigs, Mohn, & Rasmussen, 2006). Superintendents, as

the educational leaders of school districts, have been expected to improve student achievement with fewer resources, both monetary and personnel, which are essential to provide the level of instruction and support necessary to help all students learn.

Economists continue to report a bleak outlook for education funding, as the effects of the recession continue to linger (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; McNichol et al., 2012; Oliff & Leachman, 2011). State revenues have been reported to remain 7% below pre-recession levels, which will keep education funding from significantly increasing (McNichol et al., 2012). The lack of economic growth does not bode well for education funding. States have decreased or leveled education funding for school districts. This has resulted in reductions to educational staff and programs needed to provide instruction for students to achieve established achievement levels set forth by NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver for those approved states (Crampton, 2010; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; McNichol et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2006; Ravitch, 2010; Terry, 2010). Meanwhile, school districts have been expected to implement the CCSS, establish data systems that have unique student and teacher identification, and evaluate teachers and principals based on student performance.

Superintendent leadership for fiscal management and educational implementation has been thrust into the spotlight due to the economic recession and federal education mandates that have been tied to federal educational aid that states have been competing to acquire. The goal set forth by the federal government has been to prepare students to be college and career ready. Superintendents have been expected to make informed and strategic decisions in the budget development process to maximize reduced resources that will provide the necessary curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student achievement.

The federal government has twice infused money into education, through ARRA in 2009 and EJF in 2010. The ARRA and EJF funds were designated to minimize the number of teacher and administrative reductions while providing increased funding to improve educational programs for students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA] of 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; US DOE, 2009). The ARRA funds included another \$4.35 billion for RTTT funding, which required states to complete a competitive grant application process to receive a portion of these funds to support education in their states.

Although the ARRA and EJF monies stemmed the number of teacher and administrative reductions, Oliff and Leachman (2011) estimated that 229,000 positions have been eliminated in school districts across the country since 2008. This means that the remaining teachers and administrators are absorbing the responsibilities of those who were eliminated. Superintendents must provide the leadership in curriculum, instruction, and assessment necessary to continue to move their districts forward in raising student achievement while finding creative ways to support administrators, who have been given increased responsibilities for improving student achievement, with less resources (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Terry, 2010). The leadership from the superintendent is necessary to navigate and support district personnel as they implement CCSS and a new APPR evaluation system during the current fiscal limitations and increased accountability for student achievement.

Superintendents have used all or part of their reserve budgets to keep property taxes low and to minimize the number of staff reductions (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Crampton, 2010; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Silverman, 2011). With the depletion of their reserve funds and state funding remaining below 2008 levels (McNichol et al., 2012; Oliff &

Leachman, 2011), superintendents must rely on property taxes or other types of taxes and/or other sources of revenues, such as the development of a not for profit education foundation associated with the school district to raise revenues to meet the educational costs. States, such as New York and Massachusetts, have capped the percent property taxes can be increased. Tax revenues are needed to support educational programs for improving student achievement. Increased taxes have placed increased financial strain on taxpayers, which could have resulted in school budgets not being approved (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004; Silverman, 2011).

Superintendents and other officials in Florida, New York, and Ohio have indicated that it costs more to implement the mandates of RTTT than the funding provided to school districts, especially given the impact of the recessions on schools (Boser, 2012; NYSCOSS, 2011). ARRA funding expired in August 2011, and EJP ended in September 2012. This impacted the development of 2012-13 school budgets. The state's accountability linked to RTTT funding impacted the superintendent of every school district, increasing their accountability for student achievement, which could be tied to the district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment alignment and implementation.

Fiscal limitations exist and will continue to exist as the cost of education continues to increase due to collective bargaining agreements and other expenses, such as transportation and energy costs. School districts are faced with cutting programs and personnel to make the revenues meet expenses. Superintendents must use their remaining available resources to provide the instruction that will continue to increase student achievement as measured by state standardized tests. The superintendent's role as the education leader of the school district is

important as school districts move forward in their efforts to increase student achievement while facing significant fiscal limitations.

### **School District Educational Leader**

The fiscal limitations that have arisen over the past few years, combined with mandates from NCLB, RTTT, and possibly the ESEA waiver that most states have completed applications for, have added to the already arduous task of being a superintendent. The job of the superintendent of schools is enormous and requires a team of administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that the school district is a safe and engaging learning environment for students to succeed. The superintendent alone cannot accomplish everything that needs to be done on a daily basis to ensure that student learning needs are met. Elmore (2005) contended that the leadership demands of superintendents have significantly changed in the past 20 years. Student achievement accountability based on state standardized tests and fiscal limitations were key issues that have resulted in this change in the role and responsibilities of the superintendent.

Prior to NCLB, there was a movement to connect the superintendent's performance with her/his role as an instructional leader (Björk, 1993; Dillon, 2010). The superintendent's role and responsibilities for developing and implementing data-driven curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student achievement has received increased attention as a result of the mandates associated with NCLB and RTTT (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Black, 2007; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Fullan, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Lashway, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Reeves, 2006, 2009; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010). The accountability for student achievement is most linked to the superintendent (Hanks, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009). Superintendents continue to be the focus of accountability for student achievement on state standardized tests as a result of NCLB, RTTT,



and the upcoming NCLB waiver. Thus, superintendents have increased their attention to curriculum, instruction, and assessment taking place in their school districts to monitor the effectiveness of these programs on student achievement. The accountability of state and federal educational mandates requires superintendents to be educational leaders of their school districts.

Research substantiates that a positive correlation exists between certain responsibilities of educational leaders and gains in student achievement. Marzano and Waters (2009) completed extensive research and identified five superintendent responsibilities that have a significant impact on student achievement: 1) nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 2) targeted use of resources to support nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 3) collaborative goal setting; 4) continuous monitoring and evaluation of the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; and 5) board of education backing of the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Principal autonomy also showed a positive correlation with student achievement; however, it was not included in the list because it can also have a negative correlation if not properly implemented. Marzano and Waters (2009) found that when superintendents gave principals defined autonomy to achieve the nonnegotiable goals for instruction and student achievement, student achievement improved. “Defined autonomy means that the superintendent expects the building principals and all other administrators in the district to lead within the boundaries defined by the district goals,” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 8).

Other researchers, such as Black (2007); Elmore (2004); Fullan (2001, 2002, 2005,2010); Houston (2007); Levin and Fullan (2008); Louis et al. (2010); Reeves (2002, 2004, 2006, 2009); Schlechty (2002); Senge et al. (2000); Singh and Al-Fadhli (2011); Taylor (2010); and Terry (2010), investigated various aspects of these characteristics of effective educational leaders and

found a positive impact on student learning and achievement. Given the pressure of NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver on increased student achievement, superintendents need to learn and implement these educational leadership qualities in order to lead their school district efforts to improve student learning and achievement.

Superintendents have a plethora of responsibilities. Depending upon the school district, there could be many reasons for students not achieving the established state levels of performance based upon state standardized tests and graduation rates. It is important for superintendents to identify the areas that have the greatest impact on student achievement. Fullan (2001, 2005, 2008, 2010), Reeves (2002), and Schlechty (2002) stated that educational leaders have a moral purpose and a commitment to the learning and achievement of all students. Superintendents must lead the charge in developing the belief among faculty and administrators that all students can learn. The actions, communication, and modeling of the commitment to moral purpose by the superintendent begin with the establishment of a few prioritized goals focused on instruction and student learning and achievement (Black, 2007; Doyle, 2010; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2008, 2010; Houston, 2007; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Palandra, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Taylor, 2010). These goals must focus on what students are expected to learn, identified learning outcomes that demonstrate student achievement, and interventions for supporting students who have yet to achieve the identified outcomes (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; Fullan, 2008, 2010; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Schlechty, 2002). The knowledge of superintendents surrounding curriculum, instruction, and assessment is crucial, as they become educational leaders charting the path that leads to increased student learning and achievement. Without that understanding in these areas, it would be difficult for

superintendents to effectively lead their districts in this era of accountability for student learning and achievement.

Having a sound understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, superintendents can craft the vision of nonnegotiable goals for improving student learning and achievement to administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders. By helping teachers and administrators understand these nonnegotiable goals, superintendents are more apt to create a shared vision and develop a sense of urgency to facilitate collaboration among all stakeholders in working toward achieving the nonnegotiable goals (Balch & Gruenert, 2009; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2008, 2010; Hemric, Eury, & Shellman, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010). The development of a shared vision through transparent, reciprocal dialogue is linked to increased trust among stakeholders resulting in shared ownership and commitment to improving student learning and achievement (Anthes, 2002; Decman et al., 2010; Doyle, 2010; Fullan, 2001, 2005, 2010; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; Houston, 2007; Lashway, 2002; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Palandra, 2010; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Senge et al., 2000; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Once again, it is important for superintendents to model their behaviors and actions to the vision they are communicating to their stakeholders (Fullan, 2001, 2008, 2010; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Reeves, 2002). With the diminished financial and personnel resources that many superintendents are experiencing, clearly communicating and maintaining transparency of these nonnegotiable goals will be vital for superintendents to accomplish the goals. Teachers and administrators must understand their roles in leading the efforts to improve student achievement, which can only happen through the clearly communicated vision of the nonnegotiable goals by the superintendent.

Educational leaders who are inflexible with their vision and who are poor listeners can adversely impact the commitment of stakeholders to the nonnegotiable goals (Fullan, 2001, 2005; Senge et al., 2000). During the process of improving student achievement, it is important for the superintendent to have transparent, two-way communication. The actions and words of superintendents must always support their goals and vision that all students can learn.

NCLB and RTTT accountability, along with fiscal limitations, have required superintendents to develop the educational leadership structures and conditions needed to evaluate and implement effective curriculum, instruction, and assessments practices for improving student learning and achievement. Superintendents in highly effective schools develop educational structures and conditions focusing on student learning and achievement (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Hemric et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; Taylor, 2010). As stated before, the superintendent cannot improve student learning and achievement alone. Improving student achievement takes the combined efforts of the superintendent, the administrators, and the teachers.

The superintendent's level of involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as the building principal's level, will vary depending on the size of the school district (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Dillon, 2010; Doyle, 2010; Schlechty, 2002; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). It is likely that superintendents in larger school districts will have district administrators who are responsible for the district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and who will meet regularly with building administration to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs and student learning. Superintendents must ensure administrators have a level of understanding regarding the nonnegotiable goals, as well as the skills and knowledge to effectively implement them. It is important for superintendents to establish protocols for regular

dialogue among themselves and administrators to ensure that the systems and programs that have been implemented are supporting student learning and achievement and to provide opportunities for administrators to voice their concerns and offer suggestions for improvement (Anthes, 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2008, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Lamkin, 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Reeves, 2002, 2006; Schlechty, 2002; Senge et al., 2000; Taylor, 2010). A competent, knowledgeable, and informed administrative team is able to support the superintendent's efforts for improving student learning and achievement by effectively implementing and monitoring the district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment. An example of such a practice would be regularly scheduled meetings or reports from administrators to the superintendent to assess the progress of student achievement and to raise concerns that may be adversely affecting student learning. Since the superintendent is not capable of being in every building on a daily basis to implement and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the superintendent needs the support of building principals to achieve the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Principals are educational leaders capable of executing the superintendent's nonnegotiable goals for student learning and classroom instruction. Since principals are at the ground level interacting daily with students and teachers, they are able to monitor classroom instruction with daily walkthroughs, to focus on student learning, to develop support structures for student learning and teacher instruction, and to collaborate with teachers to implement and monitor the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction (Anthes, 2002; Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Doyle, 2010; Fullan, 2001, 2010; Lamkin, 2006; Lashway, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Schlechty, 2002; Louis et al., 2010).

The communication between the superintendent and administrators must focus on the best instructional practices that support student learning (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Elmore, 2005; Palandra, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010). Such conversations need to be continuous to develop a shared understanding of the meaningful learning that needs to occur every day in the classrooms to improve student learning and achievement.

Principals must have the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully implement and monitor the curriculum, instruction, and assessment taking place within their buildings. Many principals are currently being required to implement the CCSS and a new system of state approved APPR for evaluating teacher performance. Superintendents can build the capacity of their principals and other administrators by providing them the training necessary to build their knowledge to implement, monitor, and provide feedback to enhance the instruction of teachers (Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2005; Reeves, 2002; Schechter, 2011; Schlechty, 2002; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011).

Since principals play a key role in student learning and achievement, the superintendent must build the capacity of principals by continually improving their knowledge and skills pertaining to curriculum, instruction, assessment, effective use of data, and quality teacher observations that improve classroom instruction (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2002, 2005; Fullan, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Reeves, 2002, 2006, 2009; Schechter, 2011; Schlechty, 2002; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010). By developing the capacity of principals, they will see themselves as contributing and valued members of the administrative team (Johnson & Uline, 2005). Building the knowledge of principals and other administrators will allow them to be educational leaders, an essential piece for superintendents to achieve their

nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Principals and administrators need continuous training to allow them to effectively guide the instruction and learning for all students.

Principals, administrators, and teachers need to be held accountable for monitoring student learning relative to the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement (Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2002, 2005; Fullan, 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Schlechty, 2002; Taylor, 2010). The examination of data based upon specific student learning targets can be used by administrators to monitor the effectiveness of policies and strategies designed to improve student learning and achievement (Fullan, 2005; Hanks, 2010; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Regularly scheduled meetings with administrators provide an avenue of communication for superintendents to be updated on the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessments related to student achievement and to provide the opportunity to collaboratively develop interventions to address gaps in student learning as well as in the district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2002; Schlechty, 2002). An informed superintendent is more capable of determining whether students are on track to demonstrate improved performance on state standardized tests and to hold administrators accountable for the instructional programs and student achievement in their respective buildings.

Superintendents must be knowledgeable of data to make informed decisions pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Data-driven decision making is vital to the superintendent's role as an educational leader. The use of data to determine student learning needs and the instructional interventions that are necessary to improve student learning is knowledge that superintendents need to be educational leaders (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose,

2007; Decman et al., 2010; DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2008, 2010; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Reeves, 2002, 2006, and 2009; Root, 2010; Schmoker, 2003, 2006; Taylor, 2010). The use of data needs to be transparent with the focus on improving student learning (Fullan, 2008; Hanks, 2010; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Reeves, 2002). In order for data to be used effectively, administrators and teachers need to have the necessary training and the time to effectively examine and use data to make informed decisions regarding student performance and implementation of interventions to improve student achievement (Fullan, 2001; Johnstone et al., 2009; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Schmoker, 2003, 2006; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Data are necessary to help superintendents make informed decisions for providing curriculum, instruction, and assessments that improve student learning and achievement. A superintendent possessing knowledge for effectively using data is able to lead and communicate the role of data in improving student learning and achievement to administrators and teachers in their efforts to use data to inform their decisions.

Superintendents who are knowledgeable about data can overcome assumptions by teachers and administrators regarding student performance by using the data to identify deficiencies in the district's curriculum, instruction, and/or assessments and to provide strategies to overcome these deficiencies (Johnson & Uline, 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2006, 2009; Schmoker, 2003). There are teachers and administrators who believe that certain students are not capable of achieving proficiency on state standardized tests. In such instances, it is the superintendent's responsibility to use the available data to counter these beliefs or to use the data to provide additional instructional supports for these students to improve their learning and achievement. By developing the capacity and culture of data-driven decision making among teachers and administrators, the superintendent will lead the effort for using data to focus on instructional



strategies, curriculum modifications, and alignment and to design quality student assessments that lead to improved learning and achievement for all students (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2001, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Johnstone et al., 2009; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Palandra, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Schmoker, 2003; Sherman, 2007; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Taylor, 2010). The superintendent's leadership is needed to ensure teachers and administrators are using data effectively to inform their instruction.

Superintendents are able to use data to identify areas of growth for teachers and administrators. Professional development aligned to the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction provide the resources to build the capacity of teachers and administrators to improve student learning and achievement (Anthes, 2002; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2002; Hemric et al., 2010; Lashway, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Scheichter, 2011). In order for professional development to be effective, it must be embedded, focused on teacher instruction and student learning, differentiated based on teacher and administrator need, and continuous throughout the school year and possibly into the next (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; DuFour et al., 2004; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2010; Johnson & Uline, 2005; Martin-Kniep, 2008). Building the capacity of teachers and administrators through effective and sustainable professional development is integral to improving student learning and achievement.

Effective professional development can change teacher and administrative practices, provide extensive knowledge of content and pedagogy, improve instructional strategies, and incorporate data-driven decision making to improve student learning and achievement (Anthes, 2002; Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Scheichter, 2011). Professional Learning Communities

(PLCs) provide an avenue for professional development to improve student learning and achievement that utilizes the expertise of the practitioners to provide effective professional development and to develop a culture committed to learning and shared responsibility (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2006; Hemric et al., 2010; Houston, 2007; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Scheichter, 2011; Senge et al., 2000). Yet, superintendents must be careful not to have PLCs that are superficial and do not delve into the depth of learning needed by teachers and administrators to change their practice and knowledge to improve student learning and achievement (DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2006; Martin-Kniep, 2008). The superintendent needs to guide the process and provide the necessary supports to grow PLCs within the school district. It takes a complete team effort to improve the learning and achievement of all students through the implementation of effective professional development.

The current and future fiscal limitations require superintendents to effectively manage and use resources to build the capacity of teachers and administrators. Superintendents need to examine their existing resources to determine whether or not resources can be reallocated to provide the necessary support for building the capacity of teachers and administrators to be focused on teaching and learning (Adleman & Taylor, 2007; Black, 2007; Fullan, 2005). There are many demands on the limited resources available to school districts. This requires superintendents to use their knowledge as educational leaders to make informed decisions for the best use of available resources to improve student learning and achievement.

Superintendents are facing many mandates and initiatives from NCLB, RTTT, eventually the ESEA waiver, CCSS, and a new APPR for principal and teacher evaluation. There has been extensive training provided to teachers and administrators focused on improving student achievement. Covey (2004) and Reeves (2002, 2004, 2006, 2009) pointed out that the more

training or initiatives that are implemented, the less effective each will be on its intended outcome. They refer to this as the *Law of Initiative Fatigue*. Superintendents need to carefully consider their next set of trainings or initiatives so that they do not overload teachers and administrators, resulting in the ineffectiveness of the training or initiative.

Superintendents must be educational leaders in order to implement and monitor the curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are necessary to improve student learning and achievement. Educational leaders have a positive impact on student achievement (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Black, 2007; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2001, 2002a, 2005, 2010; Houston, 2007; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009; Schlechty, 2002; Senge et al., 2000; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010). The support and vigilance of the superintendent are integral in ensuring that effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment are taking place to meet the needs of all students. Education provides opportunities for students to pursue careers and enrich lives beyond high school. Superintendents are the educational leaders who can provide the educational programs to achieve such goals.

### **Summary**

The literature review revealed minimal references within the research that specifically related to the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Among the journal articles, published documents, and doctoral studies reviewed, the researcher found studies pertaining to the increased accountability of the superintendent for student learning and achievement, financial/fiscal equity in the funding of education, and responsibilities of educational leaders; however, the researcher did not find specific articles relating to the impact of fiscal limitations on

the role and responsibilities of the superintendent related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Consequently, there was a need for a study to examine the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The first 12 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have seen unprecedented levels of student achievement accountability due to NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver. NCLB brought increased accountability to school districts through student achievement for all subgroups on standardized state assessments, which have resulted in progressively intrusive measures and interventions that school districts were required to implement when school districts failed to achieve the federally approved state-established measure of AYP on state assessments (Anthes, 2002; Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Dillon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Hanks, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; O'Rourke, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Reed, 2010; Root, 2010; Sherman, 2007; Terry, 2010; Umpstead, 2007). The superintendents of school districts across the nation needed to understand the impact that the NCLB regulations had upon their schools and students, which required them to have a greater role in the teaching and learning of students.

The financial impact of the 2008 Great Recession resulted in state governments competing for a portion of the federal \$4.35 billion in RTTT funding, which required school districts to implement CCSS and a teacher/principal evaluation system that linked student growth measures based upon state standardized tests to teacher/principal performance (Fullan, 2010; NYSCOSS, 2011; Oliff & Leachman, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; US DOE, 2009). After addressing the tenants of NCLB, superintendents in states which had won RTTT funding now needed to lead the charge in curriculum development and teacher/principal evaluations while confronted

with immense budgetary issues that resulted in cuts to programs, administrators, teachers, and staff.

The ESEA waiver included language that required school districts to establish student growth models, provide competent and effective teachers and leaders, provide rigorous and equitable opportunities for all students to learn and achieve college and career ready standards, raise the level of expectation for all students to achieve post-secondary educational opportunities in K-12 education, and develop innovative programs to address persistent achievement gap issues through competitive funding opportunities and community collaboration (US DOE, 2012). The language for the requirements in the ESEA waiver was similar to RTTT requirements. Terry (2010) stated that the implementation of the ESEA waiver in school districts would be the responsibility of the superintendent of schools. In states that previously received RTTT funding, superintendents had already begun implementing the tenants of the ESEA waiver due to the similarities in the requirements for each.

The superintendent, as the agent of the board of education, is the educational leader of the school district. Superintendents bear the responsibility to carry out board policy and that of their state and federal legislations and regulations. Superintendents worked with administrators and teachers to ensure that their school districts addressed the regulations associated with each of the federally derived NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver.

In addition to NCLB, RTTT, and the ESEA waiver, school districts were dealing with substantial fiscal limitations as a result of the economic recession and the end of the stimulus money from ARRA and EJF. Although school districts have reduced administrators, teachers, and educational programs in order for their revenues to meet their expenses, the superintendent is expected to increase student achievement on state standardized tests while implementing the

CCSS and a teacher/principal evaluation system that is linked to student performance.

Therefore, the qualities of an educational leader described in research (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Black, 2007; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2001, 2002a, 2005, 2010; Houston, 2007; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009; Schlechty, 2002; Senge et al., 2000; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011; Taylor, 2010; Terry, 2010) are important for superintendents to possess as they proceed into these difficult fiscal times while attempting to implement federally driven mandates.

Superintendent leadership for fiscal management and educational implementation has been thrust into the spotlight due to the economic recession and federal education mandates that have been tied to federal educational aid that states have been competing to acquire. The goal set forth by the federal government has been to prepare students to be college and career ready. Yet, superintendents have been expected to make informed and strategic decisions in the budget development process to maximize reduced resources in order to provide the necessary curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student achievement.

Superintendents are facing a difficult road ahead due to confluence of the two powerful forces of fiscal limitations and the pressure to improve student achievement as measured on state standardized assessments. Therefore, this study examined how fiscal limitations had impacted the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning and achievement.

Federal stimulus funding expired in 2011-12. NCLB performance mandates approached the 2013-14 deadline. The ESEA waiver became an option with first year of implementation 2012-13. This convergence of forces and timeline provided the opportunity for this study.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **Purpose Statement**

The 2008 Great Recession spurred billions of additional federal dollars for education funding through ARRA and EJP to stem the elimination of administrators, teachers, and other staff, as states throughout the country cut back education spending to balance their budgets. This mixed method study intended to explore the ways in which budget limitations had already or were expected to impact the functions of school superintendents and chief education officers in school districts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The study sought to examine how superintendents used district personnel to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The study sought to examine superintendents in school districts to determine whether or not superintendents had greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment as districts experienced fiscal limitations. The study sought to examine the extent to which superintendents had delegated responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to other district personnel and/or outside agencies to ensure that structures were in place for supporting student achievement as districts experience fiscal limitations. The research was conducted with the approval of the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A).

### **Research Questions**

The role and responsibilities of superintendents have changed due to the increased accountability for student achievement set forth by NCLB. There is growing financial uncertainty coupled with increasing education costs. Superintendents may encounter additional reductions in staff and programs. Yet, superintendents are expected to lead school districts to meet the regulations and mandates established by the state and federal governments while their

resources have and will continue to diminish. Five questions were developed to determine the impact that current and future financial constraints had on the role and responsibilities of superintendents pertaining to the evaluation and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments in school districts thus improving student learning and achievement.

1. Due to budget limitations, will the superintendent take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or will these responsibilities be given to other district personnel and/or outside agencies?
2. In what ways do superintendents perceive the responsibilities of personnel within the district for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
3. How would anticipated budget limitations affect the superintendent's planning for the use district personnel to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
4. What resources do superintendents perceive are necessary to support district personnel for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
5. What are the similarities and differences by superintendents among various states in their decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment when facing budget limitations?

### **Research Design**

The first 13 years of the 21st century have seen greater federal influence on state education policy due to financial incentives and federal education policy. The 2008 Great Recession impacted state revenues. Thus, states have demonstrated their willingness to accept



federal education initiatives in exchange for much needed funds to stem the reduction of educational programs and staff in their states. Given these circumstances, this pragmatic and descriptive study was designed to examine the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of superintendents related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Creswell (2009) defined pragmatism as a “worldview aris[ing] out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (p. 10). The focus of the study by the researcher pertained to the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Gathering such current data required the researcher to utilize a methodology that provided the latest data from superintendents. Researchers agreed that pragmatism is most suited to a mixed methods research approach due to its flexibility to gain current data that can be used to address or inform current issues (Creswell, 2009; Greene & Hall, 2010; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). At this juncture, fiscal limitations concern superintendents as they attempt to lead their districts in the 21st century in providing their students with the education needed to complete globally.

A cross-sectional survey design incorporating a mixed method study was chosen for the design for gathering data. Creswell (2012) defined cross-sectional survey design as a collection of data to “examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices” (p. 377) at a particular point in time. Fowler (2002) stated that “one reason to use a survey design is to understand preferences and interests that tap into the subjective feelings of people” (p. 2). A cross-sectional survey “can be used not only for purposes of description but also for the determination of relationships between variables at the time of the study” (Babbie, 1973, p. 62).

A mixed method study allows the researcher to select and integrate the qualities of qualitative and quantitative research to strengthen the study by providing greater insight and

understanding of the topic being researched, adding to the richness and representativeness of the data collected (Creswell, 2009, 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). “Mixed methods research is both a methodology and a method, and it involves collecting, analyzing, and mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study” (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006, p. 1).

Since the start of the recession in 2008, the fiscal situation for education has impacted school district superintendents differently depending on the various factors that influenced each of the school district’s budget development. A mixed methods research study allowed participants to provide clarification and/or justification to quantitative-type questions, which increased the richness of the data. Powell, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Suldo, and Daley (2008) stated: “combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is likely to provide superior research findings and outcomes” (p. 292). Thus, the researcher included the opportunity for participants to provide additional information to their responses as needed.

The cross-sectional survey design with mixed methods research was further supported by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) because the simultaneous collection of the qualitative and quantitative data can be analyzed separately prior to cross-analyzing the different types of data to further interpret the data. The qualitative responses provided data that expanded the responses of the participants. The purpose of the mixed-method research approach was to provide relevant data to understand and describe the changes in the role and responsibilities of superintendents related to the implementation and evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment due to budget limitations.

## **Population**

The population for this study was superintendents of public school districts in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. Requests were sent to the superintendent associations of Michigan and Ohio. However, these organizations did not respond to the initial invitation to participate in the study.

## **Selection of the Sample**

The superintendents in these six states were sent an invitation to participate in the survey (see Appendix B). This was done by email for superintendents in the states of Connecticut (156), Massachusetts (328), and Vermont (59). The researcher obtained email addresses for the superintendents from the education department website for each of these states (Connecticut State Department of Education, n.d.; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.; Vermont Department of Education, 2011). For 2011-12, the following state superintendent associations reported the following number of superintendents that were sent the link to the survey: New Jersey (590), New York (697), and Pennsylvania (499). The superintendents in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania were asked to participate in the survey through their respective state superintendents' associations. Their email addresses were either not available or not in a format that readily identified public school superintendents through their state organization nor their state education department websites. Since it was not known how many of the superintendents from the latter three states received and/or were aware of the survey embedded in their organization's newsletter, calculation of an accurate response rate is not possible.

The decision not to use any type of sampling methods and to use the entire population was done purposefully. The researcher did not want to exclude any superintendents from the

study. A sampling methodology could have eliminated data from superintendents who were able to add to the richness of this study. The survey instrument was designed to analyze data to delineate various decisions of superintendents based on their budget situation, demographics, and support structures. The 2,296 superintendents were sent an invitation to participate in the survey. There were 150 superintendents who participated in the survey, with 102 superintendents completing the survey as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Population Survey Returns*

State	Number of Superintendents		
	Total	Participated in Survey	Completed Survey
Connecticut	156	30	23
Massachusetts	295	53	34
New Jersey	590	1	1
New York	697	52	34
Pennsylvania	499	2	1
Vermont	59	12	10
Total	2296	150	102

**Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument was designed to gather data on the planning and decision making that superintendents use to approach fiscal limitations and increased accountability while implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning and achievement (see Appendix C). The embedded design of the survey simultaneously collected quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). The qualitative data, which allowed respondents to provide additional responses or to clarify selected choices, supported the quantitative data. The survey was constructed to determine current structures and supports that a

superintendent has to facilitate their role and responsibilities with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

### **Survey Design**

The structure of the survey instrument consisted of a series of closed-ended, open-ended, and likert four-scaled questions to gain the most detailed data possible for effective evaluation analysis of the study. Babbie (1973) cautioned of the potential shortcomings of closed-ended questions due to the researcher's wording and choices offered to the participant, which may not include all of the possible choices for a participant to select. Therefore, the researcher included the opportunity for participants to add information in many of the closed-ended questions. In addition, the researcher developed closed-ended questions in which participants could choose more than one of the structured responses and/or add comments to provide the greatest opportunity for a complete and thorough response from the participant. Babbie (1973) contended that providing the participant with an opportunity to add responses and choose multiple responses supported the effort of data collection. The estimated time to complete the 34-question survey was between 20 and 30 minutes.

The survey instrument contained skip logic that allowed participants to skip questions based upon their selection of responses. Skip logic was included in the design of the survey because a participant's response may have made the next set of questions not applicable to the participant. The survey construction included the completed amount of the survey in order to inform participants of their progress, which was intended to increase the completion rate of the survey.

## **Survey Instrument Development**

The research of literature revealed articles related to equity in education funding, accountability of superintendents, and effective qualities of educational leaders. However, the literature was limited with regards to the role and responsibilities of superintendents for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment during fiscal limitations. Therefore, the researcher developed a survey instrument to acquire data to answer the research questions.

The survey instrument design included questions to gather demographic data. Questions were developed to determine the state in which the school districts were located. Participants were then identified by state to allow for interstate comparisons. Since the research examined superintendent planning and decision making under fiscal limitations, data was gathered for the 2011-12 budget, the anticipated 2012-13 budget, and the per pupil expenditure. The budget shortfall represented the difference between the projected 2012-13 expenses and the projected 2012-13 revenues. The demographic and budgetary data provided insight into the impact of fiscal limitations on the educational programs needed to support the learning and achievement of all students.

The researcher designed the survey to acquire data on the role and responsibilities that superintendents have related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment and how these were changing. The survey sought to determine the current involvement of superintendents in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as the supportive structures and personnel that superintendents had to implement and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Since some superintendents had already been affected by previous fiscal limitations in the previous two years, superintendents were asked about prior decisions that had been made due to the financial

situation of the school district. In addition, superintendents were asked to provide data for their decision making based on anticipated budget shortfalls for 2012-13. These questions focused on superintendents' past, present, and future decision making and the effect on their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The survey asked participants for the role and responsibilities of building principals for implementing and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district. The methods and frequency by superintendents for communicating their vision pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment were examined. Questions were designed to ascertain the system of support superintendents had related to the implementation and monitoring of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Research and peer reviewed articles on effective educational leadership determined that educational leaders who establish firm goals for instructional practices and student achievement, communicate their vision for education clearly and transparently, develop the capacity of teachers and administrators, work collaboratively to improve instruction and student achievement, implement effective data analysis to monitor goals and student achievement to develop targeted interventions, allocate resources to support goals and student achievement, and model their behavior to support their vision have a positive impact on student learning and achievement (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Decman et al., 2010; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2010; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; Huerta, 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002, 2004, and 2009; Taylor, 2010). The survey instrument wove these attributes and responsibilities into the questions.

Superintendents' role and responsibilities as educational leaders contribute to student learning and achievement. Educational leaders are able to transform the culture of a school district by providing support and resources that lead to the development of meaningful and purposeful PLCs to improve student learning through collaboration, common focus, and sharing of expertise among faculty (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2001, 2006, 2010; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Reeves, 2009; Scheichter, 2011; Senge et al., 2000). Teachers and administrators must be able to effectively use data to improve student achievement by providing targeted, informative instruction and developing plans of action for students who are not meeting academic expectations (Fullan, 2005, 2008; Hanks, 2010; Johnstone et al., 2009; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Reeves, 2002; Root, 2010; Schmoker, 2006; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). The survey instrument collected data to ascertain the aforementioned concepts and responsibilities.

### **Validity**

The survey instrument was reviewed by 14 retired superintendents. The leader from each state's superintendent association was asked for the names of retired superintendents to provide feedback on the survey. At least one participant from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont was included in the panel of 14. The panel of experts was provided the guidelines for feedback, the survey questions, an explanation of the structure of the survey, a flowchart for completing the survey, and a matrix that linked each survey question to the research questions. The panel of experts reviewed the survey questions for clarity and for correspondence to the five research questions. These experts provided suggestions for questions to be modified, deleted, and/or suggested additional questions linked to the research questions.



The survey instrument was modified based on the feedback from the panel of experts. Modifications to the survey instrument included the addition of per pupil expenditure, state origin of superintendents, and list of superintendent and principal responsibilities for instructional leadership. The order of questions was restructured to place the demographic questions at the beginning of the survey as well as re-aligning questions pertaining to the superintendent's role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to come before her/his supports for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition, questions such as the use of formative assessments and effectiveness of data teams were removed from the survey instrument. Modifications to the survey instrument were completed prior to it being sent to the superintendents in the six states.

### **Data Collection**

The survey was constructed using SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey was programmed to allow multiple response questions, separate open-ended questions in conjunction with multiple response questions, and skip logic. SurveyMonkey collected the data from the participants.

The superintendents in these six states were sent an invitation to participate in the survey (see Appendix B). This was done via direct email or an electronic newsletter from their respective state superintendent association. Superintendents invited to participate via email were sent two reminder emails. Superintendents in New Jersey and Pennsylvania were sent a reminder in the electronic newsletter from their respective state superintendent association. In New York, the survey was sent to superintendents at the end of May, which was not followed by a reminder due to the impending end of the school year.

## **Data Analysis**

Data from SurveyMonkey were converted into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v. 20 for Windows. The SurveyMonkey survey package was chosen specifically for the SPSS conversion feature.

This study was exploratory to determine superintendents' responses for meeting their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment given fiscal limitations.

Bergman (2010) explained that exploratory-based statistics do not make a distinction "between the dependent and independent variables; rather, the entire set of interdependent relationships is analyzed simultaneously" (p. 401).

The quantitative part of the survey focused on the descriptive data. Much of the data collected was categorical data. Tables and graphs were used to demonstrate the frequency of responses by individual state and total. Data was transferred from SurveyMonkey into SPSS to code numerical data and to test analysis methodologies.

This descriptive study utilized cross-tabulation to analyze the categorical data gathered from the research. Cross-tabulation is "a way of arranging data about categorical variables in a matrix so that relations can be more clearly seen" (Vogt & Johnson, 2011, p. 87). Vogt and Johnson (2011) continued to explain that cross-tabulation provides greater clarity between the relationships of two variables.

Non-parametric statistics were incorporated in the analyses of the categorical data. "Non-parametric statistics require fewer assumptions" (Vogt & Johnson, 2011, p. 256) and are frequently used with categorical data. The chi-square test is a non-parametric test that was used to analyze relationships within the categorical data. Vogt and Johnson (2011) stated that the chi-

square test is used to analyze categorical data to determine independence, as well as “goodness-of-fit test” (p. 51).

One-way ANOVA was used to determine the relationship of the level of superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the number of years of superintendent experience, whether the superintendent conducted classroom walkthroughs, and the size of school district. “A simple analysis of variance (or ANOVA) has only one independent variable, and is a test for the difference between two or more means” (Salkind, 2008, p. 388).

Fifteen questions in the survey included *other*, which provided the respondents the opportunity to give explanations to their selections or add responses not part of the original responses. Also, there were 15 questions that allowed respondents to choose multiple selections. These attempts to provide respondents with opportunities to have completeness to their answers limited the data analyses. Therefore, the responses in each question were consistently transformed into dichotomous, yes-no, variable, or likert scale data to provide further analyses of the data.

The last question of the survey allowed respondents to write their thoughts regarding the impact of the fiscal limitations on their roles as superintendents. These responses consisted of a few words to a short paragraph. The researcher exported the comments from SurveyMonkey into an excel spreadsheet.

For the qualitative part of the survey, responses were taken from SurveyMonkey and coded. “Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that coding provides the opportunity for analysis, identifying meaningful relationships among the data while

differentiating the data into their own significance. Creswell (2012) proposed six steps during the process for coding data: 1) understand the general ideas, 2) summarize statement into two to three words, 3) start to code, 4) organize similar codes together, 5) review the data for other emerging codes, and 6) organize the codes into themes.

The comments were read twice prior to making any notations regarding questions. The column adjacent to the comments was labeled “RQ” for research question. Each comment was assigned the number of the research question to which it best aligned. Comments that applied to more than one research questions were assigned the number of each research question. Comments not aligned to a research question and did provide an unexpected finding were labeled with a zero. As the comments were read the third time, the researcher assigned the number or numbers of the research question(s). For those comments that provided additional findings, they were divided among three categories – size of district and number of personnel curriculum, instruction, and support positions; time spent on the budget planning process; and impact of administrator and teacher reductions on student achievement and implementation of state and federal education mandates.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

The role and responsibilities of superintendents have changed due to the increased accountability for student achievement set forth by the NCLB Act. In addition, there is growing uncertainty for financing education coupled with the increasing cost of education.

Superintendents may have already experienced or could be considering future reductions in staff due to the financial constraints. Yet, superintendents are expected to lead school districts in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet the regulations and mandates established by the state and federal governments while their resources have and will continue to diminish.

The intent of this combined mixed method descriptive study was to explore the ways in which budget limitations had already or were expected to impact the functions of school superintendents and chief education officers in school districts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The study explored whether or not participating superintendents had already taken and/or would take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or whether these responsibilities had been or would be delegated to other district personnel and/or outside agencies.

### **Research Questions**

1. Due to budget limitations, will the superintendent take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or will these responsibilities be given to other district personnel and/or outside agencies?
2. In what ways do superintendents perceive the responsibilities of personnel within the district for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?

3. How would anticipated budget limitations affect the superintendent's planning for the use district personnel to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
4. What resources do superintendents perceive are necessary to support district personnel for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
5. What are the similarities and differences by superintendents among various states in their decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment when facing budget limitations?

Chapter four provides a detailed report on the data generated by the survey instrument that was sent to superintendents in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont (see Appendix C). Descriptive statistics were used to provide data for each of the research questions. This chapter includes tables and graphs to report the responses of the participants.

The last question of the survey allowed participants to share their thoughts on the impact of the fiscal limitations on their role and responsibilities as superintendent. These responses were anonymous. Therefore, the researcher cited their comments throughout Chapter 4 as "one respondent," with (2012) either before or after the quote to indicate that the comment came from one of the respondents participating in the research.

The findings of this exploratory research must be interpreted with caution as a result of the size of the sample participating in the study. The response rate caused significant limitations for the generalizability of the study's findings.

## Sample Demographic Data

The population of the study, displayed in Table 2, included the superintendents of school districts in six states: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York with the exception of New York City, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. There were 150 superintendents who participated in the survey, with 102 superintendents completing the survey.

Table 2

### *Response Rates by State and Total*

State	Superintendents				
	Total	Participated in Survey		Completed Survey <sup>a</sup>	
	N	N	%	N	%
Connecticut	156	30	19.2%	22	14.1%
Massachusetts	295	53	18.0%	34	11.5%
New Jersey	590	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
New York	697	52	7.5%	34	4.9%
Pennsylvania	499	2	0.4%	1	0.2%
Vermont	59	12	20.3%	10	16.9%
Total	2296	150	6.5%	102	4.4%

<sup>a</sup>Percent participating determined by total number of superintendents in each state.

**Selection of the sample.** Email addresses for superintendents from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont were retrieved from their respective state departments of education. Superintendents from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania were invited to participate in the research survey through an electronic newsletter sent to them by their respective superintendents' association. Since it was not known how many of the superintendents from the latter three states received and/or were aware of the survey embedded in their organization's newsletter, calculation of an accurate response rate was not possible. Therefore, the response rate was

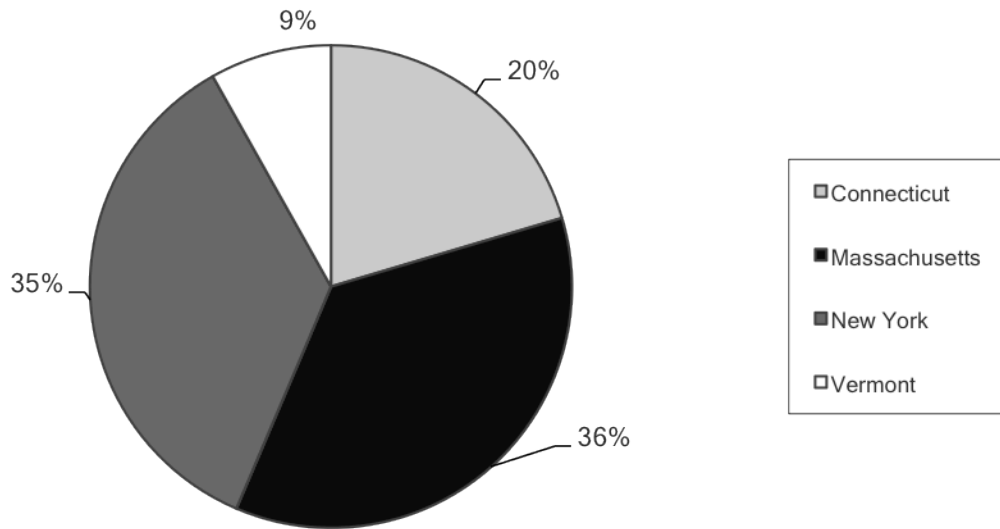
estimated using the total number of superintendents who might have received the survey. Table 2 shows the potential number of superintendents who could have participated along with the number of superintendents who actually did participate.

Vermont had the highest percent of superintendents completing the survey with 16.9%, followed by Connecticut (14.8%) and Massachusetts (11.5%). New Jersey and Pennsylvania had single digit response rates. The President of the Pennsylvania Administrator and Supervisor Association cautioned that the return from superintendents in that state might be low due to sending the survey during budget season and only having 25 superintendents respond to a recently conducted survey (personal communication, April 16, 2012). A high degree of superintendent turnover may have also impacted the response rate. Harnett (2012) reported about one-third of the superintendents had left their positions in Bergen County, New Jersey due to Governor Christie's implementation of a superintendent salary cap based on the number of students in the school district. This mobility would have reduced responses.

Due to the single-digit response rate from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, these data were not incorporated into the results of the study. The effect of dropping the reported results from New Jersey and Pennsylvania changed the overall number of respondents who participated in the survey from 150 to 147 and the number of respondents who completed the entire survey from 102 to 100 participants.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of superintendents participating in the survey by their respective state. Superintendents from Massachusetts and New York had the greatest percentage of those respondents participating in the survey at approximately 35% for each. These data represent the participants who began the survey and answered the first five questions.





*Figure 1.* State of superintendents participating in the survey.

The first part of the survey collected demographic data on the participants. These questions asked participants to provide their years of experience as superintendent including the current year as a full year, the state in which they were currently a superintendent, the size of the district's population, the poverty levels as measured by the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch, and financial data, such as the total budget and the percentage of the budget supported by state and federal funding.

Table 3 contains superintendent and school district demographics by each state. The demographic data were survey questions 1 – 5. The data showed that 12% of the superintendents were in their first year. The majority of respondents (81%) had less than 10 years of superintendency experience. This rate went to 84% for those superintendents completing the survey. Fifty-five percent of the superintendents completing the survey had five or less years of experience. Examining the data by states revealed that respondents from Vermont (75%) were least experienced in superintendent experience followed by respondents from Massachusetts

(62%) and New York (49%). Nine percent of the superintendents reported 20 or more years of experience as a superintendent, the majority of these were from Connecticut.

Table 3

*Participating Superintendent and School District Demographic Data by State*

Question & Category	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Years as a superintendent</b>						
1 – 5	10	33	25	9	77	53%
6 – 10	9	14	16	2	41	28%
11 – 20	5	5	9	0	19	13%
21 – 30	6	1	1	1	9	6%
<b>Number of students in school district</b>						
1,000 or less	9	4	20	3	36	24%
1,001 – 2,000	6	10	22	7	45	31%
2,001 – 3,000	3	19	1	2	25	17%
3,001 or more	12	20	9	0	41	28%
<b>Number of supervised school districts</b>						
1	28	48	52	3	131	89%
2 – 3	1	3	0	3	7	5%
4 – 5	0	1	0	4	5	3%
6 – 7	1	1	0	2	4	3%
<b>Free or reduced lunch rate</b>						
Less than 20%	24	33	11	1	69	47%
20% – 39%	5	15	11	3	34	23%
40% or more	1	5	30	8	44	30%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the 147 superintendents who began the survey.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents were in school districts with less than 3,000 students K-12. The smallest district had 160 students, while the largest school district had

11,000 students. While the majority of respondents (89%) reported responsibility for one school district, there were 11% of the respondents who oversaw more than one school district. These were located in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont and were responsible for 2 – 7 school districts.

Table 3 presents the data for the school district population and free or reduced lunch rates. It revealed that 69% of the respondents from school districts with 2000 students or less had 40% or more of their students receiving free and reduced lunch. For school districts with more than 2000 students, 65% of the respondents reported less than 20% of their students received free and reduced lunch.

In summary, the respondents were from school districts that ranged in size from small to large with high poverty to high wealth districts. Three-quarters of the superintendents had less than ten years of experience, and about 10% were responsible for two or more school districts.

After completing the initial questions related to demographic data, 68% of the respondents continued and completed the full survey.

Table 4 shows the school district financial data reported by the respondents. The majority of the respondents (75%) reported their 2011-12 budget to be less than \$40 million. Forty-four percent of the respondents reported that less than 10% of their total school budgets were subsidized with state and federal funding. However, the majority (73%) of the respondents who reported that 50% or more of their district budgets relied on state and federal funding were from New York.

Other data in Table 4 reveals 79% of the respondents had per pupil expenditures that range between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Only respondents from New York reported per pupil

expenditures of more than \$20,000, and 56% of those respondents were from school districts with 50% or more of their students receiving free or reduced lunch. The mean per pupil expenditure for all six states was \$14,267, with a median of \$13,055. The mean per pupil expenditure of respondents from Massachusetts and Vermont was below the mean of the respondents. New York was about \$3,000 above the mean.

Examining the school district budget and student population revealed that 95% of the respondents with budgets of \$20 million or less had K-12 student populations of less than 2,000 students. For those with school budgets between \$20 million to \$40 million, 55% of the respondents reported K-12 student populations less than 2,000 students. Only one respondent reported a school budget above \$40 million and also had less than 2,000 students.

In summary, three-quarters of the respondents had school budgets of less than \$40 million with a mean per pupil expenditure of \$14,267. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents anticipated a budget shortfall for 2012-13.

Table 4 revealed that 69% of the respondents who completed the survey anticipated a revenue shortfall during the 2012-13 budget development process. Respondents from Massachusetts and New York reported the largest percentages of anticipated budget shortfall at 74% and 88% respectively. The majority of respondents (61%) anticipated revenue shortfalls exceeding \$500,000. When comparing the anticipated revenue shortfall for the 2011-12 school budget, 86% of the respondents had a revenue shortfall exceeding more than 1% of the total 2011-12 school budget.

The financial data showed a range of budgets into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Student population numbers did not necessarily correspond to the amount of the district's budget. That is, a school district with 1,700 students could have had the same total budget as a school

district with 2,500 students. The majority of the respondents (70%) expected a budget shortfall as they planned their 2012-13 school budget. Previous data indicated that respondents were in charge of school districts with varying size, demographic, and financial backgrounds.

Table 4

*Financial Data for the School Districts Represented in the Sample*

Question & Category	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	%
<b>2011-12 Budget in millions</b>						
< \$20	7	11	13	5	36	36%
\$20 – < \$40	4	18	13	4	39	39%
\$40 – < \$160	11	5	8	1	25	25%
<b>State and federal funds</b>						
Less than 10%	10	20	9	5	44	44%
10% – 29%	8	9	7	2	26	26%
30% – 79%	4	5	18	3	30	30%
<b>Per pupil expenditure<sup>a</sup></b>						
\$5,000 – \$9,999	0	5	7	0	12	12%
\$10,000 – \$14,999	14	26	3	8	51	51%
\$15,000 – \$39,999	8	3	24	2	37	37%
Mean	\$14,295	\$11,830	\$17,158	\$13,631	\$14,267	
Median	\$14,000	\$11,689	\$17,607	\$12,800	\$13,055	
<b>Revenue Shortfall 2012-13</b>						
Yes	10	25	30	4	69	69%
No	12	9	4	6	31	31%
<b>Amount of Shortfall 2012-13 in millions</b>						
< \$.5	3	13	7	3	26	37%
\$.5 – < \$1	4	6	8	0	18	26%
\$1 or more	3	6	15	1	25	37%
<b>Percent of Shortfall<sup>b</sup></b>						
Less than 1%	3	3	1	2	9	13%
1% – < 4.9%	7	17	18	1	43	62%
5% – 12.9%	0	5	11	1	17	25%

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to nearest dollar. <sup>b</sup>Amount of budget shortfall compared to total budget for 2011-12.

The number of respondents who provided data varied based upon the construction of the survey, which allowed respondents to skip certain questions based upon previous answers. For example, if a respondent did not reduce administrative staff in the previous two years (Question 14), the respondent would not have answered questions 15-18, which were based upon the actions a superintendent had taken as a result of reducing administrative staff. These questions gathered data on school budget information; past and future reductions of administrators; superintendents responsibilities related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and the structures and systems that superintendents had in place to support their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

### **Superintendent Impact on Student Achievement**

The research questions examined the role and responsibilities of superintendents in curriculum, instruction, and assessment during a period in education when school districts continue to encounter fiscal limitations. The remainder of Chapter 4 analyzes the responses of superintendents by each research question through the use of tables and chi-square data.

**Research Question 1:** *Due to budget limitations, will the superintendent take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or will these responsibilities be given to other district personnel and/or outside agencies?*

The fiscal climate over the past two years has affected school districts differently in regards to the loss of district personnel, both teachers and administrators. The research explored the impact of fiscal limitations and administrative reductions during the past two years to the role and responsibilities of the superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Research question 1 began by examining the involvement of the superintendent with curriculum, instruction, and assessment, followed by examining the loss of administrative positions, and

finally by examining the positions in the school district that support curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 5 shows respondents in their position of superintendent reported that they were responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to varying degrees. Nearly all respondents (97%) reported that they were either directly (70%) or somewhat (27%) involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessments responsibilities.

Table 5

*Responding Superintendents' Responsibilities for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Response options	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Directly involved	59%	79%	74%	50%	70	70%
Somewhat involved	32%	21%	26%	40%	27	27%
Indirectly involved	9%	0%	0%	10%	3	3%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 6 provides a summary of the key leadership responsibilities of superintendents related to the improvement of student learning and achievement as determined by the literature. Respondents chose multiple items to illustrate their efforts to implement and evaluate the impact of curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student achievement. The data in Table 6 are listed in rank order by percent of responding participants.

Professional development (82%) and allocation of resources (71%) to address student achievement and teacher instruction were the most highly reported areas of responsibility by respondents. Teacher and principal evaluations provide feedback to improve student achievement and classroom instruction (69%) was third. Yet, the teacher and evaluation system for feedback was chosen by 82% respondents from New York. Establishing nonnegotiable goals

for student achievement had the lowest response (31%), followed by establishing clear, effective instructional practices and expectations (47%).

Table 6

*Responding Superintendents' Responsibilities Related to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Shown in Rank Order*

Responsibilities	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Professional development	18	27	28	9	82	82%
Resource allocation	15	23	24	9	71	71%
Teacher/principal evaluations	16	18	28	7	69	69%
Curriculum alignment	13	23	16	7	59	59%
Communication systems	12	16	21	9	58	58%
District assessments	15	19	16	7	57	57%
Schedule to monitor goals	14	16	22	4	56	56%
Principals autonomy <sup>b</sup>	12	17	19	7	55	55%
Classroom walk-throughs	11	17	17	6	51	51%
Instructional practices	12	14	16	5	47	47%
Student achievement goals <sup>c</sup>	7	12	10	2	31	31%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey. <sup>b</sup>Building principals are given autonomy to meet district goals. <sup>c</sup>Established nonnegotiable goals for student achievement.

Respondents were able to add other actions used to support their efforts to implement and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Other measures reported by the respondents included the development of structures within the district, collaboration with neighboring school



districts, formation of PLCs, and use of outside educational agencies such as the New York State Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) and their network teams as provided by respondents from New York. Network teams were established to assist school districts in the implementation of RTTT.

Superintendents reported their various responsibilities related to student learning and achievement. Monitoring such responsibilities was assisted by the establishment of communication systems.

Table 7 presents frequency responses for the systems that superintendents used to communicate their vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to administrators and teachers. The top five methods for communicating this vision were: 1) administrative meetings (92%), 2) opening day meeting with all staff (86%), 3) professional development (80%), 4) faculty meetings (74%), and 5) committee meetings (73%). The lowest responses among respondents pertained to the vision printed on all digital and written materials (28%). Respondents reported a greater propensity to communicate their vision internally and not externally.

Respondents had the opportunity to provide other methods for communication of their vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These methods included social media, such as twitter, the use of blogs, television interviews, PLCs, goal setting meetings, and the observation of all non-tenured teachers by the superintendent. In addition, respondents indicated that the vision, mission, and goals were displayed in various places throughout each building of the school district.

Fiscal limitations experienced in the past two years resulted in the reduction of administrative positions, both at the district and building levels. Table 8 reports the data,

indicating the reduction of administrative positions in the previous two years. Respondents were able to select more than one type of administrative position that was reduced. Data displayed in Table 8 indicate about half of the respondents reduced administrative positions in the past two years. District level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were reduced by 15%.

Table 7

*Responding Superintendents' Methods for Professional Communication Regarding Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Shown in Rank Order*

Method	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Administrative meetings	18	32	32	10	92	92%
Opening day staff meeting	19	24	33	10	86	86%
Professional development	15	28	28	9	80	80%
Faculty meetings	14	25	28	7	74	74%
Committee meetings	15	27	22	9	73	73%
Email	16	21	29	5	71	71%
Administrators	11	22	25	8	66	66%
Evaluation process	11	19	24	7	61	61%
District website	12	21	20	6	59	59%
Newsletters	11	13	22	5	51	51%
Vision printed on materials	6	9	9	4	28	28%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 8

*Responding Superintendents who Eliminated Administrative Positions in Previous Two Years*

Positions eliminated	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
No administrators	16	16	11	9	52	52%
Other administrators <sup>b</sup>	5	16	18	1	40	40%
Director of Curriculum and Instruction	1	3	6	0	10	10%
Assistant Superintendent	1	2	2	0	5	5%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey. <sup>b</sup>Building level administrators or administrators not specifically listed in the above table.

The reduction of administrative positions in the previous two years impacted the role and responsibilities of superintendents differently. Table 9 shows the self-reporting of superintendents who have reduced administrative positions in the previous two years.

Table 9

*Budget Impact on Responding Superintendents' Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) in Previous Two Years Due to Reductions in Administrators*

Level of involvement with CIA	Percent
Significantly greater	35%
Greater	41%
Remained the same	18%
Lessened	6%

Note. N = 51.

The fiscal situation over the past two years resulted in the reduction of administrative positions, as reported by about 50% of the respondents. Table 9 shows that administrative reductions in the previous two years resulted in 76% of superintendents having significantly

greater or greater involvement for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The 6% of respondents who reported that their level of involvement would be less with the cuts in administrators assigned responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to other administrators and teachers.

Although superintendents did take on greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they delegated these responsibilities to other administrators, as well as to outside educational agencies and/or consultants. Table 10 shows the distribution of positions and/or agencies that were given curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibilities by the superintendent.

Respondents were able to choose all of the positions that were assigned greater responsibility. If the response option was not listed, respondents had the opportunity to write their response, such as another position, that they took on the responsibility themselves, or that no one was assigned additional responsibility.

Principals (73%) and central office administrators (65%) were assigned greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of reductions in administrative personnel over the past two years. Since respondents were able to choose multiple responses for survey question 21, 94% of the superintendents reported that they reassigned additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to principals and central office administrators. The written responses given by respondents focused on increased responsibility for the superintendent, other administrators, and committees or teams of teachers supervised by the principal.

Although Table 10 shows that only 6% of respondents chose outside agencies/consultants, Table 11 displays the data that superintendents reported for the use of outside agencies and consultants in the previous two years.

Table 10

*Positions or Agencies with Greater Responsibility for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Response options	Percent
Principals	73%
Other office administrators	65%
Other administrators	33%
Teachers	28%
State/regional agencies/cooperatives	4%
Private educational consultants	2%
Other	12%

*Note.* N = 51.

Table 11 shows data from respondents who reduced administrative positions as a result of fiscal limitations over the previous two years. Over half of the respondents did not change their use of outside educational agencies and consultants in the previous two years to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of reductions in administrative positions. Respondents from New York included the use of services from their regional BOCES and their RTTT network teams. Respondents from Massachusetts included their local regional district's special education program.

The cross tabulation data for the level of the superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as self-reported by the respondents, shows a statistically significant relationship (see Table 12). However, there were notable findings among the comparisons that were not statistically significant.

Table 11

*Pattern of Usage of Outside Educational Agencies and/or Consultants*

Use of outside educational agencies or private consultants	Percent
Began to use agencies	12%
Began to use consultants	8%
Increased use of agencies	22%
Increased use of consultants	10%
Use of agencies remained the same	16%
Use of consultants remained the same	8%
Did not use agencies	29%
Did not use consultants	26%

Note.  $N = 51$ .

Table 12

*Chi-Square Results for the Level of Superintendent Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA)*

Factors impacting level of superintendent involvement with CIA	$\chi^2$	df	asympt sig
Superintendent classroom walkthrough	5.832	2	0.05
District level position for CIA	4.506	2	0.11
Years as superintendent	10.321	6	0.11
Principal responsibility for CIA	6.500	4	0.17
Outside agencies/consultants reductions previous 2 years	3.472	2	0.18

The cross tabulation that showed a statistical significance pertained to the level of superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment and classroom walkthroughs performed by superintendents ( $\chi^2 = 5.832, p = .05$ ). Superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were about one and one-half times more likely to conduct regularly scheduled walkthroughs of classroom instruction in

relation to superintendents who reported being somewhat involved in curriculum instruction and assessment. The combined data showed superintendents almost split in their commitment to conduct classroom walkthroughs.

Other chi-square results that were not statistically significant pertaining to the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment presented notable findings. Superintendents who had a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two times more likely to be involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents without a district level position reported five times more often to be directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment as opposed to superintendents who reported being somewhat involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents with less than ten years of superintendency experience were more likely to report being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Superintendents who were directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two to three times more likely to report that principals were also directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents who were somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two times more likely to report that principals had a shared responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment compared to superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Superintendents who reported being somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two times more likely not to use outside agencies in previous two years; whereas, superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two and one-half times more likely to increase the use of outside consultants and agencies in previous two years.

This exploratory study examined the relationship of the level of superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the number of years of superintendent experience, whether the superintendent conducted classroom walkthroughs, and size of school district. The model summary ( $R^2 = .122$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .094$ ) did not show a strong relationship among these variables. However, the ANOVA ( $r = 3.403$ ,  $p = .006$ ) was significant. It was interesting to note that two of the variables, superintendent years of experience and classroom walkthroughs, contributed the relationship; however, size of school districts did not.

The research of Marzano and Waters (2009) showed the positive impact of five superintendent responsibilities on student achievement. One of these responsibilities pertained to nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and instructional expectations for teachers. The survey for this study separated this responsibility into two parts: nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and clear, effective instructional practices and expectations. The data for nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and clear, effective instructional practices and expectations did not yield statistically significant relationships. Overall, the data showed superintendents were two times more likely not to have nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and were split in having nonnegotiable goals for clear and effective instructional practices for their school districts. Superintendents directly involved and somewhat involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two times and three times, respectively, more likely not to have nonnegotiable goals for student achievement.

The qualitative part of this mixed method research was based on the last question of the survey which provided respondents the opportunity to share any additional thoughts that



pertained to the impact of the recent fiscal limitations on their roles and responsibilities as superintendent. The responses from the respondents were anonymous.

The responses from superintendents indicated that they had taken a greater role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment due the administrative reductions that resulted from the previous and current fiscal limitations. Superintendents realized the importance of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and its impact on student achievement. Thus, they allocated resources to improve teaching and learning. To ensure the implementation and assist in the evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, superintendents formally observed and completed written evaluations of teachers.

The time required by superintendents spent on developing, planning, and promoting the budget competed with their time spent on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. One respondent (2012) revealed:

Significantly more time spent developing, planning and advocating for the fiscal plan than I should be, compared to the other aspects of the position that are as, if not more, important. We spend an inordinate amount of time preparing, proposing and defending budgets.

Superintendents reported doing the jobs of other administrative positions that had been eliminated due to the fiscal limitations, which took time away from curriculum, instruction, and assessment. One respondent (2012) commented: “In addition to being the superintendent, I am also the following job titles: IT Director, Business manager, treasurer, CIO, Athletic Director in addition to substituting for the building principal and superintendent for buildings and grounds when they are absent.” For superintendents in states that were awarded RTTT funding, there were other regulations that needed to be implemented and training that needed to be provided at

additional cost, such as a new APPR and CCSS. These mandates may support curriculum, instruction, and assessment, yet, the time to review, understand, and implement such policies took the superintendent away from curriculum, instruction, and assessment. “Training and implementation of new APPR and other state mandates have reduced opportunities to get directly involved in day to day instruction” (Respondent, 2012).

Superintendents indicated that they are not able to accomplish all that needed to be done on their own. In these times of fiscal limitations, people within the organization were given additional responsibilities.

Less money has resulted in fewer staff members. The workload to be accomplished has increased. Thus, those remaining staff members have to do more. Everyone, from the Superintendent on down is doing more with less. It is an unsustainable equation and not what is best for student achievement. (Respondent, 2012)

**Research Question 2:** *In what ways do superintendents perceive the responsibilities of personnel within the district for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?*

Research question 2 examined the personnel that superintendents had in their districts to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment; positions related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment provide support for superintendents to monitor and evaluate curriculum, instruction, and assessment within districts; and the responsibilities of those positions to inform superintendents regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The tables associated with this research question summarize the data obtained from the survey questions provided by the respondents who completed the survey.

Information on district level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment is presented in Table 13. The majority of the respondents (69%) indicated that their districts had a district position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition, 84% of the respondents without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were superintendents of districts with less than 1,700 students. In the previous two years, 16% of respondents reported that their districts had eliminated an assistant superintendent or director of curriculum and instruction.

Table 13

*Percent of Responding Superintendents who Reported a District Level Position for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Response	State				Total
	CT	MA	NY	VT	%
Yes	68%	76%	59%	90%	69%
No	32%	24%	41%	10%	31%

For respondents (30%) that reported no district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, about one-third reported no other building level support for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, including being without a director of special education (SE) or pupil personnel services (PPS) position. About one-third of these superintendents had only one other supportive position, mainly a director of SE or PPS. The remaining one-third of these respondents reported having a director of SE or PPS in addition to other positions, such as head teachers, department chairs, literacy coaches/mentors, and assessment/data positions. Eighty-four percent of the respondents without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment had less than 1,700 students.

The next two tables, 14 and 15, examine the level of responsibility that superintendents had given to principals in their districts for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 14

*Principal Responsibility for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Level of responsibility	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Directly responsible	6	15	22	6	49	49%
Mostly responsible	4	7	4	1	16	16%
Shared responsibility	11	11	8	3	33	33%
Limited responsibility	0	1	0	1	1	1%
Other	1	0	0	1	1	1%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 14 shows that 49% of the respondents believed that their principals were directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their buildings, with another 16% reporting that principals were mostly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their buildings. A further examination of the data revealed that 87% of the respondents who did not have a district position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment indicated that the principal was either directly or mostly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the building compared to 56% of the respondents who had a district position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 15 illustrates key responsibilities of principals to promote and monitor effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in their buildings. Respondents were able to choose multiple responses to describe the role that principals had in supporting the efforts of

superintendents to implement and monitor the curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs on student achievement in their building. Each responsibility listed in the survey had a response rate of over 50%.

Table 15

*Principal's Role and Responsibility for Implementing Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA)*

Responsibility	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Monitors and evaluates CIA	15	26	28	9	78	78%
Knowledgeable of CIA practices	17	22	29	8	76	76%
Faculty meetings focus on professional development	16	23	27	9	75	75%
Design and implement CIA	13	21	24	8	66	66%
Data driven instruction	13	20	22	9	64	64%
Communicates nonnegotiable goals	12	18	21	7	58	58%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

The majority of respondents (84%) chose more than one of the available responses. Three responses were selected by more than 70% of the respondents: monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (78%); remains knowledgeable of current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices (76%); and faculty meetings focus on professional development designed to improve school-wide curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices (75%). Sixty-six percent of the respondents reported that principals were directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Previously, data revealed that 31% of the respondents did not have a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A further examination of this data showed that 72% of those respondents who did not have the district level curriculum, instruction, and assessment position reported that principals were directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as compared to 59% of the respondents who had a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The written responses provided by superintendents included facilitation of committees such as PLCs, inquiry teams, and curriculum committees, as well as feedback provided to teachers from brief informal classroom observations.

Table 16 represents the data collected from respondents pertaining to the various positions that existed within the district to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Respondents were able to choose all applicable positions and to write in positions that were not available in the choices. The survey question focused on the support-related curriculum, instruction, and assessment positions and did not examine the role or job description of these positions within the school district. It is important to note that 16% of the respondents reported having none of these support positions in their districts. Meanwhile, 71% of the respondents did report a director of special education or PPS as a support position.

Eighty-four percent of the respondents reported having one or more of the listed positions. The data show that 89% of the respondents who had only one support position reported the position was a director of SE/PPS. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported having three or more support positions related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Less than one-half of the respondents reported department chairs or head teachers for the four core curricula areas. In addition, respondents reported that literacy and math coaches/mentors were

Table 16

*Support Positions Related to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Shown by State*

Responsibility	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
DC or HT for ELA	9	19	12	5	45	44%
DC or HT for math	9	20	11	5	45	44%
DC or HT for science	8	18	11	5	42	41%
DT or HT for social studies	9	18	11	4	42	41%
Literacy coach or mentor	13	12	6	5	36	35%
Math coach or mentor	11	11	0	4	26	26%
Assessment/data team coordinator	4	4	8	1	17	17%
Director of ELA	6	4	4	1	15	15%
Director of math	4	3	3	1	11	11%
Director of science	4	3	3	0	10	10%
Director of social studies	2	3	4	0	9	9%
Director of STEM	3	0	0	0	3	3%
Director of ELA/social studies	1	0	2	0	3	3%
Director of MST	1	0	1	0	2	2%
Other	5	8	2	1	16	16%

*Note.* DC = Department Chair. HT = Head Teacher. ELA = English and Language Arts. STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. MST = Math, Science, and Technology.

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

lower yet, about one-third and one-fourth respectively having such positions. Although there is greater accountability for student achievement based upon ELA and math state exams, the majority of superintendents did not have support positions related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, placing more responsibility on the shoulders of superintendents.

Respondents were able to write other types of curricular, instructional, or assessment positions that were not on the original list such as building level, represented non-core academic areas, elementary or secondary, coordinators, consultants, or targeted instructional technology.

These responses included:

- Curriculum specialists for math, ELA, science, social studies, 7-12 foreign language;
- Inquiry teams have replaced former department chairs and content area coordinators;
- Elementary and Secondary Director of Curriculum; Assistant Superintendents for Elementary and Secondary (who also share business and personnel);
- Staff Development PreK – 12;
- Director of Human Capital Development;
- Director of Technology Integration;
- District Reading/Language Consultant, District Mathematics Consultant; and
- Chief Academic Officer, K – 12 Curriculum Coordinator.

A respondent (2012) who reported not having any support positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment replied: “We are a one-school district currently in the process of entertaining regionalization K-12. During this transition period, we have a consultant handling SPED Dir[ector] role. I handle Superintendent, Curriculum Director, and Principal roles.”

Table 6 showed that 55% of the respondents reported that their principals had autonomy to achieve district goals. Tables 14 and 15 had response rates that were very close pertaining to



the level of responsibility (65%), directly or mostly, given to principals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and principal involvement with the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (66%). A respondent (2012) wrote: “Principals are expected to ensure that the core curriculum for each subject is implemented at each grade level.”

The data pertaining to a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was compared to other curriculum, instruction, and assessment support structures within the survey. Following a descriptive analysis using cross tabulation, chi-square was used to determine if any statistically significant relationships existed among the variables. Table 17 shows the results of the chi-square analyses, which revealed five statistically significant relationships.

Table 17

*Chi-Square Results for District Level Position for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) in Relationship to Additional Structures of Support*

Additional structures of support for CIA	$\chi^2$	df	asyp sig
Additional responsibilities for CIA previous 2 years	12.809	2	0.002
Core director position	8.039	1	0.010
Coaches/mentors of ELA/math	7.479	1	0.010
Principal responsibility for CIA	9.848	2	0.010
Department chair/head teacher	6.049	2	0.010

*Note.* ELA = English and Language Arts.

There were five cross tabulations completed for the district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment that provided chi-square results that were highly statistically significant. These results related to the assignment of additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; core curriculum directors; coaches/mentors for ELA and math;

principal responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and department chairs/head teachers for curriculum areas.

In the previous two years, superintendents had reduced administrative personnel and had reassigned curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibilities to other district and building administrators. The data ( $\chi^2 = 12.809, p = .002$ ) showed a highly statistically significant relationship between the district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the reassignment of such responsibilities to principals and central office/district level administrators. Superintendents who had a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were about three times more likely to assign additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to both central office/district level administrators and principals and two times more likely to assign these responsibilities solely to central office/district level administrators compared to superintendents who reported not having such a district level position. Superintendents without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were four times more likely to assign additional responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment solely to principals.

Superintendents who reported not having a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment also reported not having core curriculum director positions ( $\chi^2 = 8.039, p = .005$ ). In addition, only one-fifth of the superintendents who reported a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment had one or more core curriculum directors.

The cross tabulation of data ( $\chi^2 = 7.497, p = .006$ ) revealed that superintendents who reported having a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two and one-half times more likely to have coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math than superintendents who did not have this district level position.

Superintendents who reported a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment ( $\chi^2 = 9.848, p = .007$ ) were three and one-half times more likely to report that the principal shared this responsibility compared to superintendents who did not have such a position. In school districts without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, superintendents were about two times more likely to report that principals had direct responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment compared to superintendents who had such a district level position.

The data that examined a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and department chairs/head teachers for the core curricular areas showed a statistically significant relationship did exist ( $\chi^2 = 6.049, p = .012$ ). Superintendents who reported having a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were about two times more likely to have one or more department chairs/head teachers compared to superintendents who do not have such a position. Superintendents who reported not having a district level curriculum, instruction, and assessment position were one and one-half times more likely not to have department chairs/head teachers, than coaches/mentors for ELA and math. The data showed that superintendents without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment had fewer support-related positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Thus, these superintendents placed greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment on their principals.

The qualitative part of this mixed method research was based on the last question of the survey, which provided respondents the opportunity to share any additional thoughts that pertained to the impact of the recent fiscal limitations on their roles and responsibilities as superintendent. Respondents reported that the fiscal limitations that had been plaguing school

districts for the past few years required that administrators and teachers take on more responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Respondents expressed concerns regarding the inability to meet state educational regulations and remain compliant with state education policies with fewer personnel. The demands of implementing the CCSS to increase the rigor for students' learning and to implement a new system of teacher and principal evaluation were of significant concern to the respondents. The following are written responses from respondents (2012) for the shared responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their school districts:

- “The current budget situation has far too many responsibilities for one person to do and do well. Thus, there needs to be shared responsibility.”
- “I rely on the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction to deal with state education reporting and alignment of curriculum to the CCSS.”
- The current budget situation has really dampened the ability of the district staff to ensure that the curricula are implemented correctly. With the implementation of the CCSS and other mandated revisions, the fact that the district cannot afford a true curriculum person, I am certain that there will be areas of non-compliance and increased responsibilities to the building principals and district administrator.

**Research Question 3:** *How would anticipated budget limitations affect the superintendent's planning for the use district personnel to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment?*

Since the start of the Great Recession of the 21st century, school districts have faced fiscal limitations. For the 2012-13 fiscal year, McNichol et al. (2012) revealed that state revenues continued to be below pre-recession levels, and 30 states projected a combined \$49

billion shortfall in revenue which add to the previous four year short fall of \$530 billion. Given the anticipated fiscal limitations that superintendents were using to develop the 2012-13 school budget, the survey attempted to gather data to examine superintendent decision making regarding personnel and curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Figure 2 shows that 69% of respondents reported the anticipation of a budget shortfall for the 2012-13 school year. Survey question 19 asked these respondents to provide possible approaches to close the gap between anticipated revenues and expenses, such as using reserve funds or recuing teachers and administrators.

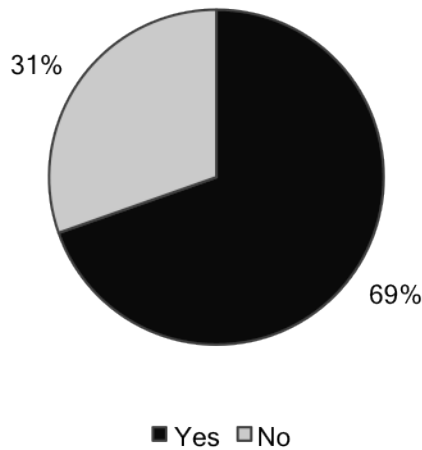


Figure 2. Anticipated revenue shortfalls for 2012-13.

Table 18 represents data from question 19, in which respondents who anticipated a budget shortfall for 2012-13 were able to choose multiple responses demonstrating their actions to address this situation the shortfall. Although 64% of the respondents reported that they would use reserve funds to prevent reductions in administrators, teachers, and/or support staff, the majority (70%) of respondents still reported the reduction of teaching staff. In addition, 59% of respondents reported that they would reduce support staff, and 33% would reduce district and

building administrators. Respondents (38%) indicated that previous reductions of administrative, teaching, and staffing positions allowed them not to reduce any positions for 2012-13.

Table 18

*Actions to Address 2012-13 Anticipated Budget Shortfall Shown in Rank Order*

Action Taken	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Reduction teachers	7	13	24	4	48	70%
Use reserve funds	5	11	23	5	44	64%
Reduction support staff	7	8	22	4	41	59%
Seek additional revenue	6	12	17	4	39	57%
No reductions in administrators	10	7	5	5	27	39%
Previous reductions	6	10	6	4	26	38%
Reduction extra-curricular activities	2	7	12	0	21	30%
Reduction district administrators	2	5	5	0	12	17%
Reduction building administrators	0	5	5	1	11	16%

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the 69 respondents anticipating a budget shortfall.

The data showed respondents from New York (87%) were most likely to use reserve funds and still find it necessary to reduce teaching positions to address the anticipated budget shortfall for 2012-13. Respondents from Massachusetts were least likely to reduce teaching, administrative, and/or support staff positions to address the budget shortfall for 2012-13.

Possible methods for superintendents to address the 2012-13 anticipated budget shortfall varied; however, reduction of district and building level administrators was chosen by

respondents. Table 19 shows how future reductions in administrators would impact the level of involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment for superintendents.

Table 19

*Budget Impact on Superintendent Role and Responsibilities for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) 2012-13 Due to Reduction in Administrators*

Level of involvement for CIA	Percent
Significantly greater	13%
Greater	28%
Remained the same	47%
Other	12%

*Note.* N = 32.

Question 20 asked respondents to predict the impact of the 2012-13 budget on their level of involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment due to anticipated cuts in administrative personnel. The data for the 2012-13 anticipated level of involvement for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was different from the 76% of respondents who reported significantly greater or greater involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the previous two years. The anticipated impact for 47% of the superintendents was that their level of involvement would remain the same, while 41% reported a significantly greater or greater involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 20 represents data from Question 21 from the survey, which asked respondents to indicate to whom they would assign greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of possible reductions in administrative positions in 2012-13.

Respondents were able to choose more than one selection from positions within the district, as well as from those outside of the district, that superintendents anticipated assigning greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as to provide their own

responses if needed. The data showed that respondents reported principals (56%) and central office administrators (38%) were the top two choices for reassigning the workload for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 20

*Positions or Agencies with Greater Responsibility for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Due to Budget Impact 2012-13*

Response	Percent
Principals	56%
Central office administrators	38%
Other administrators	19%
Teachers	34%
State/regional agencies/cooperatives	16%
Private educational consultants	3%

*Note.* N = 32.

Table 10 examined the data from respondents who reported reductions in the previous two years. In comparing Tables 10 and 20, principals and central office administration were the top two choices by respondents for assigning additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a result of reductions in administrative positions. The percent of respondents choosing other administrators decreased from 33% to 18%. Respondent use of state/regional agencies/cooperatives revealed a significant increase from the data in Table 10 (previous two years) to Table 20 (anticipated 2012-13). However, given this study’s response rate, these data should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 21 shows data from survey question 22 pertaining to the use of outside educational agencies and consultants by superintendents as a result of possible reductions in administrative personnel as a result of an anticipated budget shortfall for the 2012-13 school year. The data showed that there were superintendents who would increase the use (6% to 19%) or begin to use



(6%) outside agencies to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts, while about one-third would remain the same with their use of outside agencies and/or consultants.

Table 21

*Anticipated Use of Outside Educational Agencies and/or Consultants to Support Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment due to Budget Impact 2012-13*

Use of outside educational agencies or private consultants	Percent
Began to use agencies	6%
Began to use consultants	6%
Increased use of agencies	19%
Increased use of consultants	6%
Use of agencies remained the same	38%
Use of consultants remained the same	31%
Would not use agencies	9%
Would not use consultants	25%

Note. N = 32.

Table 22 contains the cross tabulation data resulting from the potential impact of fiscal limitations for 2012-13 and the decision making of the superintendent pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The data examined the level of superintendent responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as the use of outside educational resources. Table 22 lists the chi-square data, which must be considered with caution due to the low response rate pertaining to the criteria.

In the previous two years, superintendents had reduced administrative personnel. Superintendents had reassigned curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibilities to other district and building personnel. The data ( $\chi^2 = 12.809, p = .002$ ) showed a highly statistically significant relationship between the district level position for curriculum, instruction, and

assessment and the reassignment of such responsibilities to principals and central office/district level administrators. Superintendents who had a district level position for CIA were about three times more likely to report shared responsibilities among central office/district level administrators and principals and two times more likely to assign central office/district level administrators responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were four times more likely to assign additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to principals while more of their time was being consumed with the budget process.

Table 22

*Chi-Square Results for Impact of Past and Possible Future Fiscal Limitations*

District CIA position and superintendent CIA involvement	Past and future decisions	$\chi^2$	df	asympt sig
District CIA position	Additional responsibilities for CIA prior 2 years	12.809	2	0.002
Superintendent CIA involvement	Additional responsibilities for CIA prior 2 years	2.489	2	0.290
Superintendent CIA involvement	Additional responsibilities for CIA 2012-13	1.909	2	0.390
Superintendent CIA involvement	Level of Superintendent involvement for CIA 2012-13	4.467	6	0.610
Superintendent CIA involvement	Outside agencies/consultants 2012-13	1.565	4	0.820
District CIA position	Outside agencies/consultants 2012-13	0.256	2	0.880

*Note.* CIA = Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Although the remainder of the cross tabulations did not result in statistically significant findings, the data revealed notable information relative to decisions made in the previous two years and anticipated decisions for 2012-13 due to reductions in administrators. In the previous two years, superintendents who reported being somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction,

and assessment were one and one-half times more likely than superintendent who reported being directly involved to assign additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to both central office/district administrators and principals. For 2012-13, superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were two times more likely to assign additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to both central office/district administrators and principals compared to assigning such responsibilities to only principals.

The increase in use of outside educational agencies and/or consultants had virtually no relationship to the level of curriculum, instruction, and assessment involvement from the superintendent nor to the existence of a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As school districts reduce administrative staff, their responsibilities related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment must be done by others. With fewer administrators, superintendents may rely on these outside educational agencies and/or consultants, which they had previously contracted with to support their efforts in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The qualitative part of this mixed method research is based on the last question of the survey which provided respondents the opportunity to share any additional thoughts that pertained to the impact of the recent fiscal limitation on their roles and responsibilities as superintendent. The responses from the respondents were anonymous.

The concern of many of the superintendents participating in the study was being required to implement more state and federal educational mandates with less resources, both personnel and financial. Written responses from respondents (2012) included the following:

- “[T]he fact that the district cannot afford a true curriculum person, I am certain that there will be areas of non-compliance and increased responsibilities to the building principals and district administrator.”
- “The current budget situation has far too many responsibilities for one person to do and to do well. Thus, there needs to be shared responsibility.”
- With future reductions in state aid, the district will be forced to cut more administrators and teachers which will make my job of implementing state mandates more difficult leading the district to not being able to provide the educational programs to meet state requirements.

**Research Question 4:** *What resources do superintendents perceive are necessary to support district personnel for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?*

Research question 4 examined the resources, including the personnel and educational structures, that superintendents believed were necessary to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In Table 23, respondents were able to choose among various frequencies and methods of being informed about the effectiveness of the district’s curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student achievement. All percentages were calculated with the use of the 100 respondents who provided responses to this survey question for a consistent baseline measure for each calculation. Respondents were able to choose multiple responses. The data for meetings and reports that were weekly or two times per month were combined into one category, two or more, to facilitate the comparison of data.

Table 23

*Responding Superintendents' Use of Reports and Meetings to Stay Informed of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Method & frequency per month	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Meetings central administration						
1 time	1	1	4	4	11	11%
2 or more	12	30	22	6	71	71%
Reports central administration						
1 time	0	4	6	5	15	15%
2 or more	10	17	12	2	42	42%
Meetings principals						
1 time	6	5	7	2	21	21%
2 or more	14	26	26	8	75	75%
Reports principals						
1 time	5	11	16	6	38	38%
2 or more	7	14	12	3	37	37%
Meetings curriculum administrators						
1 time	2	12	5	2	21	21%
2 or more	11	11	12	6	40	40%
Reports curriculum administrators						
1 time	2	13	2	3	20	20%
2 or more	7	6	10	3	26	26%
Administrative team meetings						
1 time	7	6	6	4	24	24%
2 or more	10	22	26	6	65	65%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 23 shows that superintendents were more likely to have meetings with their administrators rather than to receive written reports to remain informed about curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The data show that superintendents were more likely to meet two or more times per month with their administrators – principals (75%), central office administrators (71%), and curriculum administrators (40%). Superintendents reported principals (75%) were

required to provide one or more written reports on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, followed by central office administrators (57%) and curriculum administrators (46%). The majority (89%) of superintendents reported having administrative team meetings to keep informed of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition to the meetings and written reports that superintendents reported using to keep informed of the effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs in their districts, they also reported the use of email (89%) and phone conversations (65%).

Respondents were able to share other avenues for meeting with district administrators to keep the superintendent informed about the state of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district. These included other regularly scheduled meetings; informal conversations and meetings; technology, such as dashboards with periodic updates and Google docs; and having other district personnel led meetings. Examples were assistant superintendent monthly principal meetings, data meetings, and District Leadership Council.

Table 24 shows the responses from superintendents for the support of PLCs to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts. The majority of respondents (84%) reported being supportive of PLCs in their districts. Vermont (100%) and Massachusetts (88%) had the highest percent of respondents reporting support for PLCs. The use of PLCs provides another system of support for superintendents to utilize district personnel, teachers and administrators, in their efforts to implement and evaluate curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning and achievement.

PLCs provide time for administrators and teachers to meet regularly to discuss student data to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Table 25 shows the various frequencies

of meetings that superintendents reported administrators and teachers had to meet, review, and discuss student data for the purpose of improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 24

*Responding Superintendents who Report Being Supportive of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Response	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Yes	77%	88%	79%	100%	84	84%
No	14%	9%	21%	0%	13	13%
No response	9%	3%	0%	0%	3	3%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 25

*Responding Superintendents who Regularly Schedule Meeting Time for Administrators and Teachers to Review Student Data to Inform Instruction*

Frequency of meetings	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Monthly	12	17	9	9	47	47%
Quarterly	4	8	10	1	23	23%
Semi-annually	0	2	5	0	7	7%
Annually	0	3	0	0	3	3%
Do not review data	0	0	1	0	1	1%
Other	4	4	0	0	17	17%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 25 indicates that the majority of respondents (98%) provided administrators and teachers regularly scheduled meeting time to analyze data to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The greatest response was monthly meetings (47%), followed by quarterly meetings (23%). In addition, 17% of respondents provided additional responses for regularly scheduling meetings for administrators and teachers to meet and analyze data. These included meeting one to three times monthly, monthly release time, and extended meeting time to analyze data. Thus, the majority of respondents (64%) reported that district personnel met at least monthly to analyze curriculum, instruction, and assessment data to improve student performance.

One of the outcomes of the meetings to review student data is to inform curriculum.

Table 26 shows the core curricular areas that superintendents reported the K-12 mapping of the subject area.

Table 26

*Responding Superintendents Reporting Core Curriculum Maps K-12*

Subject	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Math	18	25	32	7	82	82%
English language arts	17	25	32	7	81	81%
Science	16	19	29	5	69	69%
Social studies	14	18	29	4	65	65%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

The information displayed in Table 16 represents the completion of curriculum mapping K-12 in the participating school districts. The majority of respondents reported having curriculum maps K-12 for ELA (81%), math (82%), science (69%), and social studies (65%).



Both ELA and math curriculum maps K-12 were over 80%. Of the 32 respondents who reported not having a district position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, 88% reported curriculum maps K-12 for ELA, 84% reported curriculum maps K-12 for math, 69% reported curriculum maps K-12 for science, and 63% reported curriculum maps K-12 for social studies.

Support for implementing and monitoring curriculum, assessment, and instruction can come from personnel within the school district or from external education agencies and/or consultants. Table 27 shows the various external agencies and consultants that superintendents reported employing in their efforts to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts. The superintendents were able to choose all responses that pertained to their school district.

Table 27

*Responding Superintendents who Use Outside Educational Agencies and/or Consultants to Support Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Education entity	State				Total	
	CT	MA	NY	VT	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Regional agencies/cooperatives	14	14	22	5	55	55%
Private consultants	12	13	6	8	39	39%
State agencies/consultants	7	12	6	6	31	31%
Colleges/universities	2	7	15	4	28	28%
Private agencies	1	9	6	1	17	17%
Not applicable	4	7	4	2	17	17%
Other	1	1	2	0	4	4%

<sup>a</sup>Percentage based upon the total number of superintendents who completed the survey.

Table 27 shows that the majority (83%) of superintendents reported the use of outside educational agencies and consultants to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The highest response from superintendents was the use of regional educational agencies/cooperatives

at 55%, followed by the use of private consultants at 39%. Seventeen percent of the superintendents reported that they did not use any outside educational agencies or consultants.

Table 28 contains the cross tabulation data resulting from the level of superintendent responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in relation to the various available systems and resources that superintendents provided to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Table 28 lists the chi-square data results from the cross tabulations.

Table 28

*Chi-Square Results for Responding Superintendents' Level Involvement for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Related to Resource Support for Teachers and Administrators*

District CIA position and superintendent CIA involvement	$\chi^2$	df	asympt sig
Professional learning communities	8.991	2	0.01
Meetings for administrators and teachers to review data	3.661	3	0.30
Professional development to support achievement and instruction	1.219	2	0.54
Written reports from administrators to the superintendent	2.726	4	0.61
Allocation of resources to support achievement and instruction	0.628	2	0.73

The data for Research question 4 examined the systems and resources that superintendents provided to assist teachers and administrators in the implementation and monitoring of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the district. Table 28 examined the level of the superintendent's involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to determine possible relationships with the various types of supports offered by the superintendent.

From the cross tabulation data, the strongest relationship ( $\chi^2 = 8.991, p = .01$ ) and a highly statistically significant pattern were found between the superintendent's level of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the superintendent's support of PLCs. Superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and

assessment were 13 times more likely to support PLCs; whereas, superintendents who reported being somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were about two and one-half times more likely to support PLCs.

Although the remainder of the comparisons was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ), there were interesting findings that arose from those comparisons. The number of scheduled meetings provided to administrators and teachers to review data showed that superintendents who were directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were five times more likely to allow 20 or more meetings per school year for the review of data to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions compared to superintendents who reported being somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The data from the remaining cross tabulations had limited strength in relationship to the level of superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These relationships involved targeting professional development to support instruction, requiring written reports from administrators, and allocating resources to support student achievement and instruction. It did not matter if the superintendent was directly or somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction and assessment; the superintendents reported closely related responses showing support of these resources.

The qualitative part of this mixed method research was based on the last question of the survey, which provided respondents the opportunity to share any additional thoughts that pertained to the impact of the recent fiscal limitations on their roles and responsibilities as superintendent. The responses from the respondents are anonymous.

Superintendents realized the importance of supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment through professional development, personnel, and financial resources. Yet, they

were concerned about the impact of fiscal limitations on their ability to provide the support necessary to ensure that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment program continued to improve student learning and achievement. The written responses regarding the resources that superintendents provided to district personnel in their efforts to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district have been divided into two categories.

The first category represents the steps superintendents had taken to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment efforts in their districts through fiscal accountability. Respondents indicated that fiscal limitations necessitated greater involvement in the budget development and planning process to prioritize the use of fiscal, personnel, and time resources to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The allocation of resources resulted in greater collaboration among central offices and district level personnel, principals, and teachers. The following comments were provided by respondents (2012):

- “[A]ligning resources to support these initiatives (personnel, time, resources and professional development), increased the need to communicate more internally and externally, and has increased the need to collaborate with administrators and teams of teachers.”
- “Much time is spent on reallocating resources to improve teaching and learning.”
- “We really work hard to align budget to our curriculum and instruction needs.”

The second category pertains to the impact that fiscal limitations had on the efforts of superintendents trying to provide adequate support and resources for district personnel to implement and evaluate curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts. This occurred at a time when school districts needed to implement CCSS and new APPR teacher and principal evaluation rubrics and prepare for the next generation of testing. Fiscal limitations resulted in

the reduction of administrators and teachers. The following comments were provided by respondents (2012):

- “Superintendent on down is doing more with less. It is an unsustainable equation and not what is best for student achievement.”
- “The current budget will severely hamper the district's ability to more than maintain the status quo at a time when Common Core alignment is a priority.”
- “The current budget situation has forced us to prioritize what is needed in the district based on our vision, mission, and district goals.”

Superintendents were also looking to technology and sharing personnel resources among school districts to support the necessary curriculum, instruction, and assessment initiatives and implementation within their districts. A respondent (2012) wrote:

I am working with neighboring districts on building curriculum across district boundaries. [I am] Attempting to create some shared positions focusing on curriculum and professional development. Cloud-based tools are helping in this effort.

Such initiatives may result in the realignment and/or reorganization of district administrators.

**Research Question 5:** *What are the similarities and differences by superintendents among various states in their decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment when facing budget limitations?*

Research question 5 explored the decision making of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in relation to the state in which the school district was located. The data examined the responses of the superintendents participating in the survey to determine relevant patterns of decision making, as well as the support structures and systems that these

superintendents had in place to assist in their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Ninety percent of the respondents from Vermont and 73% of the respondents from Connecticut reported that they did not eliminate any administrative positions in the previous two years. However, respondents from New York (68%) and Massachusetts (53%) reported eliminating administrative positions in the previous two years.

Superintendents from Massachusetts had a greater frequency of meetings (91%) and reports from central office (62%) and curriculum administrators (56%). New York superintendents had the greater frequency of meetings (97%) and reports from principals (82%).

Superintendents from New York (65%) and Connecticut (64%) had the greatest reliance on regional agencies/cooperatives. Colleges and universities were selected most by superintendents in New York, of which 44% reported their use in supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Cross tabulations were completed in relation to 27 responsibilities, structures, systems, and resources related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment to determine whether there were similarities or differences in the decision making of the superintendents who completed the survey. Table 29 shows the results that were found to be statistically significant, as well as other results that were not statistically significant, yet revealed notable findings.

The cross tabulation analyses based on the state in which the school district was located yielded five highly significant patterns from the 27 cross tabulations that were completed. The states were Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. These highly statistically significant findings included the anticipated 2012-13 budget shortfall ( $\chi^2 = 17.203$ ,

$p = .001$ ), administrative reductions in the previous two years ( $\chi^2 = 13.627, p = .003$ ), coaches/mentors for ELA and/or mathematics ( $\chi^2 = 12.705, p = .005$ ), years of superintendent experience ( $\chi^2 = 20.228, p = .02$ ), and scheduled meetings for administrators and teachers to review student data to inform instruction ( $\chi^2 = 19.807, p = .02$ ).

Table 29

*Chi-Square Results for Comparison of Responding Superintendents' Decision Making by State*

Responsibilities, structures, and systems	$\chi^2$	df	asympt sig
Budget shortfall	17.203	3	0.001
Administrative reductions previous 2 years	13.627	3	0.003
Coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math	12.705	3	0.005
Years of superintendency experience	20.836	9	0.020
Meetings review student data to inform instruction	19.807	9	0.020
Superintendent CIA responsibilities previous 2 years	15.361	9	0.080
Teacher principal evaluation	6.652	3	0.080
Principal responsibility for CIA	8.692	6	0.200
Schedule for monitoring student achievement	3.437	3	0.330
Core director positions	3.353	3	0.340
Nonnegotiable goals instructional practices	1.320	3	0.720
Nonnegotiable goals student achievement	1.073	3	0.780
Superintendent walkthroughs	0.315	3	0.960

*Note.* ELA = English and Language Arts. CIA = Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The data for anticipated budget shortfall in 2012-13 showed that respondents from New York (88%) and Massachusetts (71%) were about two times more likely to report a budget shortfall for 2012-13. Respondents in New York (68%) were two and six times more likely than Connecticut and Vermont, respectively, to reduce administrators in the previous two years. The data showed that respondents from Massachusetts were two, Vermont three, and Connecticut four times more likely than respondents from New York to have coaches/mentors for ELA

and/or math. New York respondents reported not having coaches/mentors for math. The data for the years of superintendent experience showed that respondents from Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont were all two times more likely than respondents from Connecticut to have five or less years of superintendency experience. Lastly, superintendents from Connecticut and New York were two times more likely than superintendents from Massachusetts to schedule 20 or more meetings per year for teachers and administrators to review student data to inform instruction. Yet, superintendents from New York were the only ones not to have more than 50% of their respondents schedule 10 or more meeting per year to review student data to inform instruction.

Two other nearly statistically significant relationships were increased superintendent responsibilities in the previous two years due to reduction of administrators ( $\chi^2 = 15.361, p = .08$ ) and teacher and principal evaluations to improve instruction and student achievement ( $\chi^2 = 6.652, p = .08$ ). Superintendents from Massachusetts were two times more likely, and New York one and one-half times more likely, than superintendents from Connecticut to have significantly greater or greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents from New York (82%) and Connecticut (76%) were about one and one-half times more likely the superintendents from Massachusetts to use teacher and principal evaluations to improve instruction and student achievement in their districts.

There were other relationships that the data did not show were statistically significant. These relationships were linked to the five responsibilities and principal autonomy that Marzano and Waters (2009) reported were effective for improving student achievement. Superintendents in New York were two times more likely and one and one-half times more likely than superintendents in Connecticut and Massachusetts, respectively, to report that principals were



directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents in Connecticut were two times more likely and one and one-half times more likely than superintendents in New York and Massachusetts, respectively, to report that principals shared responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Another one of the superintendent responsibilities that positively impacted student achievement pertained to nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and clear, effective instructional practices (Marzano and Waters, 2009). Connecticut (60%) was the only state with the majority of respondents who reported nonnegotiable goals for clear, effective instructional practices, which was about one and one-half times more than the respondents from Massachusetts. Meanwhile, superintendents from Massachusetts (36%) had the largest response rate for nonnegotiable goals for student achievement, which was about two times more than respondents from Vermont. Overall, less than one-third of respondents had nonnegotiable goals for student achievement established in their school districts.

There were three other cross tabulations involving core curriculum directors, schedule to monitor student achievement goals, and superintendent walkthroughs that were not statistically significant, however were notable to mention. Superintendents in Connecticut were about two and one-half times more likely to have one or more core curriculum directors than superintendents in Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. The data show that superintendents in Connecticut and New York were two times more likely than superintendents in Vermont to have schedules to monitor student achievement goals. The data relating to regularly scheduled superintendent walkthroughs virtually show no statistical relationship. Half of the superintendents from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York reported classroom

walkthroughs to observe instruction. The majority (60%) of superintendents from Vermont conducted classroom walkthroughs.

The qualitative data among respondents was similar for research question 5. Superintendents were expected to implement more state and/or federal educational policies/regulation and to improve student achievement while being confronted by escalating educational costs and fiscal limitations, which resulted in the reductions of educational services and programs for students. The sense of frustration was apparent in the comments from respondents (2012):

- “We are slowly being strangled by financial constraints.”
- “Training and implementation of new APPR and other state mandates has reduced opportunities to get directly involved in day to day instruction.”
- “The budget situation has required a large amount of time dedicated to communications with stakeholders in order to gather support for the budget and to move initiatives forward.”

### **Additional Findings**

There were cross tabulations completed based on district size, the number of students enrolled in the school district. School districts were divided into four categories: 1) 1,000 or fewer students; 2) 1,001 to 2,000 students; 3) 2,001 to 3,000 students; and 4) 3,001 students and above. The statistically significant results showed that as school district size increased, superintendents were more likely to have the following structures of support: district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; core curriculum directors; coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math; and department chairs/head teachers. The anticipated assignment of additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment for 2012-13 showed that

larger school districts were more like to assign these responsibilities to both central office/district level administrators, whereas smaller districts were more likely to assign these responsibilities solely to principals. Superintendents reported that the smaller the category of the school district, the greater the use of outside educational agencies and/or consultants. Lastly, superintendents from the smallest and largest school size categories were three to four times more likely to schedule 20 or more meetings per month for administrators and teachers to review student data than the other two school size categories.

There were two themes that arose from the written responses regarding the impact of fiscal limitations on superintendents. The least unexpected was the additional time spent on the budget development process. The second finding related to the impact of administrator and teacher reductions on student achievement and successful implementation of state and federal educational mandates. Superintendents were concerned about being expected to implement additional and maintain current state and federal education policies and reporting with less personnel and financial resources.

Superintendent time spent developing a fiscally sound budget, including all of the possible scenarios for producing a budget in which anticipated revenues meet expenses, goes beyond the meetings with school district administrators and the board of education. Superintendents are becoming budget ambassadors and marketers to their communities, attending community meetings to promote the school budgets as the leanest budget while still providing education to meet the educational needs of students. The following written responses parallel the message by multiple respondents (2012) in the survey:

- “Significantly more time spent developing, planning and advocating for the fiscal plan than I should be, compared to the other aspects of the position that are as, if not, more important.”
- “More time devoted to garnering fiscal support for our school. More involvement in advocating at the state level. Much more BOE discussion and time on developing ways to save money and develop more revenue streams.”
- “It has decreased my ability to get everything done and resulted in important issues sometimes prioritized below where they belong.”

An impact of fiscal limitations has been the reductions of administrative and teaching positions, which affect the ability of school districts to provide the educational programs, instruction, structures, and supervision necessary to support the learning of all students. The reductions have required superintendents to develop plans for the future, maximize their resources, and carefully consider which educational programs may be significantly impacted or eliminated. When school districts are not able to provide required educational courses, they become educationally insolvent. The following were written responses from the respondents (2012):

- “The effect of the budget goes well beyond curriculum, instruction and assessment. That is just one piece of the puzzle. The entire organization, at varying levels is impacted by the budget pictures. However, CAI are arguably the most important.”
- “Fiscal constraints have also motivated us to become more cost effective operationally so that additional revenue may be available to meet the ambitious goals of the Regents Reform Agenda.”

- “Severe shortages will stall if not stop our curriculum reform. Many other areas of reform will be suspended. The role of the superintendent becomes one of treading water when there are no resources.”

The majority (94%) of the written responses related the concerns of superintendents regarding the impact of fiscal limitations upon their time spent on the budget development process, their concerns for implement state and federal educational mandates, and their concerns about their ability to provide adequate education to students in the future.

### **Summary**

This chapter addressed the five research questions pertaining to the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The 34-question survey consisting of open-ended, close-ended, likert scales, and multiple response questions provided a wealth of data describing the decisions superintendents made and the resources they had available to support their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The data were summarized into tables that delineated the responses among the four states represented by the superintendents in the survey. Both New Jersey and Pennsylvania were excluded from the data for purposes of analyses. Graphs were used to provide a visual summary of the data. The tables show the frequency of responses provided by the superintendents.

For each research question, the quantitative data was presented via tables and graphs with the qualitative data following and occasionally mixed within the quantitative data. Tables 2 – 4 and Figures 1 – 2 provided demographic data that were referenced within the research question findings. Research question 1, pertaining to superintendent responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, was addressed by Tables 5 – 12. Research question 2, pertaining to

the responsibilities of district personnel for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, was addressed by Tables 13 – 17. Research question 3, pertaining to budget limitations and the assignment of additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, was addressed by Tables 18 – 22 and Figure 3. Research question 4, pertaining to systems of resources necessary to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment, was addressed by Tables 23 – 28. Research question 5 contained the results of many cross tabulation analyses to compare superintendent responses based on the state in which the school district resides to responsibilities, structures, systems and resources to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment and was represented by Table 29.

Chapter five will provide further conclusions and recommendations.

## **Chapter 5: Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

The financial crisis of 2008 resulted in the Great Recession. State governments lost billions in revenues, and federal educational stimulus monies, such as ARRA and EJF, have ended. The loss of revenue by state governments resulted in the reduction of state educational aid to school districts throughout our nation, as state governments sought to reduce their deficits.

In addition to the reduction of education funding, state governments, such as New York, imposed a property tax cap or limitation on school districts, which restricts school districts' potential to raise revenues. Less money for school districts has meant the loss of educational programs through reductions of teachers, support staff, and administrators in all fifty states, totaling hundreds of thousands of positions (Oliff & Leachman, 2011).

Superintendents were faced with greater accountability for their school districts as a result of NCLB, the ESEA waiver, and RTTT funding. Fiscal limitations required superintendents to focus more time and energy on budget development. Yet, superintendents were expected to accomplish educational mandates with fewer financial and personnel resources.

This study sought to examine the impact of previous and anticipated fiscal limitations on the functions of school superintendents and chief education officers in school districts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The study sought to examine whether or not superintendents had already taken and/or anticipated greater responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, or whether these responsibilities were to be delegated to other district personnel and/or outside agencies.

The research and literature is extensive regarding NCLB accountability for school superintendents and educational leaders, qualities of educational leaders that positively impact student achievement, and the educational inequities caused by state funding of education.

However, the research and literature were limited with regards to the impact of fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Superintendents from school districts in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York excluding New York City, Pennsylvania, and Vermont were invited to participate in this mixed methods study. A total of 150 respondents began the survey, and 102 finished the survey. Due to single-digit response rates from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, these data were excluded from the results of the study.

Five questions were developed to examine the impact of past, current, and anticipated future fiscal limitations on the role and responsibilities of superintendents pertaining to the evaluation and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments to improve student learning and achievement. Research questions were designed to provide data on the decisions superintendents had made and anticipated making, as well as their support structures for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These five research questions were used to address this mixed methods descriptive study:

1. Due to budget limitations, will the superintendent take greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or will these responsibilities be given to other district personnel and/or outside agencies?
2. In what ways do superintendents perceive the responsibilities of personnel within the district for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
3. How would anticipated budget limitations affect the superintendent's planning for the use district personnel to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment?



4. What resources do superintendents perceive are necessary to support district personnel for the implementation and evaluation of curricula, instruction, and assessment?
5. What are the similarities and differences by superintendents among various states in their decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment when facing budget limitations?

A mixed method descriptive study was completed through a cross-sectional survey design to gather data. A mixed methods study was chosen to provide participants opportunities to answer survey questions to the fullest extent possible. Statistical and descriptive statistics were used to provide data for each of the research questions, including frequency tables, graphs, and cross tabulation analyses. The findings of this exploratory research must be interpreted with caution as a result of the size of the sample participating in the study. The response rate calls for the data to be carefully generalized to the entire population.

This chapter is divided into three sections: summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### **Summary of Findings**

**Demographic and financial data.** There were 150 superintendents who began the survey, of which 102 completed the survey. Massachusetts and New York had the most superintendents who began and completed the survey. The state with the greatest percentage of participation was Vermont (17%). New Jersey and Pennsylvania had one superintendent each complete the survey; their data were excluded from the analyses. Other demographic data included:

- Superintendent experience: 1 – 30 years

- District size: 160 – 11,000 students
- School budget (millions): \$3.58 – \$154.8
- Per pupil expenditure: \$7,150 – \$36,145      Mean: \$14,267

“The United States spends much more per pupil on education than any other country, and they have one of the most unequal distributions of education attainment,” (Fullan, 2010, p. 16).

Morse (2006) reported that New York’s per pupil expenditure ranks at the top across the nation.

State funding of education remains below 2008 levels, while educational costs continue to increase (McNichol et al., 2012; Oliff & Leachman, 2011). Sixty-one percent of respondents had an anticipated 2012-13 budget shortfall of more than 2% of their 2011-12 budget. Ginsberg and Multon (2011) stated that superintendents are having difficulty confronting these difficult fiscal times and producing a budget that continues to provide the educational programs and resources that are needed to improve student achievement to meet state and federal accountability measures.

Fahy (2011), Glenn (2006, 2009), and Umpstead (2007) raised this issue of revenue disparity among school districts based upon their ability to raise revenue through property due to unequal property values often related to the wealth of property owners residing in the school district. Seventy percent of superintendents from school districts with greater than 30% poverty reported an anticipated budget shortfall in 2012-13. A respondent (2012) summarized the sentiments of the majority of participants:

With future reductions in state aid, the district will be forced to cut more administrators and teachers which will make my job of implementing state mandates more difficult leading the district to not being able to provide the educational programs to meet state requirements.

The combination of reductions in educational funding, increasing costs, and limited ability to raise revenue through property and/or other taxes may result in school districts becoming fiscally and/or educationally insolvent. That is, revenues and reductions are still not enough to meet school districts' expenditures or school districts are no longer capable of providing the mandated educational programs for their students.

The demographic and financial data revealed that there were inexperienced superintendents facing fiscal limitations. Superintendents reported using available measures, such as reductions in personnel and educational programs, to produce a balanced budget. A respondent (2012) wrote: “[Fiscal limitations have] and will continue to diminish our capacity to help students. It is past doing more with less.”

**Research Question 1: Superintendent curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibility.** The student achievement accountability measures of NCLB required superintendents to become instructional leaders in regards to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Björk, 1993; Black, 2007; Dillon, 2010; Lashway, 2002; Root, 2010). Seventy percent of superintendents reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents without a central office or district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were five times more likely to report being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment and reported no core curriculum directors.

The recent fiscal climate has affected school districts differently in regards to the loss of personnel, both teachers and administrators. In the previous two years, about half of the respondents reported the reduction of administrative positions, including those with direct oversight of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents who had already or who were expecting to reduce administrative personnel indicated that their role and responsibilities

for curriculum, instruction, and assessment had increased as administrative personnel decreased. These responsibilities had also been distributed between the remaining district curriculum personnel and building principals. Superintendents increasingly sought assistance from state, regional, and/or private educational agencies and/or consultants to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment development in their districts.

Superintendents reported that principal responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was similar to their own self-reported involvement. That is, superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment reported that principals were directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their buildings. Superintendents who reported being somewhat involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment reported that principals had a shared responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The researcher did not anticipate this outcome. That is, the researcher anticipated superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment would share such responsibility with principals rather than reporting that principals were directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Ninety-two percent of superintendents reported communicating their vision about curriculum, instruction, and assessment through administrative meetings and 86% did so during opening day presentations. Research supports such meetings to keep superintendents informed and to align the focus of the district on the best instructional practices for student achievement while addressing any concerns related to student learning (Anthes, 2002; Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2001, 2010; Martin-Kniep, 2008; Palandra, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Schlechty, 2002; Sherman, 2007; Taylor, 2010; and Terry, 2010). The data indicated that

communication of this vision to external audiences via website and print materials was much less common.

The results of a meta-analysis study conducted by Marzano and Waters (2009) showed a correlation of .24 between district level leadership and student achievement. One of the five district level leadership responsibilities was the establishment of nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Less than a third of the superintendents reported having nonnegotiable goals for student achievement, and less than one-half of the superintendents had nonnegotiable goals for clear, effective instructional practices.

Superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment were one and one-half times more likely to conduct classroom walkthroughs to observe teaching and to provide principals with autonomy for curriculum, instruction, and assessments in their buildings. The data also showed that superintendents who reported being directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment met more frequently with their administrators and were five times more likely to schedule 20 or more meetings each year for administrators and teachers to review data to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Fiscal limitations had and will continue to impact superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Almost three-fourths of the superintendents who reduced administrators reported taking greater responsibility in addition to distributing these responsibilities to remaining administrators. As one respondent (2012) wrote in their survey: “I have taken on more responsibilities which, of course, lessens [the] time spent on each individual area.” This represented a common theme among multiple superintendents in the survey.

**Research Question 2: District personnel curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibility.** Instructional leadership is achieved through a collaboration of shared

accountability and responsibility, leading to a common understanding of pedagogy and curriculum necessary for successful student learning (Fullan, 2002, 2010; Root, 2010; Singh & Al-Fadhli, 2011). Johnstone et al. (2009) reiterated the importance superintendents expressed for having a sufficient number of competent and qualified people who could effectively monitor and evaluate the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning and achievement. In the previous two years, about half of the superintendents represented in this study reported the reduction of administrative positions to share such curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibilities.

The majority of superintendents had personnel in place to support their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The data showed that 70% of the superintendents had a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 65% of reported principals being responsible – directly or mostly – for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and 71% reported a director of SE or PPS. Other support positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, such as department chairs/head teachers, coaches/mentors, and core curriculum directors, were not reported by a majority by the superintendents. None of the superintendents responding from New York reported the existence of math coaches/mentors.

A district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was typically an assistant superintendent or district director. If a district did not have an assistant superintendent or district director for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the school district also did not have core curricular director positions. Similarly, districts without a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment were less likely to have department chairs or head teachers, as well as coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math.

Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 responsibilities of principals that have a positive impact on student achievement. Marzano and Waters (2009) found that when superintendents gave principals defined autonomy to achieve the nonnegotiable goals for instruction and student achievement, student achievement improved. “Defined autonomy means that the superintendent expects the building principals and all other administrators in the district to lead within the boundaries defined by the district goals” (Marzano and Waters, 2009, p. 8). The data showed that 99% of responding superintendents reported principals were given a range from direct to shared responsibility for ensuring curriculum, instruction, and assessment was being implemented and evaluated on a continuous basis.

Superintendents who had a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment reported assigning additional responsibilities to both district level and building level positions. A respondent (2012) wrote “I rely on the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction to deal with state education reporting and alignment of curriculum to the CCSS.”

**Research Question 3: Impact of fiscal limitations.** State funding of education remains below 2008 levels, while educational costs continue to increase (McNichol et al., 2012; Oliff & Leachman, 2011). The data showed that the majority (85%) of the superintendents had made or anticipated making reductions in administrators, teachers, and support staff. Superintendents were using their reserve funds in combination with personnel attrition, not hiring for retiring teachers and administrators, to prevent eliminating positions and programs in their districts. The 2011 NYSCOSS report revealed that 89% of schools were using their reserves, especially poor districts. “All budget cuts affect the quality of education” (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011, p. 47). The impact of reductions was prevalent in the responses of superintendents, as one person (2012)

wrote: “The loss of 17% of administrative staff and 7% of the teaching staff will haunt us in future student achievement.”

The majority of the superintendents (69%) reported an anticipated revenue shortfall for the 2012-13 school year. Twenty-seven percent of these superintendents reported reducing administrative positions. Bredeson and Kose (2007) found that superintendents acknowledge that there is too much to be done by all administrators due to the state and federal mandates that continue grow. Terry (2010) reported that superintendents realize that the increased workload for curriculum, instruction, and assessment placed on administrators often overloads administrators to the extent that they become less effective at performing their duties. A respondent (2012) expressed a common theme shared by many others, “[T]he fact that the district cannot afford a true curriculum person, I am certain that there will be areas of non-compliance and increased responsibilities to the building principals and district administrator.”

Another respondent (2012) wrote in the survey, “With future reductions in state aid, the district will be forced to cut more administrators and teachers which will make my job of implementing state mandates more difficult.”

Administrative reductions required that superintendents either take on greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment or begin to think outside the box. A respondent (2012) from the survey wrote: “I am working with neighboring school districts on building curriculum across district boundaries, attempting to create some shared positions focusing on curriculum and professional development. Cloud-based tools are helping in this effort.” Technology might be a viable solution for school districts that may be isolated from other resources. For school districts proximal to colleges and universities, it might be possible to collaborate with these institutions to provide needed support for curriculum, instruction, and



assessment. Superintendents indicated that they would continue to use available outside educational agencies and/or consultants regardless of the level of superintendent involvement with curriculum, instruction, and assessment or the presence of a district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

For the 2012-13 fiscal year, McNichol et al. (2012) revealed that state education funding continued to be below pre-recession levels. The superintendents who participated in this study were concerned about the impact that fiscal limitations were having on their ability to ensure that curricula were effectively being implemented with reductions in administrators. Although they continued to examine their fiscal and personnel resources, superintendents realized they must be more efficient with their resources to meet state mandates. Superintendents also realized that their jobs would become much more difficult as they continued to reduce administrators.

**Research Question 4: Resources to support district personnel.** Superintendents rely on their assistant superintendents and building principals to implement and evaluate curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning and achievement (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Dillon, 2010; Doyle, 2010). The data showed that district level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment had declined by 25% from two years ago to 2012-13. With the decreases in district level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, superintendents had, of necessity, taken more responsibility, assigned principals more responsibility, and/or enlisted outside educational agencies and/or consultants to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Superintendents who were without both a district level curriculum position and a PPS/SE position had less than 1,300 students K-12 in their districts.

Superintendents who participated in this study had limited support positions in place to assist with the implementation of CCSS, APPR, and student learning objectives (SLOs) – less than half of the superintendents reported department chairs/head teachers and only 10% had core curriculum directors. The implementation of CCSS, APPR, and SLOs, as well as the next generation of online testing, requires various levels of professional development to for administrators and teachers to fully integrate these mandates.

The data show that a few superintendents who participated in this study had begun to develop new positions, such as director of human capital development and director of technology integration, to guide professional development efforts related to CCSS, APPR, SLOs, and the next generation of student assessments. Black (2007) and Fullan (2005, 2006, 2008, 2010) would interpret these positions as supporting capacity building for teachers and administrators.

Danna (2011) concluded that superintendent support for the implementation and district use of curriculum maps improved student learning and achievement. Superintendents who participated in this study reported more curriculum maps in place for ELA (81%) and math (82%) than for science (69%) and social studies (65%). Curriculum maps are a system of support that superintendents have available to improve student learning.

The data showed that 84% of superintendents supported PLCs for the implementation and development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs in their districts. Superintendents who reported being directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment had the largest number of administrative meetings and were more likely to support PLCs. Effective PLCs have been shown to improve teacher content and instructional knowledge, which leads to increased student learning and achievement (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; DuFour et al., 2004; Fullan, 2006; Martin-Kniep, 2008). Yet, only 62% of

the superintendents scheduled at least monthly meetings for administrators and teachers to review data related to student achievement to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendent reported support of PLCs did not align to the commitment of scheduled meetings to review data.

Ultimately, financial resources were important for superintendents to support district personnel in the implementation and evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As one respondent (2012) wrote “[The] Superintendent on down is doing more with less. It is an unsustainable equation and not what is best for student achievement.” Another respondent (2012) reported “the current budget will severely hamper the district's ability to more than maintain the status quo at a time when Common Core alignment is a priority.” Fiscal limitations were hampering most superintendents’ efforts to develop the needed structures and systems to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment to continue to improve student learning and achievement.

**Research Question 5: State comparison of superintendent decisions.** Twenty-seven cross tabulations and associated chi-square analyses were completed for this research question, yielding five statistically significant findings. The similarities of and differences between superintendent responses in this study were examined by the state in which the school district was located.

Three of the five categories were administrative reductions in the previous two years, coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math, and scheduled meetings for administrators and teachers to analyze student data to inform instruction. The other two categories involved the 2012-13 anticipated budget shortfall and years of experience as a superintendent.

The data showed greater response rates in certain categories for each state.

- Respondents from Connecticut had the greatest response rates for: 1) coaches/mentors for ELA and math (64%); 2) nonnegotiable goals for clear, effective instructional practices (50%); and 3) principals' shared responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (60%).
- Respondents from Massachusetts had the greatest response rate (94%) for taking a greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction in the previous two years.
- Respondents from New York had the greatest response rates for: 1) anticipated budget shortfall for 2012-13 (88%); 2) teacher and principal evaluations to improve instruction and achievement (82%); 3) reduction of administrators in the previous two years (68%); 4) principals directly responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (68%); 5) the highest mean for per pupil expenditure (\$17,158); and 6) no math coaches/mentors.
- Respondents from Vermont had the greatest response rates for: 1) district level position for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (90%); 2) superintendents with five or less years of experience (70%); and 3) conducting superintendent walkthroughs (60%).

### **Other Findings**

**District size.** The support structures for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, such as a district level curriculum position, core curriculum directors, coaches/mentors for ELA and/or math, and department chairs/head teachers, increased in likelihood as the school district size, the number of students in the district, increased. Superintendent use of outside education agencies and/or consultants was inversely proportional to school district size. That is, the smaller the district, the greater their use of outside education agencies and/or consultants to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

**Additional time for budget process.** Superintendents reported spending much more time on promoting and explaining the school budget. In addition, they reported that this was not a unilateral activity, but involved soliciting input from internal and external sources also increasing the time for the budget process. A respondent (2012) wrote “Significantly more time spent developing, planning and advocating for the fiscal plan than I should be, compared to the other aspects of the position that are as, if not, more important.”

**Concerns for approaching insolvency.** Superintendents were concerned with their capacity to effectively implement all of these mandates to positively affect student learning and achievement. A theme emerged from the qualitative data of superintendents being concerned about becoming educationally insolvent, which could possibly force their school district to merge with neighboring school districts. One respondent (2012) wrote: “Governor Malloy suggested ‘incentives’ that would decrease the number of state dollars to our small town as a way to encourage regionalization.”

## **Conclusions**

The study explored the impact of fiscal limitations on superintendent decision making for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Data from previous studies that focused on this particular topic were not found during the literature review process. Previous studies served as the foundation to this research, such as the responsibilities of educational leaders associated with student achievement, inequitable funding of education, and the impact of state and federal mandates on the superintendency. This research integrated aspects from each of these areas into a single study relevant to today’s superintendents.

This study showed that superintendents had taken a greater role and more responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment due to fiscal limitations. One-half of the responding

superintendents reported that administrative curriculum, instruction, and assessment support personnel had decreased in the previous two years due to fiscal limitations.

Superintendents increased the curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsibilities of remaining administrators. In addition, superintendents sought greater support from outside educational agencies and/or consultants to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts. A respondent (2012) wrote: “Less money has resulted in fewer staff members. The workload to be accomplished has increased. Thus, those remaining staff members have to do more.” A small percentage of superintendents had begun to consider the consolidation of services and sharing of positions between neighboring districts to provide opportunities to reduce costs while supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Responding superintendents from New York reported that there were not any coaches/mentors for mathematics.

Data from this survey revealed important gaps between research and practice in three areas particularly related to superintendents’ roles and responsibilities. Marzano and Waters (2009) wrote: “Our findings regarding nonnegotiable goals for achievement and nonnegotiable goals for instruction are defining features and effective leadership” (p. 23).

- Two-thirds of responding superintendents had yet to establish nonnegotiable goals for student achievement.
- Only one-half of the responding superintendents had established nonnegotiable goals for clear, effective instructional practices.
- One-half of the responding superintendents conducted walkthroughs to observe classroom instruction.

Given the increased accountability for student achievement, the response rate by superintendents for nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and clear, effective instructional practices represented a substantial gap between practice and research.

Principals' responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment have increased due to fiscal limitations. The data showed that there had been a 25% decrease in district level positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment from the previous two years to the anticipated 2012-13 budget process. Superintendents reported assigning additional responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to principals in the previous two years, as well as for 2012-13. A respondent (2012) wrote: "[T]he fact that the district cannot afford a true curriculum person, I am certain that there will be areas of non-compliance and increased responsibilities to the building principals and district administrator."

Similarities and differences became evident in the state by state comparisons. The greatest areas of agreement were with two responsibilities connected to role of superintendents. Those were professional development and resource allocation. Superintendents responding from three of four states reported nonnegotiable goals of less than 50%. The most non-agreement among state comparisons came in the area of support positions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Superintendents were concerned with the impact of administrator and teacher reductions on student achievement and implementation of state and federal mandates. Superintendents provided written responses that their responsibilities were far too encompassing to accomplish alone. A respondent (2012) wrote: "Severe shortages will stall if not stop our curriculum reform. Many other areas of reform will be suspended. The role of the superintendent becomes one of

treading water when there are no resources.” This was a prevalent theme among superintendent written responses.

## **Recommendations**

**Superintendents.** Marzano and Waters (2009) identified five responsibilities of superintendents that have a positive effect on student achievement. Four of the five were examined in the study, in addition to the autonomy of principals. The four responsibilities are: 1) nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 2) targeted use of resources to support nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction; 3) collaborative goal setting; and 4) continuous monitoring and evaluation of the nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction were divided into two separate categories. Fullan (2006) confirmed that nonnegotiable goals are essential for keeping the focus on the task at hand and minimizing conflict.

The data revealed a disconnect between the research and superintendent practice. Superintendents need to establish nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and clear, effective instructional practices. This will require that superintendents provide the professional development for both administrators and teachers to build their capacity to implement the instructional practices that will support student achievement. Superintendents will then need to increase their classroom walkthroughs to ensure that the nonnegotiable instructional practices are being implemented. Educational leadership requires the follow through into the classroom to ensure that these nonnegotiable are indeed being implemented.

The ESEA waiver has given the nonnegotiable goal for student achievement through CCSS. This becomes a nonnegotiable goal for superintendents in those states who have applied



for the ESEA waiver. Superintendents will need to ensure that classroom instruction practices are clearly understood by administrators and teachers and to provide the appropriate levels of teaching for student achievement. Thus, superintendents and principals need continued professional development to ensure that curriculum development, classroom instruction, and student assessment incorporate the rigors of CCSS.

Developing instructional practices based on current knowledge of the CCSS needs to be the starting point for superintendents. The development of instructional practices among school districts would provide a common foundation for administrators to evaluate teachers, which could bring consistency to the APPR process and facilitate dialogue among administrators across school districts and states.

Superintendents should review the work of their PLCs to determine the ability of administrators and teachers to effectively examine student data to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This may require additional use of outside education agencies to review the current work of PLCs and guidance for the professional development necessary to transform PLCs into effective agents of change to improve student achievement.

Superintendents need to ensure boards of education are knowledgeable about CCSS, accountability requirements, and fiscal limitations. The accountability for school districts is not dwindling; it continues to increase. Superintendents without the necessary structures may need to explore the sharing services of curriculum and instructional specialists with other school districts. Shared services through state cooperatives are sometimes less costly. In addition to the curriculum and instruction work, these specialists could facilitate the monitoring of student progress through established systems, or recommend other systems, that provide necessary data to monitor student progress toward college and career readiness. Superintendents have the

opportunity to “create the structures and cultures by which current educators continuously improve both their individual and collective professional practice” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 19).

**State policy makers.** The Great Recession that began in 2008 has had a profound impact on education funding. School districts have been forced to reduce educational programs, teachers, and administrators to remain fiscally solvent. State governments continue to fund education below 2008 levels (McNichol et al., 2012). Leadership to address or remove unfunded mandates must be exerted.

There have been numerous lawsuits filed in the state court system throughout the country challenging the methods and formulas that state governments use to provide educational funding to schools (Brimley et al., 2012; Berry & Wysong, 2010; Crampton, 2010; Fahy, 2011; Glenn, 2006, 2009; Huerta, 2006; Jordan & Verstegen, 2009; Morse, 2006; Odden et al., 2010; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004; Springer et al., 2009; Umpstead, 2007). In many of these lawsuits, the state courts ruled that the methods for funding education were not equitable and resulted in disparities in the quality of educational opportunities afforded to students, especially students in low socio-economic school districts. Policy makers need to re-examine the method for funding education, given the current economic environment.

Superintendents have taken a greater role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition, superintendents have increased their time spent on the budget planning and development process. Policy makers need to educate school board members regarding the shifting role of superintendents as a result of fiscal limitations and increased accountability for implementing education mandates. The results of this study suggest that

policy makers should make professional development mandatory for superintendents without a recent curriculum, instruction, and assessment background.

Superintendents are concerned about the impact from the combination of administrative reductions, fiscal limitations, and state and federal education mandates. Policy makers need to convene focus forums of superintendents based on demographic data to generate creative solutions to the issues confronting superintendents and school districts.

### **Preparatory administrative programs and professional organizations.**

Superintendents and principals have increased their role as instructional leaders as a result of NCLB, RTTT, ESEA waiver, and CCSS. Administrative programs and organizations for both principals and superintendents should create courses of study and professional development programs that inform educational leadership. Candidates in these programs, as well as administrators in the field, should be given a depth of study that examines curriculum, instruction, and assessment in relation to being an instructional leader. The goal is to provide candidates and current administrators with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions as educational leaders pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student learning.

Recent fiscal limitations require superintendents to have a greater understanding of budget development in order to make informed budgetary decisions and to provide their boards of education with the knowledge that they need to properly perform their role in the budget process. Preparatory programs should include the study of state regulations regarding the development of a school budget, expenditures, revenues, and other related budget topics. Professional organizations can create a budget development series for all new superintendents, as well as for current superintendents, to maximize resources for supporting curriculum, instruction,

and assessment. These programs would provide future administrators and newly hired superintendents with the knowledge to make financial decisions that will perpetuate the educational programs to improve student learning and achievement.

**Future research.** This study included data from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. The issue of fiscal limitations extends well beyond these states. There are school districts in every state that are being impacted by fiscal limitations while attempting to implement various educational initiatives, such as the CCSS or mandates associated with the ESEA waiver. Superintendents of school districts are being asked to do more with fewer resources. In research incorporating multiple states, the experience of this researcher suggests that email addresses are most effective in obtaining superintendent participation. If email addresses are not available, sponsorship by state or national organizations would elicit greater response rates.

The following future research studies are recommended:

1. Examine the impact that fiscal limitations have had on the role of building principals related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
2. Survey principals and superintendents to examine the impact of CCSS and APPR implementation on their role as educational leaders.
3. Investigate alternative models used by school districts to meet the increasing demands of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
4. Conduct a qualitative study of superintendents who have lost administrative personnel responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

5. Study boards of education to determine the extent to which they view the role of the superintendent has changed due to fiscal limitations and increased accountability.

### **Closing Statement**

This study found that fiscal limitations had impacted superintendents and their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment due to reductions in administrative positions. Superintendents had varying structures, such as district level curricular administrators, coaches/mentors, head teachers, etc. and systems, such as PLCs, curriculum maps, meetings, etc., that supported their role and responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Fiscal limitations continued to change the way superintendents monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

If fiscal limitations continue to decrease administrative positions, superintendents will need to consider alternatives for supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their districts. The role of the superintendent may need to be redefined, such as by removing other responsibilities from superintendents.

Fiscal limitations have impacted superintendents' abilities to provide the curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs needed to support student learning and achievement. Pascopella (2012) interviewed a superintendent of schools from central New York and the executive director of the NYSCOSS. The superintendent expressed concern about losing the benefit of programs for students, such as advanced placement courses and kindergarten. The executive director of NYSCOSS stated that an issue for superintendents is one of academic insolvency, in which districts do not have the financial resources or the personnel to provide the required state-mandated course to students.

Responses from the superintendents who participated in this study supported the comments from the articles. In the survey, respondents (2012) wrote “we are slowly being strangled by financial constraints” and “the current budget situation has forced the district to cut back instructional programs by reducing our faculty through attrition over the past four budgets.” Fiscal limitations are impacting the role and responsibilities of superintendents for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The second decade of the 21st century began with a marked shift of responsibilities in the leadership of school districts. Superintendents are increasingly leaders in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

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*Appendix A*

Institutional Review Board Approval

**Sage Graduate Schools** EDUCATION  
HEALTH SCIENCES  
MANAGEMENT

School of Health Sciences --- Office of the Dean

65 1st Street

Troy, NY 12180

<http://www.sage.edu/sgs> --- 518-244-2264

July 9, 2012

Gary Furman

**IRB PROPOSAL # 11-12-049**

**Reviewer: Susan C. Cloninger, Chair**

Dear Gary:

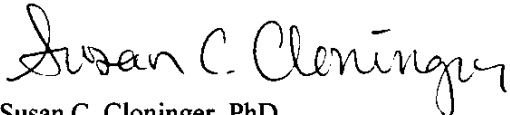
The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved your project entitled "Superintendent Decision Making Related to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment as Influenced by Budget Limitations." Good luck with your research.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Susan C. Cloninger, PhD  
Chair, IRB

SCC/nan

Cc. Dr. Ann Myers

*Appendix B*

Invitation to Participate

My name is Gary Furman. I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York under the direction of Dr. Ann Myers, Associate Professor in Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership Program. My doctoral study involves the thinking and planning of superintendents during times of fiscal limitations as it pertains to the superintendent's role and responsibilities pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in which I am the principal researcher.

I realize that this is a very busy time of the year due to the budget planning process. The survey has been streamlined to facilitate its completion and should take between 20-30 minutes. This survey is relevant to this year's budget planning process and will provide valuable ideas and strategies for superintendents in future years. Your involvement is vital to my research and will provide valuable information for superintendents of any school system who find themselves confronted by fiscal limitations.

All of the information will be kept **confidential**. An email is being sent to all superintendents in the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont that invites them to participate in the survey via SurveyMonkey. Two follow-up blanket emails will be sent as reminders because the SurveyMonkey will NOT be able to identify who has completed the survey. Multiple states have been chosen to further enhance your confidentiality.

A complete copy of my findings will be provided to your state's association of superintendents to be posted on each of their websites. The results of this study will be shared in a colloquium at Sage Graduate School during the fall of 2012 to a group of educators from across New York State. In addition, I will retain the data beyond the completion of the study in case any superintendent has questions that were not addressed in the findings. This research is intended to provide information to superintendents that can facilitate their decision-making during difficult fiscal times.

You will be giving your consent to participate in the study by choosing the following link to SurveyMonkey [www.surveymonkey.com/s/xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx).

I would very much appreciate your participation in this survey. Your input is very valuable and will be an asset to all superintendents of schools. If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact me at [xxxxxx@sage.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@sage.edu), (845) xxx-xxxx (home), or (518) xxx-xxxx (cell) or Dr. Ann Myers at [xxxxxx@sage.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@sage.edu) or her office at (518) xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Gary Furman



Appendix C

Survey

**Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal**

**Demographic Data**

Superintendents are facing difficult budget outlooks that will continue to compound. This survey is intended to gather data indicating the strategies that superintendents use to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Your input will be very valuable to superintendents throughout the six state region.

**1. Number of years serving as a superintendent including current year as a full year?**

**2. Check the state in which you currently serve as superintendent.**

- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- New Jersey
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Vermont

**3. Number of students enrolled in your current school district(s) K-12? (Write answer in numerical form)**

**4. If you are a superintendent serving multiple school districts, how many school districts do you serve as the superintendent? (If not applicable, write NA)**

**5. Percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch during the 2011-12 school year?**

- Less than 10%
- 10-19%
- 20-29%
- 30-39%
- 40-49%
- 50-59%
- 60-69%
- 70-79%
- Above 80%

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Fiscal Information

**6. What is the total school budget for 2011-12 for the district(s) you serve? (Write answer in numerical form without using commas)**

**7. What percent of the budget is funded through Federal and State grants? (Write answer in numerical form without the % sign)**

**8. What is your per pupil expenditure for the 2011-12 school year? (Write answer in numerical form without using commas)**

**9. In the 2012-13 budget planning process, did the district anticipate a revenue short-fall when compared to the anticipated 2012-13 expenses?**

- Yes  
 No

**10. What is the anticipated amount of the revenue shortfall? (Write answer in numerical form without using commas)**

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Superintendent's Involvement & District Support for Curriculum, Instruc...

**11. Which of the following characterizes your current role and responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment?**

- Directly Involved  
 Somewhat Involved  
 Indirectly Involved  
 Not Involved

**12. Does the school district have a central office administrator(s), other than the superintendent, who is responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment?**

- Yes  
 No

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### 13. Please indicate which of the following positions you have in the district that relate to curriculum, instruction, and assessment: (check all that apply)

- Director of English or English Language Arts
- Director of Math
- Director of MST (Math, Science, Technology)
- Director of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)
- Director of Science
- Director of Social Studies
- Director of English and Social Studies
- Director of Special Education or Pupil Personnel Services
- Department Chair or Head Teacher of ELA
- Department Chair or Head Teacher of Math
- Department Chair or Head Teacher of Science
- Department Chair or Head Teacher of Social Studies
- Literacy Coach or Mentor
- Math Coach or Mentor
- Assessment/Data Team Coordinator
- Does not have any of these positions

Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Prior Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Decisions

#### 14. Did the school district cut any administrative positions in the previous two school years? (Please check all that apply)

- Did not cut any administrative positions
- Assistant Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Other Administrative Positions

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Prior Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Decisions (continued)

**15. To what extent did these reductions affect your role and responsibilities as superintendent in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment?**

- Significantly greater involvement in these areas
- Greater involvement in these areas
- Involvement in these areas remained the same
- Involvement lessened due to restructuring of administrative staff
- Other (please specify)

**16. With cuts in administration, to whom did you assign greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment? (Check all that apply)**

- Central office administrators
- Principals
- Other administrators
- Teachers
- State/regional agencies/cooperatives
- Private educational agencies
- Private educational consultants

Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

**17. Did budget reductions and/or loss of administrative staff lead you to use outside education agencies or consultants to support the district's efforts in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment? (Check all that apply)**

- Began to use outside educational agencies
- Began to use private educational consultants
- Increased the use of outside educational agencies
- Increased the use of private educational consultants
- Use of outside educational agencies remained the same
- Use of private educational consultants remained the same
- Did not use outside educational agencies
- Did not use private educational consultants
- Other (please specify)

**18. Please indicate the agencies or consultants used to support the district's efforts in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (Check all that apply)**

- Not applicable
- Regional educational agencies/cooperatives
- Colleges/Universities
- State educational agencies
- Private educational agencies
- Private consultants
- Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Possible 2012-13 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Decisions

**19. Based on the anticipated budget for 2012-13 the school year, what steps will the district take to address the budget situation? (Check all that apply)**

- Due to previous cuts, the district will not need to make further cuts.
- The district will use its reserves to prevent reductions in administrators, teachers and/or support staff.
- The district will not need to make reductions in administrators.
- The district will reduce central administrative positions.
- The district will reduce building level administrative positions.
- The district will reduce teaching positions.
- The district will reduce support staff.
- The district will reduce stipend positions for extra-curricular activities.
- The district will seek additional revenue sources.

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Possible 2012-13 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Decisions (continu...

**20. To what extent do you anticipate these reductions will affect your role and responsibilities as superintendent in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment?**

- Significantly greater involvement in these areas
- Greater Involvement in these areas
- Involvement in these areas would remain the same
- Involvement would lessen due to restructuring of administrative staff
- Other (please specify)

**21. With cuts in administration, to whom would you anticipate assigning greater responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment? (Check all that apply)**

- Central office administrators
- Principals
- Other administrators
- Teachers
- State/regional agencies/cooperatives
- Private educational agencies
- Private educational consultants
- Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

**22. To what extent would the district be inclined to use outside agencies or consultants to support the district's efforts in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment to help offset the loss of administrative staff? (Check all that apply)**

- Begin to use outside educational agencies
- Begin to use private educational consultants
- Increase the use of outside educational agencies
- Increase the use of private educational consultants
- Use of outside educational agencies will remain the same
- Use of outside private consultants will remain the same
- Would not use outside educational agencies
- Would not use private educational consultants

**23. Please indicate the agencies or consultants that you would likely use to support the district's efforts in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (Check all that apply)**

- Not applicable
- Regional educational agencies/cooperatives
- Colleges/universities
- State educational agencies/consultants
- Private educational agencies
- Private educational consultants
- Other (please specify)



## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### External Support for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

**24. Please indicate the external agencies or consultants that the school district currently uses to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment? (Check all that apply)**

- Not applicable
- Answered in previous questions
- Regional educational agencies/cooperatives
- Colleges/universities
- State educational agencies/consultants
- Private educational agencies
- Private educational consultants
- Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Superintendent's Role & Responsibilities for Curriculum, Instruction, &...

**25. Please indicate the steps that you have implemented to ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are being effective in increasing student achievement. (Check all that apply)**

- Established nonnegotiable goals for student achievement
- Collaborative goal setting for horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment
- Collaborative goal setting for the implementation of district benchmark assessments
- District has established clear, effective instructional practices and expectations
- Teacher and principals evaluations provide feedback to improve student achievement and instruction
- Provide opportunities for principals to share concerns about increased responsibilities for curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- District established a schedule for monitoring student achievement and goals
- District provides professional development to address achievement and instruction deficiencies
- Superintendent performs regular walk-throughs of classroom instruction
- District allocates resources to support goals for student achievement and instruction
- Building principals are given autonomy to meet district goals
- Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

**26. How do you communicate the district’s vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment to teachers and administrators? (Check all that apply)**

- Opening day meeting with all staff
- Administrative meetings
- Faculty meetings
- Professional development
- Various committee meetings
- Email
- District website
- Newsletters
- Through other administrators to convey message to teachers
- Teacher supervision and evaluation
- Vision printed on all digital and written materials
- Other (please specify)

**27. How are you kept apprised by administrators regarding the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student achievement?**

	Not applicable	Monthly	Twice per month	Weekly
Meetings with central administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meetings with building principals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meetings with curriculum administrators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reports from central administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reports from building principals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reports from curriculum administrators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administrative team meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

**28. Do administrators use email and telephone communication to keep you apprised of the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment on student achievement?**

	Yes	No
Email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Telephone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**29. Does the school district currently support Professional Learning Communities to support and improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment?**

- Yes
- No

**30. How often does the district provide time for teachers and administrators to review data related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student performance?**

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Semi-annually
- Annually
- Do not review data
- Other (please specify)

**31. Does the district have curriculum maps K-12 in the following areas?**

	Yes	No
English Language Arts (ELA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mathematics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Building Level Support for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

#### 32. To what extent is the building principal responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

- Directly responsible
- Mostly responsible
- Shared responsibility
- Limited responsibility
- Other (please specify)

#### 33. Please indicate the extent of the building principal's roles and responsibilities for implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (Check all that apply)

- Directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Remains knowledgeable of current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
- Faculty meetings focus on professional development designed to improve school-wide curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
- Clearly communicates to teachers the district's nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Engaged in classroom curriculum design, instructional planning, analyzing formative achievement data, and examining samples of student work
- Other (please specify)

## Superintendent Decision Making Related to CIA as Influenced by Fiscal

### Fiscal Impact on the Superintendent

#### 34. Please list or share any other thoughts that you may have regarding how the impact of the current budget situation has affected your role and responsibilities as Superintendent.