A LOOK AT THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT SUPERINTENDENT TENURE, AND CANDIDATE SHORTAGES IN VIRGINIA

JEFFREY O. SMITH

ABSTRACT

The Commonwealth of Virginia has implemented the Standards of Learning which are designed to ensure that students meet certain benchmarks at various points in their elementary and secondary educational careers. President George W. Busch signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which is intended to ensure that all children succeed academically. Each of these mandates incorporates levels of accountability to which school administrators, especially the superintendent, must adhere.

Recent studies indicate that the expectations for today’s superintendent demand greater accountability and that the current systems, known as the standards movement, undermine the authority of the superintendency (Guthrie, 2003). These factors, according to Guthrie (2003), lead to a shortage in the profession (Guthrie, 2003).

Research indicates that the average superintendent’s tenure is six to seven years (Natkin, et al., 2002), that there is a national shortage of superintendent applicants (Cooper, et al., 2000), and that the quality of the applicant pool is diminishing (Glass, 2001). This study examines two independent variables, the Standards of Learning (SOL) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to determine the effect these variables have on the tenure of school superintendents in Virginia.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between the increased accountability with state and federal mandates, in particular Standards of Learning (SOLs), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and other influences on superintendent tenure in the
Commonwealth of Virginia. A survey instrument was utilized to answer the following questions: (1) What is the relationship, if any, between the Standards of Learning and the superintendent tenure? (2) What is the relationship, if any, between the No Child Left Behind Act and the tenure of the superintendent? (3) What is the relationship, if any, of other influences on the superintendent tenure?

The data received from superintendents in Virginia was entered into SPSS and disaggregated by age, gender, race, years of experience as superintendent, number of years as superintendent in current district, enrollment, Adequate Yearly Progress status, and number of schools in respondent’s district. The findings of this study revealed that of the superintendents who responded, 95% believe that the SOLs have had a positive impact on education in Virginia. Superintendents indicated that the SOLs are not a factor in their tenure as evidenced by 94% of the superintendents who revealed that they have not considered leaving the profession as a result of the SOLs.

This study also revealed that superintendents in Virginia, 71% responding to the survey, believe that NCLB has not had a positive impact on education in Virginia. However, NCLB does not factor into superintendents’ decisions to leave the profession or retire. In addition, other influences regarding superintendent tenure were revealed. This study revealed that local politics, evening responsibilities, pressure by the community to meet accreditation standards are not factors that affect superintendent tenure. However, superintendents indicated that interactions with the School Board could have an adverse affect on their tenure in the district as evidenced by 96% of the respondents.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Lorianne, for her love, unwavering faith, and encouragement. She constantly reminded me of the source of my strength – Christ.

Additionally, this dissertation is dedicated to the spirit of my grandmother, Susie Smith, who led and taught me by example.
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