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Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents Use to Work With the Political Styles of School Board Members

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A Dissertation by

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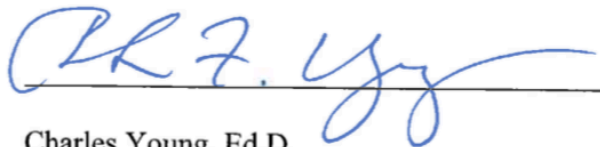
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Finally, to the five exemplary superintendents who participated in this study. Thank you for taking the time to share your experience with working effectively with the different political styles of school board members. The strategies and stories you shared will serve as a valuable tool in the development of aspiring, new, and veteran superintendents. As an experienced superintendent, I appreciated learning from each of you and am thankful for the contributions you have made to our colleagues and our profession.

ABSTRACT

Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents Use to Work With

the Political Styles of School Board Members

by Bradley D. Tooker

Purpose: The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Methodology: This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study analyzed quantitative surveys to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members and qualitative interviews to identify political strategies using a political styles framework.

Findings: The major strategies exemplary unified district superintendents used to work with the political styles of board members were to build relationships and trust; get to know them personally; invest time and energy; open, honest, direct communication; communicate frequently; provide relevant, timely information; listen; be responsive; learn preferred communication style; develop board capacity and team; clarify roles and governance process; adapt own style; understand their political reality; identify their interests; give options; focus on common vision; identify shared priorities; and align individual interests with district goals.

Conclusions: It was concluded that superintendents who get to know board members personally and build trust are more successful with developing relationships; superintendents who fail to communicate effectively will struggle; superintendents who

spend time developing the board and clarifying roles will have a stronger governance team; superintendents who do not develop political acuity and adapt their style will not work effectively with the board; superintendents who focus on a common vision will have greater success with moving the district in a positive, coherent direction; superintendents who use a variety of strategies will be better equipped to navigate politics; and student outcomes will be negatively impacted when a superintendent does not provide the board and district with effective leadership.

Recommendations: Additional research should be conducted to do a meta-analysis of the political styles thematic; understand political styles from perspective of board members; examine the strategy themes at a deeper level; identify strategies used by women in superintendent positions, city managers, and nonprofit executives; and analyze superintendent political styles and longevity.

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PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study superintendent and board member political styles in multiple types of school districts, 10 doctoral students, in collaboration with two faculty members, developed a common interest in exploring the strategies exemplary superintendents use to work with the different political styles of their board members. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of 10 doctoral students. This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was designed using the nine political styles identified in the political styles framework from *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016). Each researcher administered a survey to five exemplary superintendents to identify their own political style as well as the political styles of their board members. The researcher then interviewed the same five superintendents who completed the survey to identify the strategies they use with the different political styles and strategies that work with all political styles. In order to ensure consistency and reliability across the thematic, the team of researchers collaboratively developed the purpose statement, research questions, definitions of terms, survey instrument, interview questions, and study procedures.

Throughout the study, the term *peer researchers* was used to refer to the researchers who conducted the thematic study. My fellow doctoral students and peer researchers studied exemplary superintendents with the following populations in California school districts: Bradley D. Tooker, unified superintendents in Northern California; Reggie Thompkins, unified superintendents in Southern California; Jeffrey D. Tooker, high school superintendents; Roni Jones, rural superintendents in Northern

California; Regina Green, Latino superintendents; Susan Andreas-Bervel, small suburban elementary superintendents in Southern California; Tammy Blakely, suburban unified superintendents in Southern California; Leisa Winston, female suburban superintendents; Maura Murabito, female ROP superintendents; and Chris Sinatra, small school district superintendents.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

According to Aristotle (350 B.C.E.), "Human beings are by nature political animals" (p. 5). Politics impacts all aspects of society and is about power, influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; R. C. Tucker, 1995; White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016). References to politics can be traced back to great philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. Early political systems and parties were formed in the United States to give people who were espousing a certain agenda and ideals the ability to influence others on a large scale (Leftwich, 2004; Trott, 2014; R. C. Tucker, 1995). After World War II, politics evolved and shifted to include political and social issues at the local level with the intent of making an impact in one's own community (Hay, 2010; Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; R. C. Tucker, 1995). This refocusing of politics on social issues was reflected in the increasing influence of politics and involvement in the local educational system. Politics today continues to impact all aspects of life. It pervades government, society, and organizations on a personal and global level, including the educational system (Björk & Keedy, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). This pervasiveness of community politics has a profound impact on the operation of school districts including school board elections, policy development, district governance, and the relationship with the superintendent of schools.

School boards act as the governing arm of school districts and can be traced back to the early 1800s when public schools were governed and led by local officials. As school systems became more complex and the demands greater, school boards became elected positions that governed the schools (Land 2002; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001;

Timar, 2003). In the early days of school boards, board members were focused on a

common agenda, mutual goals, and a desire to compromise (Cibulka, 2001). This is in

stark contrast to school boards today, which can be filled with personal and political

agendas and divergent opinions (Björk & Keedy, 2001).

Originally appointed by school boards to serve as instructional leaders during the

1800s, the superintendent role evolved into that of manager of the school and the district,

and his or her responsibilities expanded in the early 1900s (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land,

2002; Moody, 2007). This led to an overlap of responsibilities and lack of clarity

between the role of the superintendent and the role of the board, resulting in

organizational and political conflict (Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007). The

relationship between the board and the superintendent became more complex over time

as the superintendent role required more technical and leadership skills to manage and

lead district operations, while the board developed a policy-making role (Kowalski et al.,

2011; Land, 2002). The board and superintendent relationship became increasingly

complex and politically charged as special interest and political groups formed, schools

were restructured and transformed, school reforms were implemented, resources became

limited, and accountability increased (Cibulka, 2001; Rocha, 2007).

Ironically, superintendents' beliefs that their jobs are becoming more political,

especially when working with the board, are not aligned with studies that show that

superintendents are hesitant to adopt political strategies to navigate the politics of their

job (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). Serving as a

school district superintendent is a complex and challenging job, and one of the most

difficult of these challenges is working with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001;

Kowalski, 2013). The relationship between the superintendent and school board affects

the quality of education and programs within a district (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001;

Waters & Marzano, 2007). In addition, the relationship between the board and the

superintendent is becoming more complex and political (Vaughn, 2010). Björk and

Lindle (2001) suggested that it can be problematic if there is not an alignment between

the leadership style of the superintendent and the political style of the board members.

Thus, it is important that superintendents understand and develop strategies to work with

the board and effectively lead the district as a governance team (DeLuca, 1999; Kowalski

et al., 2011; White et al., 2016).

Background

Brief History of Politics

Politics impacts all aspects of society and organizations and is about power,

influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; R. C. Tucker,

1995; White et al., 2016). Early references to politics can be traced back to great

philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato (Leftwich, 2004). Aristotle used the

theory of a city-state to comprehensively describe the nature of politics by drawing upon

the experiences of societies and people around him (Ranger, 2013). As in Plato's

Republic, Aristotle explained the impact of politics in society (Trott, 2017). In general,

politics referred to the competition between individuals or interest groups for power and

leadership (Trott, 2017). Early political systems and parties were formed in the United

States to provide citizens with an opportunity and platform to promote their ideas,

thereby influencing others on a large scale (Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; Trott, 2017;

R. C. Tucker, 1995). After World War II, politics evolved and shifted to include political

and social issues at the local level with the intent of making an impact in one's own community. This also led to the formation of social groups and organizations formed around common beliefs and interests (Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; R. C. Tucker, 1995).

In the last 50 years, there has been a shift in politics toward the competing interests of liberty and equality. The focus on liberty promotes a shift toward increased local control through decision-making, funding, and resources of services and local government (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). The governance of school districts by locally elected officials is an example of this movement toward local control and decision-making. At the same time, laws and regulations at the federal and state level are increasing to ensure and promote equality and opportunity, including social, economic, and educational. Understanding the political landscape at the local and national level has become critical to navigating the politics of educational reform (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski, 2005, 2013; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). Additionally, domestic politics in various systems are driven by economic and social aspects that have resulted in the emergence of new forms of communication, the rise of new political issues, and the extension of governmental activity. Modern politics has been described as largely egocentric, based on relationships, and democratic in nature (Güner, 2016).

Politics is a way for people to improve themselves, their community, and society. Politics can be about cooperation or disagreement (Fairholm, 2009). Politics is crucial because it significantly affects different activities that occur in every society (Yamin, 2013). It is a way for people to have power and the influence to change issues they believe in. Politics continues to impact all aspects of daily life. It pervades government,

society, and organizations on a personal and global level. This parallels the increasing influence of politics and involvement in the local educational system (Björk & Keedy, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Leaders use politics to lead and influence people toward their points of view, beliefs, or desired outcomes. Leaders may use politics to justify a positive or negative end goal, which may bring about moral and ethical aspects of leadership (Fairholm, 2009; White et al., 2016). Some leaders may use politics and power for personal or individual gain, while others focus on the organization and their followers. In contemporary society, leaders use politics to enhance their own interests as well as create positive outcomes (Lunenburg, 2012). Moreover, politics heightens the capability of leaders to effectively compete for power. In the organizational setting, politics enables leaders to influence subordinates to voluntarily cooperate and meet overall goals (Durrani, 2014). Politically intelligent leaders follow ethical and moral methods to navigate the use of political strategies for the good of the organization or society as a whole. A leader's use of politics in an organization can be an effective tool to bring about change and motivate people to work toward a common goal (Fairholm, 2009; Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013; White et al., 2016).

Theoretical Foundations

Elite theory. There are many theories used to describe politics, political theory, and power. In elite theory, the upper class use wealth for political power and influence. The theory suggests that a small group, comprised of people of the same economic class and networks, holds the greatest influence and that this authority is sovereign of

democratic voting (Higley & Burton, 2006; Pakulski, 2012). The elementary features of this philosophy are that authority is concentrated and elites are united, while people who are not elites are varied and helpless. The interests of the elites are unified because of shared backgrounds, with institutional position being the essential feature of power (Cole, 2018; Higley, 2018; Mills, 1956; Pakulski, 2012).

Pluralist theory. Pluralist theory is in stark contrast to elite theory in so far as pluralist theory posits that power is shared among several groups competing for their own interests. The groups may be alliances, unions, social groups, or business activists. Groups of individuals with a common interest come together to influence political outcomes (Dahl, 2005). In pluralist theory, power is spread and fragmented. Strategies are implemented through negotiation, competition, and cooperation (Parenti, 1970; Preston, 1998).

Rational choice theory. Whereas both elite theory and pluralist theory focus on political power, rational choice theory is founded on the belief that people select a line of action related to their individual preferences and desires. Rational choice theory helps in the modeling of the decisions that humans make, particularly in the setting of economics and politics (Petracca, 1991). It assists with better understanding the conduct of a community with regard to personal actions as clarified through reasoning, whereby choices are consistent because they result from personal preferences (Green & Shapiro,1996).

Normative and empirical theory. Normative and empirical theories are unlike the other theories described previously in that they are descriptive or prescriptive in nature and not necessarily focused on political power and influence. For example,

empirical theory looks at what "is," while normative theory considers what "should be." Another way to look at these theories is that empirical theory describes observable facts and objective statements as they are known. Normative theory attempts to be prescriptive in approach and may be values based and more subjective and judgmental in nature. In contrast to normative theory, empirical theory seeks to determine and define facts (Davies, 2002; Pietrzyk-Reeves, 2017; Skinner, 2006).

Social inequity theory. Social inequity theory supports the premise of elite theory and the control of power by the elite few. This theory is branded by the presence of unbalanced distribution of resources and unequal rewards for diverse statuses within a society. Resources such as power, wealth, and opportunity are distributed unequally (Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). Adams (1965) described two main means used to determine the degree of societal discrimination: disparity of conditions and disparity of chances.

Political frames. Whereas the political frames theory can be descriptive in nature similar to empirical theory, it also incorporates aspects of elite theory, pluralist theory, and power and influence theory. Political frames are the way in which people view their world and organization. Political frames are also used to make decisions within organizations. Bolman and Deal (2017) discussed the political frames of structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. In this model, they also discussed and identified the importance of organizing and categorizing within the frames as a way to better understand an organization and approach an issue (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Political frames stress the necessity for understanding power and politics and placing them at the center of goals and decisions that need to be made (Boyle, 1998).

Power and influence theory. The power and influence theory is unlike the other political theories in that it primarily focuses on leaders and how they use power and influence within their organization or community. This philosophy is founded on the diverse means by which leaders use authority and influence to achieve goals, and this results in an emergence of styles of leadership. People who are in a position of leadership or authority have power and influence over others (Grenny et al., 2013). This may be established through title or hierarchy in an organization. It can also be established through actions and reputation. Power can be achieved through coercion and intimidation, or it can be achieved through influence and relationships. The most skilled and effective leaders use power and influence strategies in a positive manner to move an organization forward toward a common goal (DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Grenny et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized to analyze the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents is the goal allegiance and initiative scale discussed in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016). This theoretical framework is relevant because superintendents need to be able to identify the political styles of board members and employ strategies to work with the different styles to navigate organizational politics and operate as an effective governance team. The work of White et al. (2016) expanded upon the nine political styles developed by DeLuca (1999). Their theoretical framework of politically intelligent leaders focused on identifying political styles through a goal allegiance and political initiative continuum. The nine political styles under the goal allegiance and degree of initiatives model include

the analyst, the adaptor, the supporter, the planner, the balancer, the developer, the challenger, the arranger, and the strategist (White et al., 2016).

Politics and Public Education

When considering the political styles framework, it is important to understand the influence of politics in public education. School boards can be traced back to the early 1800s when public schools were governed and led by local officials (Land, 2002). Eventually, as school systems evolved and became more complex with greater demands, school boards became elected positions that governed the schools (Land 2002; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001, Timar, 2003). In the early days of school boards, board members were focused on a common agenda, mutual goals, and a desire to compromise (Cibulka, 2001). This is in stark contrast to school boards today, which can be filled with personal and political agendas and divergent opinions (Björk & Keedy, 2001).

In 1837, there was evidence that school districts began appointing superintendents to serve as instructional leaders who supervised classroom instruction and were considered lead instructors or teacher scholars (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002; Moody, 2007). As the need arose in the early 1900s, superintendents became managers of the school and the district, and their responsibilities expanded. This led to an overlap of responsibilities and lack of clarity between the role of the superintendent and the role of the board, resulting in organizational and political conflict (Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007). The relationship between the board and the superintendent became more complex over time as the superintendent role required more technical and leadership skills to manage and lead district operations, while the board developed a policy-making role (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002). The board and superintendent relationship

became more politically charged as special interest and political groups formed, schools were restructured and transformed, school reforms were implemented, resources became limited, and accountability increased (Cibulka, 2001; Rocha, 2007).

School District Governance

Role of the board. Although the role of the board has evolved from performing day-to-day management of schools in addition to policy responsibilities, to solely focusing on policy making and oversight, the board has continued to play a fundamental role in the governance of schools (Kowalski, 2005). The primary role of the board is to adopt board policy, ensure proper use of funds, oversee the implementation of state and federal programs, and represent the interests of the community it serves. The board members also have the responsibility to create an educational environment with the academic opportunity and rigor to prepare students for the future (Cunningham, 2004). The board is made up of laypersons who have been elected to represent the interests of the local community. They do this by setting policy and providing direction to the superintendent as chief executive officer (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013).

Role of the superintendent. The superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he or she is responsible for managing the budget, implementing policy, following state and federal regulations, and for all other aspects of running a district. According to Griffin (2005), however, "The rules of the game have changed" (p. 54). The role, complexities, and pressures of being a superintendent have increased. With this change, expectations and relationships with boards and superintendents are increasingly strained, leading to more conflicted and mistrusting relationships between the superintendent and board. In addition, the superintendent must

also navigate the challenging internal and external political realities of the district

(Muhammed, 2012). Consequently, research has shown that this can lead to a high

turnover in superintendents, resulting in potential instability in the organization

(Kowalski et al., 2011).

Politics of the Superintendent and School Board

> **Board and superintendent relationship.** Collectively, the school board and the

superintendent form the governance team for the school district. It is important for the

governance team to work effectively together in order to have a healthy district. One of

the most common reasons for superintendents to leave a school district is a fractured or

unhealthy relationship with the school board (Kowalski et al., 2011). In addition, the

relationship between the board and the superintendent affects the quality of the

educational programs and the effectiveness of the superintendent in leading the district

(Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

> Positive and collaborative superintendent and board relationships are critical to

the success of a school district. This relationship is also important to a well-functioning

governance team (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Eadie, 2003; Hendricks, 2013). The critical

nature of the superintendent and board relationship is further substantiated by the fact that

one of the top reasons superintendents leave school districts is a lack of support and

fractured or strained relationships with board members (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In

addition, Ray (2003) opined that "a superintendent can possess all the necessary

competencies to be an effective leader, but it is the school board's perception of success

that really matters" (p. 5). A superintendent's understanding of the different political

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styles of board members, as well as knowing effective strategies to work with the different styles, is critical to a successful district (Vaughn, 2010).

Organizational and district politics. According to Björk and Keedy (2001), organizational politics exist in school districts like many other organizations and are a reality of the superintendent position. Because of this reality, superintendents must be able to navigate the politics, especially when it comes to working with board members, both individually and collectively. In addition, Caruso (2004) discussed the importance of being a board-savvy superintendent and the need for superintendents to become better equipped for the politics of the superintendency. This is especially true when it comes to understanding the different agendas and political styles of board members. Although superintendents are not politicians, they work in political environments. Superintendents who develop political skills and are more politically astute often are more effective at navigating the politics of the position and experience a greater likelihood of longevity in the position (Kowalski, 2005; Muhammed, 2012).

The Superintendent and Effective Leadership

In order to display effective leadership, superintendents are expected to exhibit knowledge and skills aligned with the roles that characterize a superintendent. As an instructional leader, they are expected to be knowledgeable about and provide leadership in the areas of staff development, curriculum and instruction, instructional supervision, pedagogy, and educational psychology. As a manager, they are expected to understand law, personnel administration, finance, facilities, collective bargaining, and public relations (Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; Fullan, 2005b). As a democratic leader, the superintendent is expected to navigate politics, maintain community relations,

and lead collaborative decision-making processes. As a social scientist, he or she is expected to be able to conduct and analyze behavioral sciences and quantitative and qualitative research. Superintendents are expected to be effective communicators with excellent verbal and written communication skills, listening skills, public speaking skills, and working with the media. Across all of their roles, they are expected to serve as motivators, collaborators, and experts in organizational change theory and development, leadership theory, technology, diversity, equity, and relationships. They also are expected to be the ethical and moral compass of the district (Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Political Strategies Used by Superintendents

There are many political strategies and skills that superintendents use to work with school boards. Some of the most effective and common strategies identified by researchers include building trust and relationships, communication, collaboration, consensus and team building, focusing on a common vision, and being politically astute (Caruso, 2004; Cox & Malone, 2001; Kowalski, 2013; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010). Communication skills and strategies are mentioned by a number of researchers as being critical to the development and maintenance of a healthy relationship. Communication keeps the board informed regarding important issues and also allows for the opportunity to proactively address problems (Cox & Malone, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn 2010). Collaborating with the board on the development of the district vision, goals, and objectives is also an effective strategy for a superintendent to use. This strategy includes the use of consensus and team-building skills as strategies to maintain

working relationships between the superintendent and board (Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010).

The increasing complexity and political aspects of the job require superintendents to become more politically astute, especially when working with the board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Caruso, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). Superintendents have to be able to navigate the politics, especially when it comes to working with board members, both individually and collectively (Björk & Keedy, 2001). In addition, Caruso (2004) discussed the importance of being a board-savvy superintendent, which includes the need for superintendents to become better equipped for the politics of the superintendency. This is especially true when it comes to understanding the different agendas and political styles of board members (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016). Building trust and relationships, communication, collaboration, consensus and team building, focusing on a common vision, and being politically astute are some of the most important strategies used by superintendents.

Statement of the Research Problem

According to recent studies, 60% of superintendents involuntarily leave their district, 45% of small school districts experience superintendent turnover, and the average tenure of urban superintendents is 3.18 years (ACSA, 2018). In addition, 27% of superintendents had reservations about becoming a superintendent due to loss of job security, 22% due to the politics of the job, and 10% due to increased workload and demands of the job (AASA, 2019). Conflict and contentious relationships with the board were some of the reasons most often cited by superintendents as to why they left a school

district. Furthermore, an inability to navigate the politics of working with the board can significantly inhibit the effectiveness of a superintendent (Finnan et al., 2015).

Researchers who have studied the school superintendency generally agree that the basic responsibilities include serves as chief executive officer, oversees the daily operations, carries out the vision and mission, and provides for the long-range planning of a school district. Additional school superintendent responsibilities consist of serving as instructional leaders, managing fiscal and business operations, hiring and supervising principals and district staff, solving problems, leveraging and obtaining resources, engaging the community, developing public relations, and working with school board members (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Griffin, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). In addition, researchers agreed that the relationship between the superintendent and the board is important to the effectiveness of the district and has an impact on the educational program (Kowalski et al., 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2007). Increased diversity in values, beliefs, priorities, expectations, and accountability have made the role of the superintendent more complex as the superintendents navigate competing interests. The increase in competing interests has made the relationship of the superintendent and board increasingly more complex and political (Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Superintendents' beliefs that their jobs are becoming more political, especially when working with the board, are not aligned with studies that show superintendents are hesitant to adopt political strategies to navigate the politics of their job (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). This makes it even more important for superintendents to be politically savvy and astute in order to navigate the politics of their

position. Superintendents who are not able to navigate the politics of the superintendency, especially in an effort to maintain relationships with the board, often struggle and sometimes experience a short tenure (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Caruso, 2004; Muhammed, 2012). Finally, there are a number of strategies used by superintendents to establish relationships and work effectively with school board members, with communication strategies being at the top of the list (Caruso, 2004; Cox & Malone, 2001; Kowalski, 2013; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016).

There is a significant body of research on these topics, validating the political reality and challenges faced by superintendents and the importance of the superintendent and board relationship. However, there is a gap in the research that identifies the political styles of board members as well as the specific strategies superintendents use to effectively work with the political styles of board members, both individually and collectively. Similarly, a number of researchers have noted the need for additional research related to the politics of the board and superintendent relationship (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Finnan et al., 2015; Ginsberg & Lyche, 2008; Glass, 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010). When there is a high turnover in leadership, the district lacks continuity, and efforts to improve programs and systems that impact student learning and outcomes are disrupted. The superintendent and board working together as a governance team is essential to district success, and building the relationship is fundamental to good governance. It is critical that superintendents understand the different political styles of board members and the need to adjust their own political style to what will work best with individual board members and the

governance team as a whole. Without this cohesion, school district efforts to improve will likely fail.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Research Questions

1. How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?

2. What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Significance of the Problem

There is a crisis in public education with the increasing turnover rate and decreasing tenure of superintendents, creating a lack of leadership stability in school districts (Finnan et al., 2015; Grissom & Anderson; 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011). This trend is validated by statistics, which show that over 60% of superintendents leave their district involuntarily (ACSA, 2018). Additionally, more than 59% of superintendents stated they were hesitant to become a superintendent due to the politics of the job, lack of job security, and the demands of the job (AASA, 2019). Conflict, disharmony, and contentious relationships with the board were some of the reasons most often cited by superintendents as to why they left a school district. Furthermore, an inability to navigate

the politics of working with the board can significantly inhibit the effectiveness and influence of a superintendent (Finnan et al., 2015; Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

Researchers such as Fullan, Fusarelli, Kowalski, Marzano, Peterson, and Waters agreed that the relationship between the superintendent and the board, as well as having long-term, stable leadership from the superintendent, is important to the effectiveness of the district (Fullan, 2000; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The stability of leadership has an impact on the educational program as well as student learning (Fullan, 2000; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007). A turnover in the superintendent position can also impede district reform efforts, systemic improvements, program quality, and student outcomes. Equally important, it may take up to 5 years for a district to recover from superintendent turnover (Fullan, 2000; Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

This study will benefit over 1,000 school district superintendents and more than 5,000 school board members who are responsible for the governance and effectiveness of the 1,026 school districts in California. Collectively, these superintendents and school boards impact more than 6,220,413 students in 10,473 schools (California Department of Education [CDE], 2019). In addition, this study will benefit professional organizations that support superintendents and school boards through professional development, training, coaching, and other professional activities. Some of these organizations include the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the National Association of School Superintendents (NASS), and the School Superintendents

Association (AASA). Furthermore, this study will be of value to universities across the United States that provide advanced degrees and certifications to superintendents and educational leaders. This study will also be beneficial to other appointed executives who work directly with elected board members and councils, including city managers, county executive officers, and other public and private agency personnel.

Although there is significant research validating the political reality and challenges faced by superintendents and the importance of the superintendent and board relationship, there is a gap in the research that identifies the specific strategies employed by superintendents to effectively work with the various political styles of board members, both individually and collectively (Finnan et al., 2015; Kowalski et al, 2011; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016). Similarly, a number of researchers have noted the need for additional research related to the politics of the board and superintendent relationship (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Finnan et al., 2015; Ginsberg & Lyche, 2008; Glass, 2001; Grissom & Anderson, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010). Additional research is needed to understand the political styles of board members as well as the strategies that superintendents use to work with the different styles.

This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study provides superintendents with a valuable resource to assist them with creating and maintaining positive, productive, and collaborative relationships as they navigate the various political styles of board members. Navigating the political styles of board members will result in a greater level of influence and superintendent effectiveness, reduce superintendent turnover, and provide stable, long-term district leadership.

Definitions

The following section defines terms as they are used in this study. These terms were collaboratively developed by a team of peer researchers studying political styles and strategies of superintendents as noted in the preface. The definitions are organized around the nine political styles matrix based on initiative and interests. The styles are listed as self-interest, blended interests, and organizational interest for each initiative: passive, engaged, and assertive.

Passive Political Styles

Analyst. Analysts are passive and oriented toward self-interest over organizational interest. They are primarily focused on tasks over relationships and will seek evidence, proof, and detailed analysis before risking a change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Boulgarides & Cohen, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Rowe & Boulgarides, 1992; White et al., 2016).

Adaptor. Adaptors are pragmatists who generally support organizational changes and team decisions, provided they do not perceive personal risk. An adaptor is one who presents a passive, cooperative, political style balanced between self-interest and organizational interests (Bobic, Davis, & Cunningham, 1999; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Kirton, 1976; White et al., 2016).

Supporter. Supporters are characterized as risk-averse, selfless, and passive devotees, backers, or advocates of the organization's visions and goals. Supporters seek harmony and hesitate to take sides, though they make decisions and provide resources that align with the organization's goals (CSBA, n.d.; DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016).

Moderately Engaged Political Styles

Planner. Planners demonstrate modest initiative in political ventures and are typically focused on self-interests rather than organizational interests. Planners gather and analyze data for potential personal risks, putting constraints on decision-making (Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; White et al., 2016).

Balancer. Balancers blend self and organizational interests. Focused on the prevention of disequilibrium, balancers use their knowledge of the organization's culture to diplomatically shift their support when needed to maintain stability, harmony, and equanimity (Sheehan, 1989; White et al., 2016).

Developers. Developers work behind the scenes to coach or challenge others to build skills that can positively advance organizational interests to which they are fully committed. Developers exhibit a high level of self-awareness of their own knowledge and skill (DeLuca, 1999; Goleman, 2000; Rath, 2007; White et al., 2016).

Assertive Political Styles

Challenger. Challengers are characterized by self-interest, assertive behavior, and confidence in their own vision, ideas, and goals, which inspires a strong desire to lead and make decisions quickly. Challengers see themselves as movers and shakers, efficient, politically strategic, aggressive, and willing to confront the views of others in an attempt to influence outcomes (DeLuca, 1999; Jasper, 1999; Meyer, Jenness, & Ingram, 2005; Polletta, 2004; White et al., 2016).

Arranger. Arrangers use a political style in which they are assertive in pursuing their goals that are a blend of both organizational priorities and their own self-interests. They build a power base by connecting with many people. Arrangers will take risks to

advance their goals and are strategic in combining resources (DeLuca, 1999; Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014; White et al., 2016).

Strategist. Strategists are visionary, open to new ideas, and collaborative. They empower others and model the organization's values. Supporting the organizational interests over self-interests, they strategically use a variety of approaches to propose new initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders, elicit commitment, and make purposeful decisions (DeLuca, 1999; Dergel, 2014; White et al., 2016).

Other Definitions

Politics. Politics are the activities, actions, and policies through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live and are used to achieve a desired outcome through reconciling differences and engaging others in dialogue. Politics also involves the use of power to influence or to improve organizational interests (Fairholm, 2009; White et al., 2016).

Power. Power is the ability to mobilize resources to accomplish organizational outcomes and influence others to overcome resistance (Emerson, 1962; Fairholm, 2009; Kanter, 1979; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992).

Ethics. Ethics are moral principles of right and wrong, based on shared or agreed upon values, beliefs, and norms, that guide a leader's behavior (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Brierton, Graham, Tomal, & Wilhite, 2016; DeLuca, 1999; Duffy, 2006; White et al., 2016).

Political strategy. Political strategy is the approach or tactics a leader uses in pursuing a desired goal or objective. It considers both internal and external issues,

situations, and changing dynamics in adapting a plan of action (DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; White et al., 2016).

Political style. Political style is the way one's values, character, and beliefs are manifested into actions and behaviors to influence others and achieve desired outcomes. It is the way in which a leader uses power to engage with individuals, groups, and circumstances. It is the combination of an individual's commitment to organizational interests versus self-interests and the level of initiative and energy he/she devotes to pursuing those interests (DeLuca, 1999; Grenny et al., 2013; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005; White et al., 2016).

Political intelligence. Political intelligence is a set of skills and ethical behaviors used to achieve organizational and/or personal goals. Political intelligence is the way that a leader negotiates policy, standards, and rules and regulations within organizational life, while considering the wants, needs, values, motivations, and emotions of all stakeholders to accomplish organizational goals (DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; R. C. Tucker, 1995; White et al., 2016).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to five exemplary unified school district superintendents in the Sacramento and San Francisco Bay areas. An exemplary superintendent in this study is a school district leader who demonstrates at least four of the following eight criteria:

- Shows evidence of positive governance team relationships.

- Has a minimum of 3 years of experience as a superintendent in his or her current district.

- Is identified by the county superintendent as exemplary in working with board members.

- Is identified by a panel of experts who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents.

- Has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional organization such as ACSA.

- Has received recognition by his or her peers.

- Has a membership in professional associations in his or her field.

- Has participated in CSBA Master's in Governance program training or other governance training with at least one board member.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I included an introduction to politics, a brief history of politics, theoretical foundations of politics, and a theoretical framework from *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016). Chapter I further discussed politics and public education, school district governance, politics of the superintendent and school board, the superintendent and effective leadership, and political strategies used by superintendents. Chapter II contains an extensive review of the literature and research that has been conducted on politics, superintendents, school boards, and strategies exemplary superintendents use to work with school board members. Chapter III describes the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this study. Chapter IV includes a presentation and analysis of the data as well as the findings and results of the research study. Chapter V concludes the study with

major findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further

research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II presents a review of the literature regarding superintendents and the strategies they use to work with the different political styles of board members. The literature review begins with an overview of the literature, followed by a brief history of politics. The chapter then introduces the theoretical foundations of politics and power as well as the theoretical framework utilized in this study. The chapter then examines the body of literature surrounding politics and public education, school district governance, and the politics of the superintendent and school board. The literature further explores the superintendent and effective leadership as well as the political strategies used by superintendents to work with school board members. The final section of this chapter concludes with a summary of the literature, significance of the problem, and importance of the study.

Review of the Literature

According to Aristotle (350 B.C.E.), "Human beings are by nature political animals" (p. 5). Politics impacts all aspects of society and is about power, influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; R. C. Tucker, 1995; White et al., 2016). References to politics can be traced back to great philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. Early political systems and parties were formed in the United States to give people who were espousing a certain agenda and ideals the ability to influence others on a large scale (Leftwich, 2004; Trott, 2017; R. C. Tucker, 1995). After World War II, politics evolved and shifted to include political and social issues at the local level with the intent of making an impact in one's own community (Hay, 2010; Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; R. C. Tucker, 1995). This refocusing of politics on

social issues is reflected in the increasing influence of politics and involvement in the

local educational system. Politics today continues to impact all aspects of life. It

pervades government, society, and organizations on a personal and global level, including

the educational system (Björk & Keedy, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Kowalski,

2013; Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). This pervasiveness of

community politics has a profound impact on school board elections, policy

development, district governance, and the relationship with the superintendents of

schools.

School boards can be traced back to the early 1800s when public schools were

governed and led by local officials. As school systems became more complex and the

demands greater, school boards became elected positions that governed the schools (Land

2002; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Timar, 2003). In the early days of school boards,

board members were focused on a common agenda, mutual goals, and a desire to

compromise (Cibulka, 2001). This is in stark contrast to school boards today, which can

be filled with personal and political agendas and divergent opinions (Björk & Keedy,

2001).

Originally appointed by the board as instructional leaders in the 1800s,

superintendents became managers of the school and the district, and their responsibilities

expanded in the early 1900s (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002; Moody, 2007). This led

to an overlap of responsibilities and lack of clarity between the role of the superintendent

and the role of the board, resulting in organizational and political conflict (Kowalski et

al., 2011; Moody, 2007). The relationship between the board and the superintendent

became more complex over time as the superintendent role required more technical and

leadership skills to manage and lead district operations, while the board developed a policy-making role (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002). The board and superintendent relationship became increasingly complex and politically charged as special interest and political groups formed, schools were restructured and transformed, school reforms were implemented, resources became limited, and accountability increased (Cibulka, 2001; Rocha, 2007).

Superintendents' beliefs that their jobs are becoming more political, especially when working with the board, are not aligned with studies that show superintendents are hesitant to adopt political strategies to navigate the politics of their job (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). Serving as a school district superintendent is a complex and challenging job while one of the most difficult challenges is working with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013). The relationship between the superintendent and school board affects the quality of education and programs within a district (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007). In addition, the relationship between the board and the superintendent is becoming more complex and political (Vaughn, 2010). Björk and Lindle (2001) suggested that it can be problematic if there is not an alignment between the leadership style of the superintendent and the political style of the board members. Thus, it is important that superintendents understand and develop strategies to work with the board and effectively lead the district as a governance team (DeLuca, 1999; Kowalski et al., 2011; White et al., 2016).

Brief History of Politics

Politics impacts all aspects of society and organizations and is about power, influence, control, relationships, community, and ethics (DeLuca, 1999; R. C. Tucker, 1995; White et al., 2016). Early references to politics can be traced back to great philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato (Leftwich, 2004). Aristotle used the theory of a city-state to comprehensively explain about politics by drawing upon the experiences of societies and people around him (Ranger, 2013). As in Plato's Republic, Aristotle explained the impacts of politics in society (Trott, 2017). In general, politics referred to the competition between competing individuals or interest groups for power and leadership (Trott, 2017). Early political systems and parties were formed in the United States to give people who were espousing a certain agenda and ideals the ability to influence others on a large scale (Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; Trott, 2017; R. C. Tucker, 1995). After World War II, politics evolved and shifted to include political and social issues at the local level with the intent of making an impact in one's own community. This also led to the formation of social groups and organizations formed on common beliefs and interests (Heywood, 2013; Leftwich, 2004; R. C. Tucker, 1995).

In the last 50 years, there has been a shift in politics toward the competing interests of liberty and equality. The focus on liberty has made a shift toward increased local control through decision-making, funding, and resources of services and local government (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). The governance of school districts by locally elected officials is an example of this movement toward local control and decision-making. At the same time, there are increasing laws and regulations at the federal and state level to ensure and promote equality and opportunity, including social, economic,

and educational. Understanding the political landscape at the local and national level has become critical to navigating the politics of educational reform (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). Additionally, domestic politics in various systems are driven by economic and social aspects that have resulted in the emergence of new forms of communication, the rise of new political issues, and the extension of governmental activity. Modern politics has been described as very egocentric, based on relationships, and democratic in nature (Güner, 2016).

Politics is a way for people to improve themselves, their community, and society. Politics can be about cooperation or disagreement (Fairholm, 2009). Politics is crucial because it significantly affects different activities that happen in every society (Yamin, 2013). It is a way for people to have power and the influence to change issues they believe in. Politics today continues to impact all aspects of life. It pervades government, society, and organizations on a personal and global level. This parallels the increasing influence of politics and involvement in the local educational system (Björk & Keedy, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Leaders use politics to lead and influence people toward their points of view, beliefs, or desired outcomes. Leaders may use politics to justify a positive or a negative end goal, which may bring about moral and ethical aspects of leadership (Fairholm, 2009; White et al., 2016). Some leaders may use politics and power for personal or individual gain, while others focus on the organization and their followers. In contemporary society, leaders use politics to enhance their own interests as well as create positive

outcomes (Lunenburg, 2012). Moreover, politics heightens the capability of leaders to effectively compete for power. In the organizational setting, politics enables leaders to influence subordinates to voluntarily cooperate and meet overall goals (Durrani, 2014). Politically intelligent leaders follow ethical and moral methods to navigate the use of political strategies for the good of the organization or society as a whole. A leader's use of politics in an organization can be an effective tool to bring about change and motivate people to work toward a common goal (Fairholm, 2009; Grenny et al., 2013; White et al., 2016).

Theoretical Foundations

Elite Theory

There are many theories used to describe politics, political theory, and power. In elite theory, the upper class use wealth for political power and influence. The theory suggests that a small group, comprised of people of the same economic class and networks, holds the greatest influence and that this authority is sovereign of democratic voting (Higley & Burton, 2006; Pakulski, 2012). The elementary features of this philosophy are that authority is concentrated and elites are united, while people who are not elites are varied and helpless. The interests of the elites are unified because of shared backgrounds, with institutional position being the essential feature of power (Higley, 2018; Mills, 2018; Pakulski, 2012).

Pluralist Theory

Pluralist theory is in stark contrast to elite theory in so far as pluralist theory posits that power is shared among several groups competing for their own interests. The groups may be alliances, unions, social groups, or business activists. Groups of

individuals with a common interest come together to influence political outcomes (Dahl, 2005). In pluralist theory, power is spread and fragmented. Strategies are implemented through negotiation, competition, and cooperation (Parenti, 1970; Preston, 1998).

Rational Choice Theory

Whereas both elite theory and pluralist theory focus on political power, rational choice theory is founded on the belief that people select a line of action related to their individual preferences and desires. Rational choice theory helps in the modeling of the decisions that humans make, particularly in the setting of economics and politics (Petracca, 1991). It assists with better understanding the conduct of a community with regard to personal actions as clarified through reasoning, whereby choices are consistent because they result from personal preferences (Green & Shapiro,1996).

Normative and Empirical Theory

Normative and empirical theories are unlike the other theories described previously in that they are descriptive or prescriptive in nature and not necessarily focused on political power and influence. For example, empirical theory looks at what "is," while normative theory considers what "should be." Another way to look at these theories is that empirical theory describes observable facts and objective statements as they are known. Normative theory attempts to be prescriptive in approach and may be values based and more subjective and judgmental in nature. In contrast to normative theory, empirical theory seeks to determine and define facts (Davies, 2002; Pietrzyk-Reeves, 2017; Skinner, 2006).

Social Inequity Theory

Social inequity theory supports the premise of elite theory and the control of power by the elite few. This theory is branded by the presence of unbalanced distribution of resources and unequal rewards for diverse statuses within a society. Resources such as power, wealth, and opportunity are distributed unequally (Powell et al., 2005). Adams (1965) described two main means used to determine the degree of societal discrimination: disparity of conditions and disparity of chances.

Political Frames

Whereas the political frames theory can be descriptive in nature similar to empirical theory, it also incorporates aspects of elite theory, pluralist theory, and power and influence theory. Political frames are the way in which people view their world and organization. Political frames are also used to make decisions within organizations. Bolman and Deal (2017) discussed the political frames of structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. In this model, they also discussed and identified the importance of organizing and categorizing within the frames as a way to better understand an organization and approach an issue. Additionally, they described several propositions that exist within the political frames of organizations: (a) coalitions; (b) enduring differences; (c) scarce resources; (d) differences that give rise to conflict; making power the most important resource; and (e) bargaining, negotiating, and jockeying for position (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Political frames stress the necessity for understanding power and politics and placing them at the center of goals and decisions that need to be made (Boyle, 1998).

Power and Influence Theory

The power and influence theory is unlike the other political theories in that it primarily focuses on leaders and how they use power and influence within their organization or community. This philosophy is founded on the diverse means by which leaders use authority and influence to achieve goals, and this results in an emergence of styles of leadership. People who are in a position of leadership or authority have power and influence over others (Grenny et al., 2013). This may be established through title or hierarchy in an organization. It can also be established through actions and reputation. Power can be achieved through coercion and intimidation, or it can be achieved through influence and relationships. The most skilled and effective leaders use power and influence strategies in a positive manner to move an organization forward toward a common goal (DeLuca, 1999; Fairholm, 2009; Grenny et al., 2013).

<div align="center">

Theoretical Framework

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The theoretical framework utilized to analyze the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents is the goal allegiance and initiative scale discussed in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016), which identifies nine different political styles. This theoretical framework is relevant because superintendents need to be able to identify the political styles of board members and employ strategies to work with the different styles to navigate organizational politics and operate as an effective governance team. The work of White et al. (2016) expanded upon the nine political styles developed by DeLuca (1999).

The nine political styles developed by DeLuca (1999) focused on one's orientation toward action and attitude toward politics. De Luca believed that action

orientation, or degree of initiative, is an important component of political style.

However, White et al. (2016) made the argument that goal allegiance is a stronger

determinant of political style for leaders in the educational and public sectors. The

theoretical framework outlined in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016)

focused on identifying political styles through a goal allegiance and political initiative

continuum. The nine political styles under the goal allegiance and degree of initiative

model include the analyst, the adaptor, the supporter, the planner, the balancer, the

developer, the challenger, the arranger, and the strategist (White et al., 2016).

Goal Allegiance Continuum

According to White et al. (2016), "In education and other public sector roles,

people tend to operate on a continuum from an exclusive focus on goals associated with

self-interests to an exclusive focus on goals associated with organizational interests"

(p. 69). The goal allegiance continuum (see Figure 1) is used to identify where a person's

political style is focused most consistently, acknowledging that most people will move on

the continuum based upon the current circumstance. However, when given a choice to

advance one's own interests over advancing the interests of the organization, most people

tend to choose one direction. This is especially true when facing difficult or adverse

situations (White et al., 2016).

Basis for Goals		
Self-Interests	Blended Interests	Organizational Interests
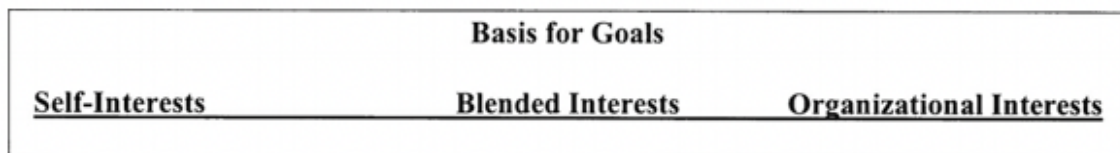
Figure 1. Goal allegiance continuum. From *The Politically Intelligent Leader: Dealing With the Dilemmas of a High-Stakes Educational Environment* (2nd ed.), by P. White, T. Harvey, and S. Fox, 2016, p. 69. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Political Initiative Continuum

According to White et al. (2016), "Once you have a goal in mind, whether it's for your self-interest or your organization's interest, the question is, what do you do about it?" (p. 69). The political initiative continuum (see Figure 2) measures the degree to which people are willing to get involved and take action. On the left side of the continuum are people who are reluctant and less likely to get involved. On the right side of the continuum are those with more assertive styles who are more willing to get involved, express their opinions, and take risks (White et al., 2016). Those people with assertive styles are also described as "eager to take the plunge, anxious to make things happen, and disdainful of the indecisive" (White et al., 2016, p. 70). As with the goal allegiance continuum, most people will move on the political initiative continuum depending on the circumstance; however, people usually have a default style they resort to that is characteristic of their natural political style (White et al., 2016).

Level of Initiative		
Passive	Moderately Engaged	Assertive
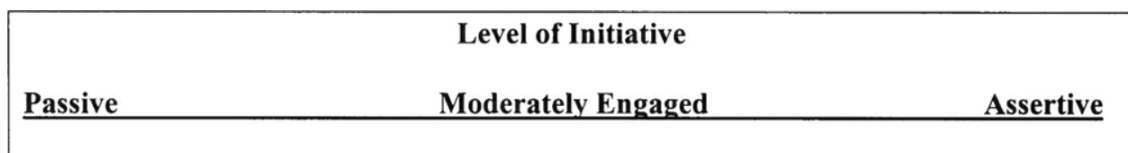
Figure 2. Political initiative continuum. From *The Politically Intelligent Leader: Dealing with the Dilemmas of a High-Stakes Educational Environment* (2nd ed.), by P. White, T. Harvey, and S. Fox, 2016, p. 70. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Political Styles

A person's political style is determined by where he or she intersects between the goal allegiance continuum and the political initiative continuum on the political styles matrix (see Figure 3). The political styles matrix identifies nine different political styles (White et al., 2016). These styles are described in more detail in the following section.

Nine Political Styles

Goal / Initiative	Self-Interests	Blended Interests	Organizational Interests
Assertive	Challenger	Arranger	Strategist
Engaged	Planner	Balancer	Developer
Passive	Analyst	Adaptor	Supporter

Figure 3. Political styles matrix. From *The Politically Intelligent Leader: Dealing with the Dilemmas of a High-Stakes Educational Environment* (2nd ed.), by P. White, T. Harvey, and S. Fox, 2016, p. 72. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

The following section defines the nine political styles as they are used in this study. These terms were collaboratively developed by a team of peer researchers studying political styles and strategies of superintendents as noted in the preface. The definitions are organized around the nine political styles matrix based on initiative and interests. The styles are listed as self-interest, blended interests, and organizational interest for each initiative: passive, engaged, and assertive. In addition, White et al. (2016) theorized that there are specific strategies that politically intelligent leaders use to work effectively with the different political styles. Although these strategies may not work in all situations, they are recommended strategies that are known to be effective based upon the attributes of each of the political styles (White et al., 2016).

Passive Political Styles and Strategies

Analyst. Analysts are passive and oriented toward self-interest over organizational interest. They are primarily focused on tasks over relationships and will

seek evidence, proof, and detailed analysis before risking a change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Boulgarides & Cohen, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Rowe & Boulgarides, 1992; White et al., 2016). When working with analysts, the following strategies are effective: "build trust, use concrete examples, approval of power structure, go slow to go fast, chits, many messengers, co-option, command, broken record, meet their needs, and link agendas" (White et al., 2016, p. 84).

Adaptor. Adaptors are pragmatists who generally support organizational changes and team decisions, provided they do not perceive personal risk. An adaptor is one who presents a passive, cooperative political style balanced between self-interest and organizational interests (Bobic et al., 1999; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Kirton, 1976; White et al., 2016). When working with adaptors, the following strategies are effective:

> build trust; go slow to go fast; agenda linking; praise and recognition; many
> messengers; command; broken record; meet their needs; simple messages; do
> your homework; use norms; management by walking around; be open to their
> ideas; create a benevolent environment; where snipers dwell, plan meticulously;
> know who trusts whom; and conflict strategy of smoothing. (White et al., 2016, p.
> 86)

Supporter. Supporters are characterized as risk averse, selfless, and passive devotees, backers, or advocates of the organization's visions and goals. Supporters seek harmony and hesitate to take sides, though they make decisions and provide resources that align with the organization's goals (CSBA, n.d.; DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016). When working with supporters, the following strategies are effective:

build trust, testimonials from trusted sources, approval of power structure, go

slow to go fast, agenda linking, superordinate goal, expand the pie, many

messengers, problem solving, meet their needs, simple messages, do your

homework, celebrate everything, use norms, management by walking around, and

benevolent environment. (White et al., 2016, p. 87)

Moderately Engaged Political Styles

Planner. Planners demonstrate modest initiative in political ventures and are

typically focused on self-interests rather than organizational interests. Planners gather

and analyze data for potential personal risks, putting constraints on decision-making

(Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; White et al., 2016). When working with

planners, the following strategies are effective:

win-win; agenda linking; chits; many messengers; command; broken record; meet

needs; simple messages; never let 'em see you sweat; do your homework; respond

positively to perceived danger; count your votes; use norms; dig the well early;

create a benevolent environment; and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously.

(White et al., 2016, p. 89)

Balancer. Balancers blend self and organizational interests. Focused on the

prevention of disequilibrium, balancers use their knowledge of the organization's culture

to diplomatically shift their support when needed to maintain stability, harmony, and

equanimity (Sheehan, 1989; White et al., 2016). When working with balancers, the

following strategies are effective:

build trust, go slow to go fast, win-win, agenda linking, superordinate goal,

expand the pie, include all sides, accordion process, conflict strategies, problem

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solving, political vision, meet their needs, simplify your message, do your

homework, know each decision maker's agenda, be aware of political blind spots,

coalition building, working the community, build networks, respond positively to

danger, count your votes, use norms effectively, management by walking around,

be open to ideas, empower others, create a benevolent environment, know who

trusts whom, and float the idea. (White et al., 2016, p. 89)

Developer. Developers work behind the scenes to coach or challenge others to

build skills that can positively advance organizational interests to which they are fully

committed. Developers exhibit a high level of self-awareness of their own knowledge

and skill (DeLuca, 1999; Goleman, 2000; Rath, 2007; White et al., 2016). When working

with developers, the following strategies are effective:

build trust; go slow to go fast; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal;

expand the pie; include all sides; accordion process; problem solving; create a

political vision; meet their needs; simplify and clarify message; do your

homework; know each decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots;

coalition building; working the community; build networks; respond positively to

perceived danger; celebrate everything; use norms effectively; dig the well before

you're thirsty; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower

others; create a benevolent environment; know who trusts whom; float the idea,

and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously. (White et al., 2016, p. 91)

Assertive Political Styles

Challenger. Challengers are characterized by self-interest, assertive behavior, and

confidence in their own vision, ideas, and goals, which inspires a strong desire to lead

and make decisions quickly. Challengers see themselves as movers and shakers, efficient, politically strategic, aggressive, and willing to confront the views of others in an attempt to influence outcomes (DeLuca, 1999; Jasper, 1999; Meyer et al., 2005; Polletta, 2004; White et al., 2016). When working with challengers, the following strategies are effective:

include all sides; win-win; agenda linking; chits; many messengers; ability to compete, intention to cooperate; broken record; never let 'em see you sweat; do your homework; know each decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; where snipers dwell, plan meticulously; working the community; build networks; respond positively to danger; dig the well early; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; know who trusts whom; use the accordion approach; and count your votes. (White et al., 2016, p. 95)

Arranger. Arrangers use a political style in which they are assertive in pursuing their goals that are a blend of both organizational priorities and their own self-interests. They build a power base by connecting with many people. Arrangers will take risks to advance their goals and are strategic in combining resources (DeLuca, 1999; Effelsberg et al., 2014; White et al., 2016). When working with arrangers, the following strategies are effective:

build trust; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal; expand the pie; include all sides; accordion process; conflict strategies; problem solving; political vision; meet their needs; do your homework; know decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; working the community; build networks; ability to compete, intent to cooperate; respond positively to danger; count your

votes; celebrate everything; use norms effectively; dig the well early; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower others; know who trusts them; float the idea; and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously. (White et al., 2016, p. 96)

Strategist. Strategists are visionary, open to new ideas, and collaborative. They empower others and model the organization's values. Supporting organizational interests over self-interests, they strategically use a variety of approaches to propose new initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders, elicit commitment, and make purposeful decisions (DeLuca, 1999; Dergel, 2014; White et al., 2016). When working with strategists, the following strategies are effective:

build trust; include all sides; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal; expand the pie; accordion process; ability to compete, intent to cooperate; dialogue; problem solving; political vision; simple, clear message; do your homework; know decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; working the community; build networks; respond positively to danger; count your votes; celebrate everything; uncover informal norms; dig the well early; link agendas; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower others; benevolent environment; know who trusts whom; and float the idea. (White et al., 2016, p. 98)

Politics and Public Education

School boards can be traced back to the early 1800s when public schools were governed and led by local officials (Land, 2002). Eventually, as school systems became more complex and the demands greater, school boards became elected positions that

governed the schools (Land 2002; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001, Timar, 2003). In the early

days of school boards, board members were focused on a common agenda, mutual goals,

and a desire to compromise (Cibulka, 2001). This is in stark contrast to school boards

today, which can be filled with personal and political agendas and divergent opinions

(Björk & Keedy, 2001).

In 1837, there was evidence that school districts began appointing superintendents

to serve as instructional leaders who supervised classroom instruction and were

considered lead instructors or teacher scholars (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002;

Moody, 2007). As the need arose in the early 1900s, superintendents became managers

of the school and the district, and their responsibilities expanded. This led to an overlap

of responsibilities and lack of clarity between the role of the superintendent and the role

of the board, resulting in organizational and political conflict (Kowalski et al., 2011;

Moody, 2007). The relationship between the board and the superintendent became more

complex over time as the superintendent role required more technical and leadership

skills to manage and lead district operations, while the board developed a policy-making

role (Kowalski et al., 2011; Land, 2002). The board and superintendent relationship

became more politically charged as special interest and political groups formed, schools

were restructured and transformed, school reforms were implemented, resources became

limited, and accountability increased (Cibulka, 2001; Rocha, 2007).

Public education is greatly influenced by federal, state, and local governments,

which require districts to follow ever-changing laws and policies that are intended to

control actions and policy. Many of these requirements are complex and necessitate a

change in practice or policy adjustments within a school district (Brierton et al., 2016;

Kowalski et al., 2011). Societal changes, including changing demographics, economics, and belief systems, also influence school district politics. Change often creates conflict (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). As the collective needs of a community and society change, conflict occurs in school districts as school boards and superintendents work to ensure that the change is managed efficiently and effectively (Brierton et al., 2016).

School districts are influenced by internal and external power and politics, which creates conflict from a variety of sources. Quite often, the most influential groups have an agenda for the issues they are targeting. Some of these groups include advocacy groups, unions, business groups, school board members, and politicians (Brierton et al., 2016; Grenny et al., 2013). The goals of these groups may directly conflict with the goals of the district. Achieving positive results when change ensues and conflict occurs requires communication, strategic planning, collaboration, and resolve. As the governance team, it is incumbent upon the school board and the superintendent to work toward a positive resolution in times of conflict and political influence (Brierton et al., 2016; Kowalski, 2013).

School District Governance

The superintendent and the school board collectively make up the school district governance team. Together they are responsible for developing and implementing policy and procedures to ensure a high-quality education and the success of the district (Kowalski et al., 2011). CSBA (n.d.) made clear the authority of the board as a whole when discussing the roles and responsibilities of the board:

Authority is granted to the board as a whole, not each board member individually. Therefore, board members fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team with the superintendent to make decisions that will best serve all the students in the community. (p. 1)

The coherence of effort of the governance team has a significant impact on student learning and carrying out the goals and vision of the school district. In addition, there is a direct correlation between the stability and longevity of the superintendent and the impact on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Because of the instability and short tenure of the superintendency, as well as the fact that the superintendent works for the school board, there exists an imbalance of power. It is important for superintendents to understand this imbalance of power and be able to navigate the politics of the school board (Kowalski et al., 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Role of the Board

As school systems became more complex and the demands greater, school boards became elected positions that governed the schools (Land 2002; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Timar, 2003). In the early days of school boards, board members were focused on a common agenda, mutual goals, and a desire to compromise (Cibulka, 2001). This is in stark contrast to school boards today, which can be filled with personal and political agendas and divergent opinions (Björk & Keedy, 2001).

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the California School Boards Association (CSBA) both defined the role of school board members. NSBA (2019) stated that school board members have a responsibility to

participate in strategic planning, develop the community's vision, oversee

improvements in instruction, review district plans, practice collaboration,

demonstrate trust, advocate with legislators, advocate for student achievement,

establish a climate of transparent communication, and provide funding for the

above collaborative efforts. (p. 1)

CSBA (n.d.) took a somewhat different approach to defining the role of the school board

and explicitly stated,

The role of the school board is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the

values, beliefs, and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by

performing five major responsibilities:

- Setting direction

- Establishing an effective and efficient structure

- Providing support

- Ensuring accountability

- Providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district,

  and public schools. (p. 1)

Although the role of the board has evolved from performing day-to-day

management of schools in addition to policy responsibilities, to solely focusing on policy

making and oversight, the board has continued to play a fundamental role in the

governance of schools (Kowalski, 2005). The primary role of the board is to adopt board

policy, ensure proper use of funds, oversee the implementation of state and federal

programs, and represent the interests of the community it serves. They also have the

responsibility to create an educational environment with the academic opportunity and

rigor to prepare students for the future (Cunningham, 2004). The board is made up of laypersons who have been elected to represent the interests of the local community. They do this by setting policy and giving direction to the superintendent as the chief executive officer (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013).

In general, school boards continue to focus on local control to meet the needs of the community, while at the same time attempting to fulfill their governance role, with the superintendent serving as the educational expert and district leader (Kowalski, 2013; Land, 2002). Although board members continue to face new challenges with changing demographics, advancing technology, and a higher level of accountability, their primary purpose is to set policy for the school district, provide fiscal oversight, and hire and evaluate the superintendent. A number of researchers on this subject agreed that the board's most critical role is the hiring and evaluation of the superintendent (Bartusek, 2003; Hess, 2002; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2011; Resnick & Bryant, 2010).

Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he or she is responsible for managing the budget, implementing policy, following state and federal regulations, and for all other aspects of running a district. According to Griffin (2005), "The rules of the game have changed" (p. 54). The role, complexities, and pressures of being a superintendent have increased. With this change, expectations and relationships with board members have become strained, leading to more conflicted and mistrusting relationships between the superintendent and board. In addition, the superintendent has to deal with navigating the political realities of the district and being a superintendent (Kowalski, 2013; Muhammed, 2012). Ultimately, research has shown

that this can lead to a high turnover in superintendents, resulting in potential instability in the organization (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Waters and Marzano (2007) described the role of superintendent as a list of responsibilities whose focus is on academic achievement, while Orr (2006) discussed the challenges of the superintendency as a constant struggle between leadership, the priorities of the district, and internal and external demands and accountability. Rueter (2009) proposed that superintendents are required to lead instruction, manage governance, facilitate the budget and operations, and communicate with stakeholders, while at the same time juggling the politics of the position. Other researchers described the responsibilities of the superintendent as developing and implementing the vision, mission, and goals of the district, providing leadership to accomplish objectives, creating an environment of growth and professional learning, and providing resources (Kowalski, 2013; Townsend et al., 2007). Many researchers made reference to the fact that it is important for the superintendent to maintain a positive working relationship with the board (Donlan & Whitaker, 2017; Townsend et al., 2007; Worner, 2010).

While school boards develop and adopt policy, superintendents serve as agents of the board and are required to carry out board policy and procedures. As district leaders, it is imperative that superintendents have a strongly developed and clear personal moral and ethical framework as they work with the board (Brierton et al., 2016; Harris, 2009; Worner, 2010). These principles are important because the board may be influenced by politics, control, and power. As the role and responsibilities of the superintendency continue to grow and expand, the superintendent has to be an expert in school law, state and federal accountability, teaching and learning, finance, school reform, and leadership,

all the while navigating the politics of working with the community, agencies, interest groups, and especially the school board (Glass, 2010; Kowalski, 2013; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Politics of the Superintendent and School Board

School district governance and leadership are closely linked to change, power, conflict, and politics (Brierton et al., 2016). While the superintendent's primary responsibility is to serve as the chief executive officer of the district, the school board serves as a policy-making body (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). Even though these are their primary functions, the decisions the superintendent and school board make are often based on political, moral, legal, and ethical influences. As the superintendent and school board deal with the reality of internal and external politics, they also experience politics within the governance team, individually and collectively (Fairholm, 2009; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016).

There are a variety of issues that influence and drive the politics of the school board. Some of these influences may include the following:

- the level of community involvement in school board election in terms of voter turnout and the number of challengers to incumbents,

- demand for change based upon a contentious issue or policy,

- division and partisanship in the community that leads to division and partisanship on the school board, and

- personal agendas of board members as a reason to run for the school board (Brierton et al., 2016; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Researchers also discussed several theories regarding the politics and role of local school boards, including creating educational policy that is influenced by politics. Some of these theories are dissatisfaction theory, continuous participation theory, decision output theory, and public choice theory and can be a strong indicator of the level of politics that exists on a school board, within a school district, and in the community. These theories can also indicate the reason or motivation for someone running for the school board (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Hess & Meeks, 2011; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008; Moe, 2005, 2011; Rada, 1988; H. J. Tucker & Zeigler, 1978; Wirt & Kirst, 1989).

Dissatisfaction theory refers to a system in which there is a long period of stability on the board and relatively little incumbent turnover. This is followed by a very brief period of dissatisfaction and incumbent turnover in an election due to challengers. This dissatisfaction is generally associated with a specific unpopular decision or controversial issue and not a general dissatisfaction with the district (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008). This can pose a challenge for the superintendent in working with the political styles of the new board members.

In the continuous participation theory, there is a small percentage of the community who stays continually involved in district politics. These people, usually representing specific interests, are actively engaged and represented on the school board (Brierton et al., 2016; H. J. Tucker & Zeigler, 1978). Continual participation provides for political stability on the board, even though board members may only be representative of a small percentage of the community.

Decision output theory discusses the undemocratic nature of local school boards in that many policies at the local level are defined by laws and policies at the state and federal levels. It surmises that other than fiscal decisions, the policy making of the board is minimal, and thus the political influence of the board is limited. This theory also speculates that it is the superintendent who has more control and influence than the board (Hess & Meeks, 2011; Wirt & Kirst, 1989).

Finally, public choice theory is one of the more recent studies related to politics and school district governance. It explains that generally, there are two types of board members who serve on school boards: power and/or prestige candidates (Moe, 2011). Power candidates want to get on the board to make decisions and change district policy. Prestige candidates want to get on the board for the notoriety they gain within the local community. Both types of board members impact and influence the politics within the school board, governance team, and community (Moe, 2005, 2011; Rada, 1988).

These theories are further validation that the superintendent and school board are subject to many social and political influences, both internally and externally, that have a real impact on decisions and the decision-making process. The reason a board member runs for and serves on the board also has a significant impact on superintendents in fulfilling their responsibilities (Kowalski, 2013; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; White et al., 2016). For these reasons, it is important to understand the board and superintendent relationship.

Board and Superintendent Relationship

Collectively, the school board and the superintendent form the governance team for the school district. It is important for the governance team to work effectively

together in order to have a healthy district. One of the most common reasons for superintendents to leave a school district is due to a fractured or unhealthy relationship with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013). In addition, the relationship between the board and the superintendent affects the quality of the educational programs and the effectiveness of the superintendent in leading the district (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Positive and collaborative superintendent and board relationships are critical to the success of a school district. This relationship is also important to a well-functioning governance team (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Eadie, 2003, Hendricks, 2013). The critical nature of the superintendent and board relationship is further substantiated by the fact that one of the top reasons superintendents leave school districts is due to a lack of support and fractured or strained relationships with board members (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In addition, Ray (2003) opined that "a superintendent can possess all the necessary competencies to be an effective leader, but it is the school board's perception of success that really matters" (p. 5). A superintendent's understanding of the different political styles of board members, as well as knowing effective strategies to work with the different styles, is critical to a successful district (Vaughn, 2010).

Superintendents can be more effective, fulfill their responsibilities, and make greater progress toward district goals if they communicate effectively, are able to manage the school board, and develop strong relationships (Glass, 2010). Superintendents assert the importance of their relationship with the board and the detriment to their position if they have strained relations with the board (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006). This is supported by a study conducted by Rueter (2009) in which building relationships with the

school board was conveyed as a top priority for superintendents and was the greatest

element in determining superintendent success. Strategies such as developing political

and management skills, investing energy in maintaining relationships, and developing

open lines of communication contribute to effective relationships between the

superintendent and school board (Byrd et al., 2006; Glass, 2010; Rueter, 2009).

Organizational and District Politics

According to Björk and Keedy (2001), organizational politics exist in school

districts like many other organizations and are a reality of the superintendent position.

Because of this reality, superintendents have to be able to navigate the politics, especially

when it comes to working with board members, both individually and collectively. In

addition, Caruso (2004) discussed the importance of being a board-savvy superintendent

and the need for superintendents to become better equipped for the politics of the

superintendency. This is especially true when it comes to understanding the different

agendas and political styles of board members (Balch & Adamson, 2018; Houston &

Eadie, 2002; White et al., 2016). It is problematic when board members put their

personal interests ahead of the district and push an agenda that is different from the rest

of the board members (Caruso, 2004; Houston & Eadie, 2002). Although

superintendents are not politicians, they work in political environments. Superintendents

who develop political skills and are more politically astute, often are more effective at

navigating the politics of the position and experience a greater likelihood of longevity in

the position (Darfler-Sweeney, 2018; Kowalski, 2005; Muhammed, 2012).

Strained Relations Between the Superintendent and Board

Moody (2007) stated, "Given the complex and often ambiguous nature of school governance, it is appropriate to characterize superintendent-board relations as being problematic" (p. 35). One of the most challenging aspects of being a superintendent is not necessarily a specific responsibility; rather, it is the weight of the responsibility coupled with the pressure from stakeholders and the board. This is a great source of stress for superintendents while they navigate the political pressures, including the expectations and political dynamics of working with and gaining the support of the board (Atherton, 2008; Gestson, 2009; Jackson, 2016). Moody (2007) submitted that the relationship between the superintendent and board has become increasingly strained because responsibilities and issues have become more complex and challenging. In addition, there is more of a tendency for board members to become involved with and influence the administrative duties and responsibilities of the superintendents and staff, stepping outside of the role of a board member. This role confusion can create animosity and a lack of clarity between the role of the board and the role of the superintendent (Moody, 2007; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005).

The Superintendent and Effective Leadership

In order to display effective leadership, superintendents are expected to exhibit knowledge and skills aligned with the roles that characterize a superintendent. As an instructional leader, they are expected to be knowledgeable about and able to lead staff development, curriculum and instruction, instructional supervision, pedagogy, and educational psychology. As a manager, they need to understand law, personnel administration, finance/budgeting, facilities, collective bargaining, and public relations

(Fullan, 2005a; Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). As a democratic leader, the superintendent needs to navigate politics, maintain community relations, and lead collaborative decision-making processes. As a social scientist, he or she needs to be able to conduct and analyze behavioral sciences and quantitative and qualitative research. Superintendents need to be effective communicators with excellent verbal and written communication skills, listening skills, public speaking skills, and working with the media. Across all of their roles, they need to serve as motivators, collaborators, and experts in organizational change theory and development, leadership theory, technology, diversity, equity, and relationships. They also need to be the ethical and moral compass of the district (Glass et al., 2000; Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011).

A number of researchers have discussed the importance and impact of the superintendent and effective leadership on the success of school districts. Marzano and Waters (2009) determined that there is a correlation between district-level leadership and student achievement. The specific leadership behaviors from superintendents and district-level leadership that have an impact on student achievement include "collaborative goal-setting, non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, creating board alignment with and support of district goals, monitoring achievement and instruction goals, and allocating resources to support the goals of achievement and instruction" (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 5). Fullan (2005a) has many recommendations that overlap or support the work of Marzano and Waters (2009) when discussing effective superintendent leadership. Superintendents need to lead with a "compelling, driving conceptualization" in which they have a clear understanding of where the district

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needs to go and how to get there (Fullan, 2005a, p. 12). Fullan (2005a) also discussed

effective leaders as having a moral purpose, understanding the change process,

developing relationships, creating culture, fostering knowledge and learning, building

capacity, and creating coherence.

Political Strategies Used by Superintendents

The increasing complexity and political aspects of the job require superintendents

to become more politically astute and aware, especially when working with the board

(Björk & Keedy, 2001; Caruso, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012).

Superintendents have to be able to navigate the politics, especially when it comes to

working with board members, both individually and collectively (Björk & Keedy, 2001).

In addition, Caruso (2004) discussed the importance of being a board-savvy

superintendent, which includes the need for superintendents to become better equipped

for the politics of the superintendency. This is especially true when it comes to

understanding the different agendas and political styles of board members (Björk &

Keedy, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016).

There are many political strategies and skills that superintendents use to work

with school boards. Some of the most effective and common strategies identified by

researchers include building trust, communication, collaboration, consensus and team

building, focusing on a common vision, and being politically astute (Caruso, 2004; Cox

& Malone, 2001; Kowalski, 2013; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010). Communication

skills and strategies are mentioned by a number of researchers as being critical to the

development and maintenance of a healthy relationship. Communication keeps the board

informed regarding important issues and also allows for the opportunity to proactively

address problems (Cox & Malone, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn 2010).

Collaborating with the board on the development of the district vision, goals, and

objectives is also an effective strategy for a superintendent to use. This strategy includes

the use of consensus and team-building skills as strategies to maintain working

relationships between the superintendent and board (Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010).

A number of researchers and studies have overlapping opinions regarding the

strategies that superintendents use to work effectively with the board. During the course

of this study, more than 30 specific and general strategies were identified from numerous

sources. Although some of the strategies identified were complementary, others were

divergent or outlier strategies. The consistent strategies that were identified in virtually

every study include build trust and relationships; communication; team building,

collaboration, and consensus building; focus on shared vision and goals; board member

training and clarity of roles; and being politically astute and board-savvy (Alsbury &

Gore, 2015; Balch & Adamson, 2018; Björk & Keedy, 2001; Björk & Kowalski, 2005;

Callan & Levinson, 2011; Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Caruso, 2004; Cora, 2019; CSBA,

n.d.; Darfler-Sweeney, 2018; DeLuca, 1999; Donlan & Whitaker, 2017, 2019; Eller &

Carlson, 2009; Finnan et al., 2015; Fullan, 2005a, 2005b; Harris, 2009; Harvey,

Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Houston &

Eadie, 2002; Kersten, 2012; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2011; Marzano & Waters,

2009; Mayer, 2011; Muhammed, 2012; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005; Scudero, 2019;

Townsend, Brown, & Buster, 2005; Townsend et al., 2007; Van Clay & Soldwedel,

2009; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016; Worner, 2010). Some of the key political

strategies are briefly summarized in the following sections.

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Build Trust and Relationships

Houston and Eadie (2002) emphasized that "board-savvy superintendents devote considerable time and attention to building and maintaining a close, and productive working partnerships with their boards" (p. 73). Building trust is a necessary strategy in order to have positive working relationships with the board and should be a priority of every superintendent (Harris, 2009; Townsend et al., 2007; White et al., 2016). A number of researchers discussed the importance of building trust in order to develop and maintain healthy and positive relationships (Covey, 2006; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007; White et al., 2016). When trusting relationships are fostered, a superintendent can develop and maintain a positive rapport with the board (Eller & Carlson, 2009; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Additionally, building trust is a critical element of developing effective teams (Harvey & Drolet, 2005). Weisman (2016) identified five domains of trust that include competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In recent studies focused on the domains of trust, Cora (2019) and Scudero (2019) concluded that all five domains are important in order for superintendents to develop trust and stronger relationships with their school board.

Communication

Effective communication is a critical political strategy for a superintendent to possess (Finnan et al., 2015; Harris, 2009). A comprehensive study by Kowalski et al. (2011) indicated that the amount of time superintendents spend communicating with boards has increased significantly. An increase in communication has a positive impact on a superintendent's relationship with school board members (Finnan et al., 2015). Using communication effectively goes beyond information shared verbally. The

superintendent needs to continually make sure the board feels informed (Donlan &

Whittaker, 2019; Foersch, 2012). This information needs to be shared equally with all

board members regardless of whether or not the superintendent has a positive relationship

with an individual board member (Eller & Carlson, 2009; Vaughn, 2010). It can be a

sign of an unhealthy governance team when board members and the superintendent

frequently surprise each other. Any information shared must be honest and accurate in

order to not compromise the integrity or credibility of the information and the

relationship. When information is not shared equally or is not accurate, distrust may

surface between the superintendent and the board (Caruso, 2004; Townsend et al., 2007;

Vaughn, 2010).

Team Building, Collaboration, and Consensus Building

Team building, collaboration, and consensus building were found to be effective

political strategies used by superintendents when working with school board members

(Balch & Adamson, 2018; Donlan & Whittaker, 2017; Harvey & Drolet, 2005).

Governance teams that spend time developing norms to guide how they operate at

meetings and interact as a team enhance the opportunity for developing stronger

relationships (Townsend et al., 2007). Additionally, superintendents increase their

influence when they have the skill and ability to build consensus, foster shared decision-

making, and practice inclusivity (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Vaughn, 2010).

Effective collaboration and team building encourage board members as they learn

about each other and share ideas and opinions (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). It helps them to

meet together and talk about important issues, which include strategies to attain goals,

understand the diverse needs of the district, and form authentic and caring relationships

(Brierton et al., 2016; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Van Clay & Soldwedel, 2009). A shared sense of culture and purpose is often the result of time spent collaborating and team building. Equally important, collaboration and team building create a supportive environment in which no one feels alone and isolated. This enables superintendents to create stronger relationships with the board members, both individually and collectively (Brierton et al., 2016; Harris, 2009; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Meyer et al., 2005).

Building consensus is another political strategy a superintendent uses to work with board members. When the board is working through complex issues to seek mutually acceptable resolutions, building consensus allows input from all members involved in the decision-making process (Brierton et al., 2016; Harvey & Drolet, 2005). Building consensus also establishes a way for developing solutions that work for everyone.

Focus on Common Vision and Goals

Establishing a common vision and goals can drive personal behaviors that affect the entire team (Harris, 2009; Muhammed, 2012; Townsend et al., 2005). Board members become motivated to support the success of the goals when they feel they are part of the process of developing shared goals, which are aligned with the vision and purpose (Brierton et al., 2016; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Additionally, this practice aligns board member actions with the goals and values of the district. If a board member attempts to micromanage, get involved with the daily operations of the district, or push his or her own personal agenda, bringing the focus back to the vision and goals of the district can be an effective strategy. Furthermore, it grounds the board when the district is dealing with challenging political issues (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Caruso, 2004;

Harvey et al., 2013). Having a common vision and goals that were collaboratively

developed also gives the board a shared moral imperative and a unity of purpose

(Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Board Member Training and Clarity of Roles

Board member training is essential for creating conditions that meet the needs of

all board members. Effective training can assist board members in understanding how to

work with each other and the superintendent effectively and provide clarity of roles

(Brierton et al., 2016; Caruso, 2004; Foersch, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011). The training

can also educate board members regarding how to work effectively with people from

different views and backgrounds. The training can improve the board member's

understanding of his or her role as a board member and how to work well as a

governance team (Brierton et al., 2016; Donlan & Whittaker, 2019; Harris, 2009).

Governance training can also facilitate board members holding high standards for

themselves and others (Townsend at al., 2005). A competent governance team can

institutionalize and model a culture of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors to work

together effectively with all members (Kowalski et al., 2011). This also circles back to

the importance of collaboratively developing a shared vision, purpose, and goals

(Brierton et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2005). In addition, governance training assists the

superintendent in identifying certain behaviors in board members and gives him or her

the skills and knowledge to respond appropriately (Callan & Levinson, 2011).

Other effective strategies superintendents use to work with the political styles of

board members include developing a school board code of ethics, statement of beliefs,

and a school board member handbook. Some boards review and update these written

guidelines annually while others review them when a new member is elected to the board (Balch & Adamson, 2018; Caruso, 2004; Townsend at al., 2007). These are opportunities for superintendents, sometimes with the assistance of an outside consultant, to have conversations with the board regarding standards of behavior, guiding principles, governance and meeting norms, role of board members, role of the superintendent, and ethical and legal obligations (Brierton et al., 2016; Kowalski, 2013; Worner, 2010).

Politically Astute and Board-Savvy

Superintendents need to be politically aware and astute to understand the politics and political styles of board members (Caruso, 2004; Kowalski, 2013; White et al., 2016). This does not mean superintendents get involved in the politics of the board; rather, they understand how to navigate the politics. This includes understanding the lens, political context, and position of the board, especially when dealing with controversial or difficult issues (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016). Superintendents also need to have an understanding and be politically aware of the impact that their recommendations will have on board members (Darfler-Sweeney, 2018; Vaughn, 2010). Sometimes, one of the most valuable political strategies a superintendent can use is to step back and scan the political landscape (Harvey et al., 2013; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Heifetz and Linsky (2002) described this strategy as "getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony" to step back in the midst of action and ask yourself, "What is really going on here?" (p. 51). "Staying alive" is crucial to leadership. "When you take personal attacks personally, you unwittingly conspire in one of the common ways you can be taken out of action" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 51).

Unified School District Superintendents

The focus of this study was exemplary unified school district superintendents. Generally, unified school districts have schools with students in kindergarten through 12th grade (CDE, 2019). School district organization formally began with the framing of the California Constitution in 1849 (CDE, 2016). As the population of California increased rapidly, the educational needs also grew. There were over 3,500 school districts by 1935, which forced the need for new laws to encourage elementary and high school districts to combine as unified school districts under one board of education (CDE, 2016). In 1945, California passed the Optional Reorganization Act, reducing the number of school districts from 2,568 to 2,111 (CDE, 2016). By 1971, encouraged by incentive programs and new legislation, the total number of school districts was reduced to 1,068 (CDE, 2016). The trend of a decline in the total number of school districts has continued as the number of unified school districts has increased, while the number of elementary and high school districts has decreased significantly (see Table 1).

Table 1

Change in Number of School Districts

Type of school district	1971-1972	2017-2018	Change
Unified	242	344	+102
Elementary	709	524	-185
High	117	76	-41
Other		82	+82
Total	1,068	1,026	-42

Note. From "Fingertip Facts on Education in California–CalEdFacts," by California Department of Education, 2019 (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp).

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied. Often, a target population is identified due to the delimitations of time, money, geography, and other barriers that make it difficult to study every individual within the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017). Because it was not practical to study all 1,026 superintendents in California, a target population of unified school district superintendents was selected for this study. Within California, there are approximately 344 unified school districts (CDE, 2019).

Research Gap

Although there is significant research validating the political reality and challenges faced by superintendents and the importance of the superintendent and board relationship, there is a gap in the research that identifies the specific strategies employed by superintendents to effectively work with the various political styles of board members, both individually and collectively (Finnan et al., 2015; Kowalski et al, 2011; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016). Similarly, a number of researchers have noted the need for additional research related to the politics of the board and superintendent relationship (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Finnan et al., 2015; Ginsberg & Lyche, 2008; Glass, 2001; Grissom & Anderson, 2005; Kowalski et al, 2011; Moody, 2007; Muhammed, 2012; Vaughn, 2010). Additional research is needed to understand the political styles of board members as well as the strategies superintendents use to work with the different styles. This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study will provide superintendents with a valuable resource to assist them with creating and maintaining positive, productive, and collaborative relationships as they navigate the various political styles of board members. Navigating the political styles of board members will result in a greater level of influence

and superintendent effectiveness, reduce superintendent turnover, and provide stable, long-term district leadership.

This study will benefit over 1,000 school district superintendents and more than 5,000 school board members who are responsible for the governance and effectiveness of the 1,026 school districts in California. Collectively, these superintendents and school boards have impacted more than 6,220,413 students in 10,473 schools (CDE, 2018-2019). In addition, this study will benefit professional organizations that support superintendents and school boards through professional development, training, coaching, and other professional activities. Some of these organizations include the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the National Association of School Superintendents (NASS), and the School Superintendents Association (AASA). Furthermore, this study will be of value to universities across the United States that provide advanced degrees and certifications to superintendents and educational leaders. This study will also be beneficial to other appointed executives who work directly with elected board members and councils, including city managers, county executive officers, and other public and private agency personnel.

Summary

There is a crisis in public education with the increasing turnover rate and decreasing tenure of superintendents, creating a lack of leadership stability in school districts (Finnan et al., 2015; Grissom & Anderson; 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011). This trend is validated by statistics that show that over 60% of superintendents leave their district involuntarily (ACSA, 2018). Additionally, more than 59% of superintendents

stated that they were hesitant to become a superintendent due to the politics of the job,

lack of job security, and the demands of the job (AASA, 2019). Conflict, disharmony,

and contentious relationships with the board were some of the reasons most often cited by

superintendents as to why they left a school district. Furthermore, an inability to navigate

the politics of working with the board can significantly inhibit the effectiveness and

influence of a superintendent (Finnan et al., 2015; Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

Researchers such as Fullan, Fusarelli, Kowalski, Marzano, Petersen, and Waters

agreed that the relationship between the superintendent and the board, as well as having

long-term, stable leadership from the superintendent, is important to the effectiveness of

the district (Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Fullan, 2000; Petersen & Fusarelli,

2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The stability of leadership has an impact on the

educational program as well as student learning (Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011;

Fullan, 2000; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007). A turnover in the

superintendent position can also impede district reform efforts, systemic improvements,

program quality, and student outcomes. Equally important, it may take up to 5 years for

a district to recover from superintendent turnover (Fullan, 2000; Grissom & Anderson,

2012).

Researchers studying the school superintendency generally agreed that the basic

responsibilities include serves as chief executive officer, oversees the daily operations,

carries out the vision and mission, and provides for the long-range planning of a school

district. Additional school superintendent responsibilities consist of serving as

instructional leader, managing fiscal and business operations, hiring and supervising

principals and district staff, solving problems, leveraging and obtaining resources,

engaging the community engagement, developing public relations, and working with school board members (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Griffin, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Moody, 2007; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). In addition, researchers agreed that the relationship between the superintendent and the board is important to the effectiveness of the district and has an impact on the educational program (Kowalski et al., 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2007). Increased diversity in values, beliefs, priorities, expectations, and accountability have made the role of the superintendent more complex as they navigate competing interests. The increase of competing interests has made the relationship of the superintendent and board increasingly more complex and political (Kowalski et al., 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Superintendents' beliefs that their jobs are becoming more political, especially when working with the board, are not aligned with studies that show that superintendents are hesitant to adopt political strategies to navigate the politics of their job (Björk & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). This makes it more important than ever for superintendents to be politically savvy and astute in order to navigate the politics of their position. Superintendents who are not able to navigate the politics of the superintendency, especially in an effort to maintain relationships with the board, often struggle and sometimes experience a short tenure (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Caruso, 2004; Muhammed, 2012). Finally, there are a number of political strategies used by superintendents to work effectively with school board members, with the following strategies at the top of the list: building trust and relationships, effective communication, collaboration, team building, focus on vision and goals, and board and governance

training (Caruso, 2004; Cox & Malone, 2001; Kowalski, 2013; Muhammed, 2012;

Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III outlines the methodology used in this study to understand the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by superintendents. In addition, the study identified the political strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members. More specifically, the study focused on the strategies used by unified school district superintendents.

The chapter begins with the purpose statement and research questions for the study as well as the research design used to accomplish the purpose of the study. This chapter then describes the population, target population, and the process used to determine the research sample. The chapter also outlines the instrumentation used to collect data from the research participants. How the data were organized and analyzed through a data analysis process is also described. The limitations of the study are also discussed as well as the generalizability and utility of the findings. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of the methodology used in the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Research Questions

1. How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?

2. What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods approach to combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allowed the researcher to make explicit the implicit theories that guided the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method were collected using a survey to identify the political styles of superintendents as well as the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents. As a qualitative method, data were then collected through interviews with superintendents to identify strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

Quantitative research methods focus on the collection and analysis of numerical data. The quantifiable data may be collected through polls, surveys, questionnaires, or by analyzing and interpreting preexisting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One benefit of a quantitative method is that it potentially reduces some bias and may be more reliable. A disadvantage is that certain issues studied may be too complex or not be conducive to the use of numerical data (Patton, 2015). In this study, a Political Styles

Matrix Survey was administered to select superintendents to determine their own political style as well as the political style of their board members.

Qualitative research design is used to find understanding, gain meaning, and describe behaviors (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research may also be used to describe and examine perceptions and to gain knowledge about a phenomenon or a group of people (Patten, 2017). The purpose of a qualitative study is to explore, find meaning, and gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, cultures, issues, or phenomena. Qualitative research questions usually begin with "what" or "how" because they are exploratory in nature. Furthermore, qualitative research explores issues and people and does not try to be predictive (Patton, 2015). As a qualitative methods approach, interviews, observations, and artifacts are all appropriate types of data to use when developing themes and drawing conclusions from multiple realities and understanding a phenomenon from a participant's perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). When collecting data, the researcher conducts the research in the field and is considered an instrument of the research. After data collection, the researcher creates themes and finds meaning from the data that were collected. The final report in qualitative methods is usually narrative in nature (Patten, 2017). In this study, interviews were used to collect data to describe superintendents' perceptions of the political styles of their board members as well as the strategies superintendents used to work with the different political styles.

The benefits and focus of a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design were determined to be aligned with the purpose statement and research questions this study sought to answer. As is discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in an

explanatory research design, the quantitative data are gathered first, followed by the collection of qualitative data to further explain and expand upon the quantitative data. Collecting quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data through interviews also allows the researcher to triangulate the data and add depth and credibility to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gather important data regarding the political styles of board members through the Political Styles Matrix Survey. The researcher then used those data to further explore strategies used by superintendents to work with the different political styles through interviews with superintendents. In order to collect data, identify themes, and describe the lived experience of superintendents, this sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was selected as the most effective approach (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2003. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Population

The population is a group that researchers intend to study and make generalizations about with the findings of the study. Additionally, the population is a group of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that

differentiate them from other groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017).

The larger population of this study was school district superintendents. The superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he or she is responsible for managing the budget, implementing policy, following state and federal regulations, and for all other aspects of running a school district. Serving as a school district superintendent is a complex and challenging job, while one of the most difficult challenges is working with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013).

At the time of this study, there were nearly 14,000 public school districts in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). This means that there were also about 14,000 school district superintendents. It was not realistic or feasible to study such a large population due to time, geography, and financial constraints. The population for the study was initially narrowed geographically to focus on superintendents in California. However, there were approximately 1,026 superintendents representing school districts in California (CDE, 2019). This population was still too large to make it feasible to survey or interview all potential participants of the study. The population was then narrowed to a target population. The narrowing of the population made it a more feasible study.

Target Population

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied. Often, a target population is identified due to the delimitations of time, money, geography, and other barriers that make it difficult to study every individual within the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017).

Because it is not practical to study all 1,026 superintendents in California, a target population of unified school district superintendents was selected for this study. Within California, there are approximately 344 unified school districts (CDE, 2019). To make the study more feasible, the researcher focused on unified school district superintendents in the Northern California regions of the Sacramento area and the San Francisco Bay area. The Sacramento area includes the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba. The San Francisco Bay area includes the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma (Bellisario, Weinberg, & Mena, 2016). These regions included approximately 73 unified school districts (CDE, 2019).

Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. The sample identifies who specifically will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). The researcher used purposeful sampling for the mixed-methods approach of the study, which took a sample from the target population who met the needed characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful sampling allowed for the use of criteria to identify superintendents to be respondents to surveys and participate in face-to-face interviews.

The study sample included five exemplary superintendents from the target population (see Figure 5). In order to be considered exemplary, the selected participants needed to meet at least four of the following criteria:

Figure 5. Superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts, by California Department of Education, 2019 (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp).

- Shows evidence of positive governance team relationships.

- Has a minimum of 3 years of experience as a superintendent in his or her current

  district.

- Is identified by the county superintendent as exemplary in working with board

  members.

- Is identified by a panel of experts who were knowledgeable of the work of

  superintendents.

- Has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional

  organization such as ACSA.

- Has received recognition by his or her peers.

- Has a membership in professional associations in his or her field.

- Has participated in CSBA Master's in Governance program training or other governance training with at least one board member.

Sample Participant Selection Process

Recommendations for exemplary unified superintendents were obtained from a retired superintendent who worked with the North/South Superintendent's Group, county superintendents, and superintendent search consultants who were familiar with superintendents in California. The researcher also reviewed artifacts such as board meeting minutes, board meeting video recordings, district websites, articles, publications, and lists of recognized superintendents from professional organizations such as ACSA. The data collected were reviewed with a retired superintendent from the North/South Superintendent's Group and county superintendents. From the selection process, five exemplary unified school district superintendents were invited to participate in the study.

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Brandman University approved the proposed study (Appendix A), the five superintendents identified through the selection process were contacted to participate in the study. All five participants were asked to participate in both an electronic survey and a face-to-face interview as a requirement of the study. The process for contacting the study participants was as follows:

1. The researcher contacted the participants by phone or e-mail to explain the purpose of the study and to confirm participation in the study. The researcher explained the anonymity of the study and answered any questions.

2. After agreeing to participate, the researcher sent the participants an invitation to
    participate letter (Appendix B), the Brandman University's Research Participant's Bill
    of Rights (Appendix C), an informed consent form (Appendix D), and a link to the
    electronic Political Styles Matrix Survey (Appendix E).

3. The researcher also scheduled a 60-minute interview with each participant. Prior to
    the interview, the researcher e-mailed the participants an audio recording release form
    (Appendix F) and a copy of the interview questions and nine political styles
    definitions contained in the Political Styles Interview Protocol (Appendix G).

Instrumentation

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. The
researcher used both quantitative and qualitative instrumentation and data analysis to
answer the research questions. A mixed-methods approach combines the benefits of both
quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows researchers to make explicit the
implicit theories that guide the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan &
Schumacher, 2010). In this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, the quantitative
data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan &
Schumacher, 2010). Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method using
a survey to identify the political styles of superintendents as well as the political styles of
board members as perceived by superintendents. As a qualitative method, data were then
collected through interviews with superintendents to identify strategies that
superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members. The
peer researchers, in collaboration with university faculty, developed an electronic-survey

tool for the quantitative data collection and an interview guide for the qualitative interviews.

Quantitative Instrument–Survey

Quantitative instruments are used to collect numerical data that can be analyzed to develop themes and findings. Quantitative instruments are usually in the form of surveys, tests, and questionnaires. If developed and implemented properly, quantitative instruments will produce reliable data that are useful to answer the research questions of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, a survey was used as the quantitative instrument.

The quantitative survey instrument, Political Styles Matrix Survey, was developed by peer researchers along with experienced faculty advisors. The survey was created using the nine political styles identified as part of the Political Styles Matrix in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016). The survey prompted superintendents to identify their own political style by selecting where they fall on the goal allegiance and initiative continuums. Superintendents were also asked to identify the political style of each of their board members. The goal allegiance continuum has three descriptors: self-interest, blended-interests, and organizational. The initiative continuum also has three descriptors: passive, engaged, and assertive. By cross-referencing the two continuums, individuals are identified as having one of nine political styles: analyst, adaptor, supporter, planner, balancer, developer, challenger, arranger, or strategist.

In a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the quantitative data are collected and then used to inform the qualitative design approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In the case of this study, the Political Styles Matrix Survey served as

the quantitative instrument and informed the development of the interview plan for the qualitative instrument. The qualitative instrument, Political Styles Interview Protocol, explored the strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

Qualitative Instrument–Interview

There are a number of methods for collecting data when conducting qualitative research. Some of the most common methods include "interviews, observations, questionnaires, document reviews, and audiovisual reviews" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 343). Interviews were selected as the qualitative instrument for this study. The survey instrument developed for this study was the Political Styles Interview Protocol, which contained a series of semistructured questions. There are advantages to conducting interviews. Interviews allow the researcher to gather a deeper level of information regarding the lived experience of the participants. An interviewer is also able to probe and get further details regarding the superintendent's responses, which may elicit additional details and data that are valuable to the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

For this study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews using semistructured questions developed by a team of peer researchers along with university faculty. The interviews were conducted after each superintendent had completed the electronic survey as part of the quantitative data collection process. The participants were provided interview questions and the political styles definitions in advance of the interview. The questions were developed using the political styles outlined in *The*

Politically Intelligent Leader (White et al., 2016) as a frame of reference. The questions were also developed based upon a review of literature conducted by peer researchers.

The researcher began the interview with a brief overview of the study. This included reviewing the Research Participant's Bill of Rights and obtaining the participant's signature on the informed consent and audio recording release forms. The researcher used semistructured questions to guide the interview process. Questioning prompts were used when necessary for further inquiry or to prompt more in-depth answers. The researcher facilitated interactive dialogue as much as possible to make the superintendent comfortable and to collect authentic data.

The interview was recorded with the permission of the participant then transcribed by a confidential transcriptionist. The participant had the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy. The data were analyzed and coded by the researcher using a qualitative analysis software program called NVivo.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered an instrument of the study. As such, the data collection and analysis can be subject to bias because the data may be influenced by the researcher's opinion, personality, and experiences (Patten, 2017; Patton, 2015). The researcher for this study had more than 23 years of experience as a leader and educational administrator, including more than 6 years as a superintendent. The researcher had extensive experience conducting a variety of interviews in an educational setting. The interviews were conducted face to face in a comfortable environment chosen by the participant. The researcher recorded all interviews and

provided the participants with a written transcript of their interview to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and eliminate any inaccurate interpretation of responses.

Field-Testing

The researcher conducted a field test of the Political Styles Matrix Survey with a current school district superintendent who met the criteria for the study and was not included in the sample. Nine other peer researchers also administered the survey as a field test to other superintendents who also qualified for the study. After completing the survey, the researcher gathered feedback from the superintendent using the Political Styles Matrix Survey Feedback form (Appendix H). The researcher gave the superintendent a written copy of the survey in order to obtain feedback regarding any perceived strengths or weaknesses in the survey, including questions that may need clarification. After completing the field test, the researcher and peer researchers analyzed the feedback received from the participants and made revisions to the survey as needed. Ultimately, a revised survey was approved by the peer researchers and faculty.

A field test of the Political Styles Interview Protocol was also implemented by the researcher and peer researchers. The participants used in the field test met the criteria for the study. Feedback was acquired from the field-test participants using the Field Test Participant Feedback Questions (Appendix I). Feedback was also gathered from an observer who was familiar with conducting interviews as part of qualitative research. This feedback was collected using the Interview Feedback Reflection Questions (Appendix J). As with the survey instrument, the researcher and peer researchers conducted an analysis of the feedback received from the researchers, participants,

observers, and peer researchers during the field test. A final version of the interview

questions and protocol was developed and approved by the faculty and peer researchers.

Validity

According to Roberts (2010), "Validity is the degree to which your instrument

truly measures what is purports to measure" (p. 51). In order for an instrument to be

effective and answer the research questions, the researcher needs to make certain there is

a level of validity. In essence, there should be an appropriate and accurate way to

measure what the researcher intended to measure. Validity also adds to the strength of

the study conclusions and increases the assurance that the findings of the study are true

(Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010). Content validity must also be present in a study to ensure

that there are no misinterpretations made that would affect the conclusions drawn based

upon the data collected (Patton, 2015).

Creswell (2005) recommended a minimum sample size between three and five for

a mixed-methods research when the focus of the research was on analyzing qualitative

data. This smaller sample size provided valuable information on this chosen topic

(McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). Further, the importance of this purposeful sample

was in the depth of knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of superintendents working

with board members with different political styles. The importance of the data emerges

from the comprehensive qualitative data obtained rather than the total number of

participants in research (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

Field testing is one method that researchers use to improve the validity of the

instruments used in the study. In addition, in a mixed-methods approach, it is important

to field test both the qualitative and the quantitative instruments. It can be particularly

problematic if the quantitative instrument has not been tested for validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Roberts, 2010). In this study, both the quantitative survey and the quality interview were field tested to improve the validity of the instruments.

The researcher and peer researchers field-tested both instruments, made revisions to the instruments, and approved the final survey and interview instruments. Each researcher administered the survey to a field-test participant. Feedback was collected from the participants regarding the survey. The research team reviewed the field-test participant feedback, as well as their own analysis, to revise the survey. The validity of the interview instrument was also tested through feedback collected from an observer. The team of peer researchers analyzed the field-test participant feedback, observer feedback, and peer researcher feedback to develop a revised interview that was approved by the team of peer researchers and experienced faculty. The faculty advisors who assisted in the development and review of the instruments were experienced superintendents, had worked with CSBA in board governance training, presented nationally on politics, and had more than 50 years combined experience in research at the university.

Validity was improved in the survey by using a consistent electronic survey instrument conducted in the language of the participant. The interview was also conducted in the language of the participant, with researchers following consistent protocols. The interviews were electronically recorded and professionally transcribed with the participants reviewing the written transcripts for accuracy.

Reliability

Roberts (2010) stated that "reliability is the degree to which your instrument consistently measures something from one time to another" (p. 151). This statement is supported by other researchers who described reliability as being able to obtain consistent results from an instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patten, 2017). In addition, an instrument used in a study is considered to be reliable when the data collection, data analysis, and the results are consistent (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). In this study, the researcher used field testing, interview protocols, consistent interview questions, and an electronic survey to enhance the reliability.

Both the survey instrument and the interviews were field tested to enhance reliability. In order to increase the reliability of the quantitative data, the survey was consistently administered to all five participants using an electronic survey instrument. To enhance reliability for the qualitative interviews, a script was utilized to ensure that all participants received consistent directions and interview questions in the same manner.

Intercoder reliability occurs when a third-party evaluator analyzes and codes the data and reaches the same conclusion as the researcher (Patton, 2015). In general, intercoder agreement and reliability is reached when there is an agreement level of 80% or higher between the coding of the researcher and the third-party evaluator (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study utilized a peer researcher to evaluate the coding and themes of the data to ensure consistency and reliability.

Data Collection

The researcher used two different methods of data collection in this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study. An electronic survey was used to collect quantitative

data while face-to-face interviews were used to collect qualitative data. All data and

information collected were securely stored, and the confidentiality of participants was

maintained. Electronic data were maintained on a password-protected computer.

Personal information provided by the participants was in no way linked to data or other

information collected from the participants. All participants signed an informed consent

form (Appendix D) prior to participating in the study. In addition, the purpose of the

study was clearly stated in writing to the participants. Prior to collecting data, the

researcher completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) certification for protecting

human research participants (Appendix K). Data collection began after the researcher

received approval from the Brandman University IRB (Appendix A).

Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data were collected through the Political Styles Matrix Survey.

This survey was developed by peer researchers along with experienced faculty advisors.

The survey was created using the nine political styles identified as part of the Political

Styles Matrix in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016). The survey

prompted superintendents to identify their own political style by identifying where they

fall on the goal allegiance and initiative continuums. Superintendents were also asked to

identify the political style of each of their board members. The goal allegiance

continuum has three descriptors: self-interest, blended-interests, and organizational. The

initiative continuum also has three descriptors: passive, engaged, and assertive. By cross-

referencing the two continuums, individuals are identified as having one of nine political

styles: analyst, adaptor, supporter, planner, balancer, developer, challenger, arranger, or

strategist. All participants were e-mailed the informed consent form along with a link to

the survey. Participants were required to give consent and acknowledge that they were voluntarily participating in the study prior to taking the survey.

Qualitative Data Collection

For this study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews using semistructured questions developed by a team of peer researchers and university faculty. Further, the researcher collected artifacts such as agendas, handouts, and handbooks as evidence of a healthy governance team and/or a positive relationship between the superintendent and the board. The interviews were conducted after each superintendent had completed the electronic survey as part of the quantitative data collection process. The participants were provided interview questions and the political styles definitions in advance of the interview. The questions were developed using the political styles outlined in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016) as a frame of reference. The questions were also developed based upon a review of literature conducted by peer researchers.

The researcher began the interview with a brief overview of the study. This included reviewing the Research Participant's Bill of Rights, obtaining the participant's signature on the informed consent and audio-recording release forms. The researcher used semistructured questions to guide the interview process. Questioning prompts were used when necessary for further inquiry or to prompt more in-depth answers. The researcher facilitated interactive dialogue as much as possible to make the superintendent comfortable and collect authentic data.

The interview was recorded with the permission of the participant then transcribed by a confidential transcriptionist. The participant had the opportunity to

review the transcription for accuracy. The data were analyzed and coded by the researcher using a qualitative analysis software program called NVivo.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, which required both quantitative and qualitative analysis. First the quantitative data were collected though an electronic survey and then the qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The data were analyzed after both forms of data collection were completed.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data were obtained through an electronic survey instrument that was completed by five unified school district superintendents who met the sample population criteria. Descriptive statistics were then used to analyze the data and answer Research Question 1, "How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?" Descriptive statistics is one of the most frequently used methods of analyzing quantitative data. Researchers use descriptive statistics to translate the numbers into data or descriptions that have meaning and provide simple summaries (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this study, superintendents identified their own political style as well as the individual styles of their board members. The quantitative data that were collected and analyzed were used to inform the collection and analysis of qualitative data through the interviews.

Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, the researcher analyzed the data collected from face-to-face interviews with the five unified school district superintendents. Qualitative

data analysis consists of the process of organizing, preparing, reading, and reviewing data prior to coding the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were initially organized by electronically recording the interviews, which were then transcribed by a professional and confidential transcription service. The participants were given the opportunity to review the written transcripts for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. The researcher read the transcripts and identified general themes in an effort to find meaning and patterns in the data. Finally, the data were formally coded using electronic coding software to identify patterns and frequency of themes, categories, and assertions (Patton, 2015).

In conjunction with the statistical findings from the quantitative survey instrument, the researcher used the qualitative data to answer Research Question 2, "What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?" The results of the sequential explanatory mixed-methods study further informed the researcher regarding the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the political styles outlined in the theoretical framework: analyst, adaptor, supporter, planner, balancer, developer, challenger, arranger, or strategist.

Limitations

The generalizability of the results of a study to a larger group may be impacted and constrained by limitations of the study that are often outside of the researcher's control (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). This thematic study was replicated by 10 peer researchers who used the same quantitative and qualitative methodology and instrumentation but with different types of superintendents. Using a variety of

superintendents, as well as analyzing data from a total of 50 superintendents across 10 studies, enhanced the validity of this study's findings. This study had several limitations that may have impacted the findings including time, geography, sample size, and the researcher as the instrument.

Time

There were time limitations associated with the study. Superintendents are extremely busy people with full schedules and many demands on their time. Because of this, interviews were limited to 60 minutes in order to affirm that the researcher valued the superintendents' time. In addition, interviews needed to be scheduled well in advance of the interview date. Time limitations also included the school calendar. Many people were on vacation during the summer and holidays, so interviews had to be conducted after the school year began and prior to the holidays. Finally, because this was a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, the survey had to be completed prior to the interviews.

Geography

At the time of this study, there were nearly 14,000 public school district superintendents in the United States and 1,026 in California. Because of the large geographic area of the United States, which would place a time and monetary strain on the researcher, the sample was reduced to unified school district superintendents in California. Limiting the geographic area and the sample size allowed for face-to-face interviews to be conducted within a realistic amount of time.

Sample Size

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. The sample identifies who specifically will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). The researcher used purposeful sampling for the mixed-methods approach of the study, which took a sample from the target population who met the needed characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful sampling allowed for the use of criteria to identify superintendents to be respondents to surveys and participate in face-to-face interviews. Five unified school district superintendents participated in both the survey and the interviews. The small sample size can limit the generalizability of the study.

Researcher as the Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered an instrument of the study. As such, the data collection and analysis can be subject to bias because the data may be influenced by the researcher's opinion, personality, and experiences (Patten, 2017; Patton, 2015). The researcher for this study had more than 23 years of experience as a leader and educational administrator, including more than 6 years as a superintendent. The researcher had extensive experience conducting a variety of interviews in an educational setting. The interviews were conducted face to face in a comfortable environment chosen by the participant. The researcher recorded all interviews and provided the participants with a written transcript of their interview to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and eliminate any inaccurate interpretation of responses.

Summary

This study used a mixed-methods approach to combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows researchers to make explicit the implicit theories that guide the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method using a survey to identify the political styles of superintendents as well as the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents. As a qualitative method, data were then collected through interviews with superintendents to identify strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

This chapter reviewed the purpose statement, research questions, and research design. Next, the chapter discussed the population, target population, sample, and sample criteria. The chapter then examined the quantitative and qualitative instruments used in the study as well as data collection methods and analysis of data. The study was conducted using surveys as a quantitative method and interviews as a qualitative method. The chapter concluded by outlining a few of the limitations of the study.

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members. While this study focused on unified

school district superintendents, nine other peer researchers studied superintendents from different types of school districts using the same methodology and instruments. With the collective effort of the peer researchers, this study produced generalizable results regarding political strategies exemplary superintendents use to work with the different styles of board members. Chapter IV contains the results of the data collection, research findings, and a quantitative and qualitative analysis. Chapter V then contains the significant findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter IV provides a summary of the purpose, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, and population sample. The demographic data of the superintendents who participated in the study are also summarized. In addition, this chapter presents a synthesis and report of the findings of the data collected as related to the research questions. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Research Questions

1. How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?

2. What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study used a mixed-methods approach to combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allowed the researcher to make explicit the implicit theories that guided the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed-

methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method using a survey to identify the political styles of superintendents as well as the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents. As a qualitative method, data were then collected through interviews with superintendents to identify strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

Quantitative research methods focus on the collection and analysis of numerical data. The quantifiable data may be collected through polls, surveys, questionnaires, or by analyzing and interpreting preexisting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One benefit of a quantitative method is that it potentially reduces some bias and may be more reliable. A disadvantage is that certain issues studied may be too complex or not be conducive to the use of numerical data (Patton, 2015). In this study, a Political Styles Matrix Survey was administered to select superintendents to determine their own political style as well as the political style of their board members.

Qualitative research design is used to find understanding, gain meaning, and describe behaviors (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research may also be used to describe and examine perceptions and to gain knowledge about a phenomenon or a group of people (Patten, 2017). The purpose of a qualitative study is to explore, find meaning, and gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, cultures, issues, or phenomena. Qualitative research questions usually begin with "what" or "how" because they are exploratory in nature. Furthermore, qualitative research explores issues and people and does not try to be predictive (Patton, 2015). As a qualitative methods approach,

interviews, observations, and artifacts are all appropriate types of data to use when developing themes and drawing conclusions from multiple realities and understanding a phenomenon from a participant's perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). When collecting data, the researcher conducts the research in the field and is considered an instrument of the research. After data collection, the researcher creates themes and finds meaning from the data that were collected. The final report in qualitative methods is usually narrative in nature (Patten, 2017). In this study, interviews were used to collect data to describe superintendents' perceptions of the political styles of their board members as well as the strategies superintendents used to work with the different political styles.

The benefits and focus of a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design were determined to be aligned with the purpose statement and research questions this study sought to answer. As is discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in an explanatory research design, the quantitative data are gathered first, followed by the collection of qualitative data to further explain and expand upon the quantitative data. Collecting quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data through interviews also allows the researcher to triangulate the data and add depth and credibility to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gather important data regarding the political styles of board members through the Political Styles Matrix Survey. The researcher then used those data to further explore strategies used by superintendents to work with the different political styles through interviews with superintendents. In order to collect data, identify themes, and describe

the lived experience of superintendents, this sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was selected as the most effective approach (see Figure 4, repeated here for ease of reference).

Figure 4. Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2003. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Population

The population is a group that researchers intend to study and make generalizations about with the findings of the study. Additionally, the population is a group of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from other groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017). The larger population of this study was school district superintendents. The superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he or she is responsible for managing the budget, implementing policy, following state and federal regulations, and for all other aspects of running a school district. Serving as a school district superintendent is a complex and challenging job, while one of the most difficult challenges is working with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 2013).

At the time of this study, there were nearly 14,000 public school districts in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). This means that there were also about 14,000 school district superintendents. It was not realistic or feasible to study such a large population due to time, geography, and financial constraints. The population for the study was initially narrowed geographically to focus on superintendents in California. However, there were approximately 1,026 superintendents representing school districts in California (CDE, 2019). This population was still too large to make it feasible to survey or interview all potential participants of the study. The population was then narrowed to a target population. The narrowing of the population made it a more feasible study.

Target Population

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied. Often, a target population is identified due to the delimitations of time, money, geography, and other barriers that make it difficult to study every individual within the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017). Because it is not practical to study all 1,026 superintendents in California, a target population of unified school district superintendents was selected for this study. Within California, there are approximately 344 unified school districts (CDE, 2019). To make the study more feasible, the researcher focused on unified school district superintendents in the Northern California regions of the Sacramento area and the San Francisco Bay area. The Sacramento area includes the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba. The San Francisco Bay area includes the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma

(Bellisario et al., 2016). These regions included approximately 73 unified school districts (CDE, 2019).

Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. The sample identifies who specifically will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). The researcher used purposeful sampling for the mixed-methods approach of the study, which took a sample from the target population who met the needed characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful sampling allowed for the use of criteria to identify superintendents to be respondents to surveys and participate in face-to-face interviews.

The study sample included five exemplary superintendents from the target population (see Figure 5, repeated here for ease of reference). In order to be considered exemplary, the selected participants needed to meet at least four of the following criteria:

- Shows evidence of positive governance team relationships.

- Has a minimum of 3 years of experience as a superintendent in his or her current district.

- Is identified by the county superintendent as exemplary in working with board members.

- Is identified by a panel of experts who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents.

- Has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional

   organization such as ACSA.

- Has received recognition by his or her peers.

- Has a membership in professional associations in his or her field.

- Has participated in CSBA Master's in Governance program training or other

   governance training with at least one board member.

Figure 5. Superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts, by California Department of Education, 2019 (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp).

Demographic Data

This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study surveyed and interviewed five

exemplary unified school district superintendents from the target population who met an

established set of criteria. The five superintendents who participated in the study ranged

in age from 51 to 60 years old and consisted of two females and three males. The

superintendents had between 4 years and 20 years of experience as a superintendent,

including between 3 years and 7 years in their current district. The enrollment of the

school districts ranged in size from 9,000 students to 50,000 students. Table 2 represents

the demographics of the superintendents who participated in the study.

Table 2

Demographics of Superintendents in Study

Superintendent	Gender	Age	Total years as superintendent	Years in current district	District enrollment
Superintendent A	M	51-60	7	7	14,000
Superintendent B	M	51-60	6	6	50,000
Superintendent C	F	51-60	4	4	16,000
Superintendent D	M	51-60	20	6	9,000
Superintendent E	F	51-60	12	3	20,000

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The presentation and analysis of data include the quantitative data collected from

the survey and the qualitative data collected from face-to-face interviews. Because this

was a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, the researcher administered the

surveys first and then conducted the interviews. The presentation and analysis of data is

organized by the research questions used in the study.

Research Question 1

How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style

and the individual styles of their school board members?

Research Question 1 was designed to collect data from exemplary unified school

district superintendents who met the identified criteria. Specifically, the intent of Research

Question 1 was to have superintendents identify their own political style as well as the political style of each of their school board members. Through the survey, superintendents were asked to identify the political styles using the nine political styles outlined in the political styles matrix. For the purpose of this study, political style was defined as the way one's values, character, and beliefs are manifested into actions and behaviors to influence others and achieve desired outcomes. It is the way in which a leader uses power to engage with individuals, groups, and circumstances. It is the combination of an individual's commitment to organizational interests versus self-interests and the level of initiative and energy he or she devotes to pursuing those interests (DeLuca, 1999; Grenny et al., 2013; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005; White et al., 2016).

Table 3 represents a summary of the political styles of school board members as identified by the superintendents. Political styles were identified for a total of 29 board members. Three of the superintendents interviewed had five school board members on their board. Two of the superintendents interviewed had seven school board members on their board.

Table 3

Political Styles of School Board Members as Perceived by Superintendents

Political style	Super 1	Super 2	Super 3	Super 4	Super 5	Total	%
Arranger	1	-	3	4	2	10	35%
Balancer	1	1	-	2	1	5	17%
Developer	1	1	1	-	1	4	14%
Strategist	1	-	2	-	-	3	10%
Planner	1	2	-	-	-	3	10%
Challenger	-	-	1	1	-	2	7%
Supporter	-	1	-	-	1	2	7%
Adaptor	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Analyst	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Total	5	5	7	7	5	29	100%

As is indicated in Table 3, the board member political style identified with the most frequency was arranger. Ten of the 29 board members were identified as arrangers, which is 35% of the board members studied. This was followed by five board members identified as balancers (17%) and four board members identified as developers (14%). Three board members were identified as strategists (10%) and three board members were identified as planners (10%). Finally, two board members were identified as challengers (7%) and two board members were identified as supporters (7%). There were no board members identified as adaptors or analysts.

Table 4 groups the nine political styles into passive political styles (analyst, adaptor, supporter), moderately engaged political styles (planner, balancer, developer), and assertive political styles (challenger, arranger, strategist). The nine political styles were listed on the political styles matrix as self-interests, blended interests, and

Table 4

Board Member Political Styles: Passive, Moderately Engaged, Assertive

	Political style	Number of board members	% of board members
Passive:	Analyst	0	
	Adaptor	0	
	Supporter	2	
	Total	2	7%
Moderately engaged:	Planner	3	
	Balancer	5	
	Developer	4	
	Total	12	41%
Assertive:	Challenger	2	
	Arranger	10	
	Strategist	3	
	Total	15	52%

organizational interests for each initiative: passive, engaged and assertive. Fifteen of the board members were identified as having assertive political styles (52%), 12 of the board members were identified as having moderately engaged political styles (41%), and two were identified as having passive political styles (7%).

Table 5 represents a summary of how the five superintendents studied identified their own political style. The data were collected using the Political Styles Matrix Survey. This survey was used to gather quantitative data prior to the interviews. Four of the five superintendents identified themselves as strategists (80%) while one superintendent identified as a developer (20%). None of the superintendents identified themselves as an arranger, balancer, planner, challenger, supporter, adaptor, or analyst.

Table 5

Political Styles of Unified School District Superintendents

	Super 1	Super 2	Super 3	Super 4	Super 5	Total	%
Strategist	1	-	1	1	1	4	80%
Developer	-	1	-	-	-	1	20%
Arranger	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Balancer	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Planner	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Challenger	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Supporter	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Adaptor	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Analyst	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Total	1	1	1	1	1	5	100%

Research Question 2

What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Qualitative methods were used to collect data for Research Question 2. Specifically, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the five identified

exemplary unified school district superintendents. The interviews were conducted using semistructured questions.

Strategies Superintendents Use for Political Styles

For the purpose of this study, a group of peer researchers developed definitions for each of the nine political styles identified in *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016). The nine political styles are analyst, adaptor, supporter, planner, balancer, developer, challenger, arranger, and strategist. Through the survey, each superintendent identified his or her own perceived political style as well as the political style of each of his or her board members. During the interviews, superintendents further provided descriptions of the political styles in addition to discussing effective and ineffective strategies to work with each of the styles. The following is an analysis of the data collected regarding the strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Arranger

Arrangers use a political style in which they are assertive in pursuing their goals that are a blend of both organizational priorities and their own self-interests. They build a power base by connecting with many people. Arrangers will take risks to advance their goals and are strategic in combining resources (DeLuca, 1999; Effelsberg et al., 2014; White et al., 2016).

Ten of the 29 board members were identified as arrangers, which is 35% of the board members studied. Four of the five superintendents reported having at least one arranger as a board member. There was a common theme with how the superintendents described board members who were identified as arrangers. Superintendents noted that

arrangers' own self-interests were important. They usually had political aspirations beyond their school board position, and often made decisions based upon how they would be perceived. Superintendent 1 stated,

> They have a power base and network. It seems like they know everybody on every nuanced issue. But the other piece is it's about their goals and not necessarily the organization's goals. They focus on a lot of ticky-tacky stuff. So, it's not things that are going to have big outcomes, but there's a lot of energy invested in something that they're interested in, which really is tangential to the success of the district and for students.

Superintendent 3 affirmed these thoughts regarding arrangers and shared,

> Arrangers have definitely stated their interest in life beyond their current board member position, which then leads itself to almost preparing for that next step, whatever that next step may be. I think for some, it could be a political office at the city or county level. You can definitely see that their style and organization, and the way that they conduct business keeps all of that in mind. They are definitely making decisions, gathering public input, directing my work in a way that always keeps in mind constituents beyond the district level.

Similarly, Superintendent 4 described arrangers as historically using the school board as "a pathway to the city council." Superintendent 4 continued,

> At any term, I always have at least two to three board members that are, you can tell right off the bat, that they are positioning themselves to move up. That's the message. I need to work with them and understand their needs and wants.

Superintendent 5 concluded,

The arranger is kind of that blend of having the best interest of the organization

but also their self-interests at the forefront. So, it's a balancing act. And

sometimes the lines get blurred between their role as a board member and their

role as community member or in their job that they hold outside of being a board

member.

Effective strategies. The theme with the most coded responses for strategies

used with an arranger was communication (see Table 6). The themes of political acuity,

governance, relationships, and common vision were also highly coded. The most

frequently coded strategies across all themes were the following:

- Open, honest, direct communication

- Identify and understand their motivation

- Focus on district vision and goals

- Align personal interests with district priorities

- Build relationships, get to know them

- Clarify governance roles and structure.

Communication. In the category of communication, the strategy of "open, honest,

and direct communication" was identified as important. This was followed by "listen and

ask clarifying questions," "provide relevant and timely information," and "communicate

frequently in a variety of ways." Superintendent 3 discussed the importance of always

being honest and direct in communications with arrangers:

We need to be honest. I feel like it's very important as a superintendent to own

the good, the bad, the ugly along with the beautiful things that happen in this

district. My advice, or my guidance, or my contact with her was, "I respectfully

Table 6

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Arrangers

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Arranger	**Communication**	Total for all communication codes	**37**
		Open, honest, direct communication	11
		Listen and ask clarifying questions	6
		Provide relevant, timely information	5
		Communicate frequently in a variety of ways	5
		Be responsive, follow-through, circle back	4
		Communicate in their preferred medium	3
		Be transparent	2
		Immediate communication when there's an issue	1
	Political acuity	Total for all political acuity codes	**30**
		Identify and understand their motivation	10
		Give them space to pursue an interest	4
		Understand what they're looking to pursue	4
		Use their connections and network	3
		Explain the why and purpose behind decisions	3
		Connect district issues to larger political issues	3
		Help them save face	1
		Give them talking points for constituents	1
		Support their political interests	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**29**
		Clarify governance roles and structure	9
		Help them understand complexity of issues	5
		Governance training	5
		Work with them and not against them	3
		Establish guidelines and parameters	3
		Coaching and guiding board member	2
		Give them wins, credit for success	1
		Strong superintendent leadership	1
	Relationships	Total for all relationship codes	**28**
		Build relationships, get to know them	9
		Invest time and energy	6
		Meet face-to-face regularly	4
		Show interest and respect ideas	3
		Build trust	3
		Bring people together	1
		Be available	1
		Own mistakes	1
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**16**
		Focus on district vision and goals	8
		Align personal interests with district priorities	5
		Ground member in district issues	3

disagree with your handling of the situation." The strategy is to be very honest

about where I come from, why I made the decision I made. I mean, it's right

there. Very upfront, but in a respectful, not demeaning way.

Superintendent 4 described a time when an arranger was pushing for a focus that would

take resources away from other goals and priorities of the district:

Even though he's trying to do something good for kids, but it's a distracter. When

you're a superintendent with consensus items in the end and even though the

district's running great, they want to still do something. A lot of ideas get thrown

out there, especially from board members like this. They say, "By the way, can

we do this?" Then I will say, "Well, let me look into it." Then I'll remind them,

"When you do these things it stops the train for a while. It has nothing to do with

our strategic action plan." I remind them at the board meetings, individually, and

during my evaluation.

Superintendent 4 emphasized the strategy of open, direct, and honest communication and

stated, "I am not shy about being direct and taking them on. I think that's what they

respect." Superintendent 5 explained the strategy of immediate and direct

communication along with the strategy of listening and asking clarifying questions when

an issue arises:

What I have found that has worked for me is just either get them on the phone

right away if I'm hearing something that is bubbling up or something has come

my way. Or, if it was just posted on social media and I think it could be really a

slippery slope for a board member to be getting involved with, I'll pick up the

phone and I'll call them and talk it through and find out a little bit more because

many times when I'm hearing things or seeing something posted on social media, same thing, you're just hearing or seeing one side of the story. So, I have to remember on my side to sit back and listen, tell me a little bit about what you're hearing and how you've been involved and give them a chance to share. Because sometimes I might jump to an assumption that is incorrect without hearing their level of thinking.

Communicating frequently and in a variety of ways was discussed as an effective strategy by three of the superintendents. Superintendent 3 stated,

When I look at the three arrangers, they are really communicative. They will meet with me, e-mail, text, phone calls all the time. So, that's one thing. I think that the strategy is just because they're all arrangers doesn't mean you communicate or interact with them in the same way.

Superintendent 4 confirmed these thoughts and said,

These three will make sure that they have . . . these are the ones that call me probably at least twice a day. Tell me what's going on out there. They listen to . . . they're on Facebook. They're on Twitter. These three people, if I'm not there . . . really, it's these three people could probably dominate by 70% of my time. Time, listening, quick information, again it's knowing how to communicate with each board member. One of the things that I guess I didn't know much about early on is understanding how your communication strategy with each board member is different.

Superintendent 5 summarized the strategy of communicating frequently and in a variety of ways and said, "I spend a little bit more time sometimes circling back with these board

members and I believe both of them have good interests and intent, but sometimes the lines get blurred. So, I keep that communication going."

Political acuity. Under the theme of political acuity, the strategy of "identify and understand their motivation" is closely aligned with the strategies of "focus on district vision and goals" and "align personal interests with district priorities" under the theme of common vision. Superintendent 3 described how he used this strategy:

> What I have come to learn with him and his political aspirations, that the way in which I need to work with him is different. What I learned was that interacting with him needs to be attached to something specific [so] that he can meet his political needs. If I really want to get my point across, I tie it to something on the outside of the district. I will get a phone call like that. The same thing is if I have an initiative or something I need to have done in the district that I believe is right for kids, I will talk to him by text, not by phone. Then I connect it to something like how it will benefit the outside community of the school district. Then I'll get a phone call right away.

Governance. Because of the inherent nature of arrangers to involve themselves in issues aligned with political motivation, four of the five superintendents emphasized the need to "clarify governance roles and structure." Superintendent 5 said it best under the theme of governance:

> And sometimes the lines get blurred between their role as a board member and their role as community member or in their job that they hold outside of being a board member. Frequently circling back especially as you talk about the lines being blurred. I sometimes can share examples of things that don't go well if we

don't follow our chain of command. So really training the board and reminding

the board of our protocols of chain of command of where issues need to start to be

resolved. And I said, it's perfectly fine to acknowledge the community member

or the parent who's coming to you with this concern. And you can say, if after

you've gone through this chain here, if you haven't gotten a response back, they

may like the response all the time.

This strategy was also supported by Superintendent 3,

They get their fingers a little further. I wouldn't call it micro-managing all the

time, but there's shades of micro-managing because they want to solve the

problem. And letting them know that our organization and system has that

foundation and it has certain protocols that we follow so we can get things

resolved in the best way possible. I think because they're trying to balance the

best interests of their constituents, plus they're trying to balance and understand

the whole organization and all, the policies and the ARs and people's roles.

Relationships. Finally, "building relationships and getting to know" arrangers

was noted as a critical strategy under the theme of relationships. Superintendent 3

validated this point and stated, "I thought that the way in which we would have a better

relationship is if I met with him, talk with him, interacted frequently, and got to know

him personally." Superintendent 4 discussed his approach to building relationships as, "I

get to know their families, get to know their whole background so I understand who I'm

working with. Because I can't really support them if I don't know how they tick." He

went on to say, "I think I've been able to stay longer because I build those relationships.

It all comes back to communication and building relationships."

Effective strategies used with arrangers identified in this study were aligned with a number of the strategies outlined in the theoretical framework. Following are some of these strategies:

> build trust; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal; expand the pie; include all sides; accordion process; conflict strategies; problem solving; political vision; meet their needs; do your homework; know decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; working the community; build networks; ability to compete, intent to cooperate; respond positively to danger; count your votes; celebrate everything; use norms effectively; dig the well early; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower others; know who trusts them; float the idea; and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously. (White et al., 2016, p. 96)

Ineffective strategies. The superintendents were asked about strategies that were not effective with board members who were arrangers. The ineffective strategy brought forward by the superintendents with the most frequency was, "Don't dismiss their personal interest or the political context of an issue." Superintendent 1 stated, "If you are going to say no to an idea they have, you better understand where they are coming from on the issue. Sometimes it is as simple as asking them to clarify their interest." Similarly, Superintendent 4 said, "It is not worth getting into an argument with them. Listen to and understand their position so they feel you have heard them and understand their position."

Balancer

Balancers blend self and organizational interests. Focused on the prevention of disequilibrium, balancers use their knowledge of the organization's culture to diplomatically shift their support when needed to maintain stability, harmony, and equanimity (Sheehan, 1989; White et al., 2016).

Five of the 29 board members were identified as balancers, which is 17% of the board members studied. Four of the five superintendents reported having at least one balancer as a board member. The superintendents commonly discussed the balancers as some of the easier board members to work with. They were frequently described as bringing harmony and balance to the board, resolving issues in the best interests of the district. Superintendent 1 described the balancer style during a controversial issue.

> This trustee really was in the swing vote category and really did provide a good balance between approaching this in a very logical, legalistic framework to arrive at a decision that really both sides of the board on this issue could respect. They appreciated the thoughtful, studied approach that this trustee took, because their vote was actually going to determine the outcome.

Superintendent 2 described the balancer as "seeing the value in harmony amongst the board and in the entire district." Superintendent 4 also discussed the board member who is a balancer as "someone who seeks harmony and always focuses on the best interest of the district."

Effective strategies. The theme with the most coded strategies for balancers was relationships (see Table 7). This theme was closely followed communication, political acuity, and governance. Interesting to note was the fact that there were no coded

Table 7

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Balancers

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Balancer	**Relationships**	Total for all relationship codes	**33**
		Invest time and energy	8
		Get to know them personally	8
		Be authentic and genuine	5
		Give affirmation and show value	4
		Support them through conflict	2
		Be responsive to needs	2
		Meet with them frequently	2
		Provide access to key staff	1
		Debrief after difficult issues or conflict	1
	Communication	Total for all communication codes	**28**
		Provide relevant, timely information	9
		Frequent communication	6
		Open, direct, honest communication	6
		Provide rationale for recommendations	3
		Listen - they want to be heard	3
		Ask questions	1
	Political acuity	Total for all political acuity codes	**25**
		Use them to influence others	9
		Perpetuate their role as balancer	5
		Be attuned to what they're trying to tell you	3
		Give them framework to work through issues	3
		Understand they may need time to process	3
		Strategize with them	1
		Promote their interests	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**21**
		Help them work with other board members	8
		Provide tools to support role as balancer	6
		Help them understand all sides of issue	2
		Providing options in difficult situations	2
		Use them to find common ground	2
		Involve in difficult conversations	1
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**0**

strategies under the theme of common vision. The following were most frequently coded

strategies across all themes:

- Get to know them personally

- Invest time and energy

- Provide relevant, timely information

- Use them to influence others

- Help them work with other board members.

   Relationships. Within the theme of relationships, the strategies of "invest time

and energy" and "get to know them personally" were each coded 8 times. The focus on

building and developing relationships and spending time with the balancer was important.

Superintendent 2 stated, "The relationship piece is really important with this board

member. The relationship has to be strong." Superintendent 2 also gave an example of

the board member calling and saying, "Hey buddy, how are you doing?" or, "Hey, let's

go to a football game together." Superintendent 5 also emphasized, "You cannot

underestimate the value of establishing a strong relationship with this board member."

   Communication. The strategies used under the theme of relationships were

closely tied to the most frequently coded strategies within the theme of communication.

"Provide relevant, timely information" was coded 9 times. The strategy of "frequent

communication" was coded 6 times. Superintendent 5 validated this strategy:

   I think they need to hear from me often. Communication again is key. This board

   member will also come to me after a decision has been made on a topic that was

   maybe controversial and wants to just reaffirm why he voted a certain way. He's

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very thorough and explains why he voted the way he did or what he thought or shared. He wants to be reaffirmed. He says, "We're still good. Right?" Superintendent 2 discussed the benefit of providing the balancer information:

I provide him information. Just making sure that he had all the information he needed, so that he could support the will of the district, but then, also, answer to his constituents, and have thoughtful answers to his constituents that he believed in. We weren't asking them to make any decision that he didn't in the end agree with, but I think we provided him with all the information he needed, so that he felt good about the decision he was making. So, with him, it's just making sure he's got all the information.

Political acuity. Under the theme of political acuity, the strategy of "use them to influence others" was coded 9 times. This strategy is complementary to the strategy of "help them work with other board members," which was coded 8 times under the theme of governance. Superintendents discussed using these strategies to strategically influence other board members, especially with difficult issues on a divided board. Superintendent 4 supported this strategy and stated, "I can usually use this board member to bring closure to an important issue if I provide them with the rationale needed to make a decision. They will usually support the best interest of the district and have the respect of other board members." Superintendent 2 also discussed that the time he invested in building a relationship with his balancer enabled him to use the board member to influence others. He recounted a story where the board member stated, "I will always go in the direction with whatever you say. So, if you say to support it, I'm going to support it."

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Superintendent 1 gave an example of helping the balancer work with other board members:

>   How you use them in those situations is important. Helping them work through when there is going to be conflict, because, again, they want to have that harmony. Give them a framework of how to logically work through how to arrive at their position and decision, because they can tend to want to be more harmonizing. When there is a split decision, like a 2/2 on this, and they're it, how to give them a framework to arrive at their decision. They can feel they can publicly share that and, I don't want to say defend that, but be okay with that. Helping structure that for them, because they do need to ultimately make a decision.

Superintendent 2 also described helping the balancer work with colleagues on the board:

>   It's sometimes helping strategize with them how to approach this and how to approach the deliberations with other trustees to help identify what their interests may be, what their questions may be. And it was just about providing him that support, so that he could then address other board members and he supported the goals of the district. I'm thrilled to have a balancer in the group, because I can strategically use them to help keep the board coherent by pushing them in that natural tendency to be in that role by helping them understand the interests of other trustees, how to approach or appeal to that, and how to make sure those are taken into context.

Superintendent 5 validated this strategy:

>I think other board members listen and they will sometimes align if there's a
>sound rationale that this board member provides. He's very articulate and can
>state the case of why he supports something or doesn't support something. So
>other board members will sometimes align with that because it's very logical one
>way or the other.

Effective strategies used with balancers identified in this study were aligned with
a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical
framework. Following are some of these strategies:

>build trust, go slow to go fast, win-win, agenda linking, superordinate goal,
>expand the pie, include all sides, accordion process, conflict strategies, problem
>solving, political vision, meet their needs, simplify your message, do your
>homework, know each decision maker's agenda, be aware of political blind spots,
>coalition building, working the community, build networks, respond positively to
>danger, count your votes, use norms effectively, management by walking around,
>be open to ideas, empower others, create a benevolent environment, know who
>trusts whom, and float the idea. (White et al., 2016, p. 89)

Ineffective strategies. In general, superintendents acknowledged that balancers
were easy to work with. However, three ineffective strategies that surfaced were
"assuming they understand other board members' interests," "not feeling heard or
valued," and "not helping them work through conflict." Superintendent 5 simply stated,
"The balancer really wants to be heard. So, if the balancer doesn't feel like, maybe I'm

taking some of those ideas seriously enough, then I'll hear about it. They want to be heard and valued."

Superintendent 1 acknowledged that he made the mistake "early on of assuming they would understand other trustees' interests versus realizing that I talked to all of them more than they talked to each other." Superintendent 1 also reaffirmed the idea that balancers like harmony and do not like conflict. He went on to explain the problem of "not acknowledging the need to help make them okay when there's conflict because it leaves them unsettled. They need help to process through that."

Developer

Developers work behind the scenes to coach or challenge others to build skills that can positively advance organizational interests to which they are fully committed. Developers exhibit a high level of self-awareness of their own knowledge and skill (DeLuca, 1999; Goleman, 2000; Rath, 2007; White et al., 2016).

Four of the 29 board members were identified as developers, which is 14% of the board members studied. Four of the five superintendents reported having at least one developer as a board member. Superintendent 1 gave a thorough description of the developer political style:

> So, this person is the ultimate behind-the-scenes mover and often can be, because
> of that, can often be underestimated, but really is savvy and can use that to cajole
> or coach fellow trustees, even staff. But also, can challenge, but not in a sharp
> way, but challenge in a way around efficacy, around wondering. And this person
> rarely goes into the personal interest and their dominant piece is about the overall

organization, the overall well-being of children. They are aware of their ability

and skill, but also very humble.

Superintendent 2 succinctly described the developer:

They understand our system very, very well. When they have an interest or they

need to move people in a certain direction, they know how to go about doing it.

They kind of operate in that vein all the time. And it helps bring the board together.

Effective strategies. The theme with the highest frequency of coded strategies

with 37 was relationships (see Table 8). This was followed by the themes of

communication with 25 coded strategies, governance with 12 coded strategies, political

acuity with 11 coded strategies, and common vision with six coded strategies. The

following were the most frequently coded strategies across all themes:

- Build relationships

- Get to know them personally

- Build trust

- Frequent, timely communication

- Encourage tendency to develop others

- Use them to support district goals

Relationships. In the theme of relationships, the strategies of "build

relationships," "get to know them personally," and "build trust" were the most frequently

coded. Superintendent 2 noted the benefits of this strategy when she stated,

It's very important that I establish a relationship with her and that I know about

her personal life. The fact that I value that part of her and her family, I think in

the end, has what's allowed her to be invested in me as much as she is.

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Table 8

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Developers

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Developer	**Relationships**	Total for all relationship codes	**37**
		Build relationships	9
		Get to know them personally	8
		Build trust	5
		Invest time and energy	5
		Be a thought partner with them	3
		Show value and respect	3
		Meet with them face-to-face	1
		Use them as a sounding board	1
		Use empathy during conflict	1
		Be vulnerable	1
	Communication	Total for all communication codes	**25**
		Frequent, timely communication	7
		Check-in with them frequently	5
		Provide and clarify information	4
		Listen and make them feel heard	4
		Open, honest communication	3
		Keep them in the loop	1
		Be open to their input	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**12**
		Encourage tendency to develop others	6
		Help them think through their approach	3
		Develop their capacity	2
		Use them to bring the board together	1
	Political acuity	Total for all political acuity codes	**11**
		Encourage their voice	5
		Use them to influence others	5
		Invite them to develop superintendent	1
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**6**
		Use them to support district goals	5
		Focus on district vision and mission	1

Superintendent 5 concurred and stated,

> We have an open relationship with one another which has been very helpful. It
>
> allows for that level of dialogue and I can't say I have that level of relationship

with all board members. But with that profile, I think it really lends itself to being able to continue to build that relationship.

Communication. In the theme of communication, the strategies of "frequent, timely communication" and "check-in with them frequently" were coded the most often. Superintendent 2 explained,

> I was just on the phone with her after an early morning meeting. Just to give her an update on something. I'm constantly checking in and communicating with her. Partly to make sure she has accurate information. Making the investment on the front end.

Superintendent 3 noted,

> I think, for me, I really take time to try to bring out that in the developer. Where I may not ask any of the other ones, "Hey," text, or a phone call, or an email, "Do you have any questions about that?" Or, "You want to get on a call to talk about an issue?" I will do that more with her as far as checking-in.

Superintendent 4 emphasized, "You not giving her the information, the necessary information, is going to cost you more time in the end."

Governance and political acuity. Much like the balancer, the most frequently coded strategies under the themes of governance and political acuity are closely aligned: "encourage tendency to develop others," "encourage their voice," and "use them to influence others." Superintendent 1 stated,

> And then it's also encouraging this person in that development role, whether with colleagues or even sometimes with staff that they may have an interest in, that allow this person to really work effectively as a developer in the challenge of the

building of folks. It's really that it has been the most effective way is to work with them, and not on everything all the time, but strategically to really encourage them to develop and influence others.

Superintendent 3 discussed the challenge of encouraging the voice of the developer,

Building her confidence in her skills to bring that forward. I think that her challenges, or the challenges with a developer is ensuring that the other board members allow her voice, or give time to her voice, which then means for me to be able to facilitate that as a superintendent, ensuring that those that have all of this experience and knowledge that they can bring forward have the opportunity to bring forward, and don't get drowned out by the others. One very simple strategy is I have her sit next to me at the board meetings, at the dais. I know people maybe don't think about it, but how I position people on the dais is a strategy. Who sits by who? If I look at it, I've got a mix of arrangers, developers, challengers. They're all mixed. No one group is sitting next to each other.

Common vision. "Use them to support district goals" was the most frequently coded strategy within the theme of common vision. Superintendent 2 used the developer "to support the vision of the district and work of the superintendent." Superintendent 3 added to this and stated,

I talked to her about her role is not to vote based on what other board members want, but vote based on what her constituents and she believe are the right things to do for students, again, in alignment with the mission, vision and priorities.

Effective strategies used with developers identified in this study were aligned

with a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical

framework. Following are some of these strategies:

> build trust; go slow to go fast; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal;
>
> expand the pie; include all sides; accordion process; problem solving; create a
>
> political vision; meet their needs; simplify and clarify message; do your
>
> homework; know each decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots;
>
> coalition building; working the community; build networks; respond positively to
>
> perceived danger; celebrate everything; use norms effectively; dig the well before
>
> you're thirsty; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower
>
> others; create a benevolent environment; know who trusts whom; float the idea,
>
> and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously. (White et al., 2016, p. 91)

Ineffective strategies. Generally, superintendents stated that developers were

easy to work with and struggled to identify ineffective strategies. Superintendent 3 said,

"She is so open to learning, which is a characteristic of a developer," while

Superintendent 5 agreed and stated,

> This board member who has the developer profile, they're very easy to work with
>
> because they're pretty self-reflective and that's helpful. I think it's really helpful
>
> when you have a board member who's self-reflective and then they'll come to me
>
> and ask my thoughts on could they have handled something differently or how did
>
> I do. It allows for that level of dialogue and I can't say I have that level of
>
> relationship with all board members, but with that profile, I think it really lends
>
> itself to being able to continue to build that relationship.

Ultimately, there were two ineffective strategies that were coded three times each. The strategies were "not bringing them along" and "too much change too soon." This is reflective of the fact that a number of developers described had a history with their organizations, which lent to developing others. It is critical that the superintendent bring the developers along with change, so that they will be advocates and supporters. Superintendent 2 gave an example of this point and stated,

> She was used to things being done a certain way. She would get frustrated with me, so I had to work through that. I would say, if you think you're going to just try to get something by her quickly, that's not going to work.

Strategist

Strategists are visionary, open to new ideas, and collaborative. They empower others and model the organization's values. Supporting organizational interests over self-interests, they strategically use a variety of approaches to propose new initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders, elicit commitment, and make purposeful decisions (DeLuca, 1999; Dergel, 2014; White et al., 2016).

Three of the 29 board members were identified as strategists, which is approximately 10% of the board members studied. Two of the five superintendents reported having at least one strategist as a board member. Superintendent 1 described his strategist board member as "having a very strong vision around wanting to eliminate achievement and wellness gaps for students. Is a very strong advocate of the organization, even when at times an issue is contrary to their own political or personal beliefs." Superintendent 3 described her strategist board member as

She is naturally inquisitive, creative, and collaborative. Whenever there is an

issue that the board wrangles with, she is an expert in framing it a different way if

other board members are not understanding. The other thing she does is that she

brings a different view of it from an activist, labor, legal background that, in this

community, needs to happen. I almost feel like she's nontraditional in terms of a

board member who really bends what's being talked about in a way that gives the

voice of maybe people on the margin, or people who are not as mainstream, how

they would react to the situation, or how they would deal with it. Because they're

bringing new ideas. They're bringing fresh ideas. They're bringing creativity and

different things, almost where they're willing to be vulnerable and expose

potential flaws in the district, which I think, "How do you get better if you don't

do that?"

Effective strategies. The themes with the highest frequency of coded strategies

were political acuity and governance, with 16 coded strategies each (see Table 9). This

was followed by the themes of relationships with 13 coded strategies, communication

with 10 coded strategies, and common vision with six coded strategies. The following

were the most frequently coded strategies across all themes:

- Ground them in reality and pragmatism

- Use their experience and expertise

- Make them feel part of the process

- Engage them in strategic thinking

- Open, direct, honest communication

- Focus on common vision and goals

Table 9

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Strategists

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Strategist	**Political acuity**	Total for all political acuity codes	**16**
		Ground them in reality and pragmatism	6
		Use their expertise and experience	5
		Invite them to be problem solvers	3
		Channel tendencies as strategist	1
		Get into the tactical level	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**16**
		Encourage dialogue with other members	4
		Make them feel part of the process	4
		Encourage collaboration	2
		Give time to process issues	2
		Use them to influence others	2
		Establish interests and priorities	1
		Help them frame issues	1
	Relationships	Total for all relationship codes	**13**
		Engage them in strategic thinking	4
		Affirm and validate their ideas	4
		Invest time and energy	2
		Seek their input	2
		Own decisions and mistakes	1
	Communication	Total for all communication codes	**10**
		Open, direct, honest communication	5
		Learn their communication style	3
		Provide relevant, timely information	1
		Listen	1
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**6**
		Focus on common goals and vision	4
		Connect process to vision and outcome	2

Political acuity. In the theme of political acuity, the two strategies with the

highest frequency of codes were "ground them in reality and pragmatism" and "use their

experience and expertise." Superintendent 1 discussed that strategists get so focused on

vision and big picture that "they need to be grounded in the reality of a decision or

implementation." He continued,

Helping them get beyond the vision and bring them back to the practical reality of
something. Instead of just letting them operate at the strategic level, invite them
into a conversation at the tactical level. So, sometimes it is effective in helping
them understand why some things may need more incremental changes to reach
the goal. Also, reminding them that some of the assumptions they make may not
pull through in the context of the situation.

Superintendent 3 emphasized the importance of using the experience and
expertise of the strategist:

Whenever there is an issue that the board wrangles with, she is an expert in
framing it a different way if other board members are not understanding. The
other thing she does is that she brings a different view of it from an activist, labor,
legal background that, in this community, needs to happen. It's a very
progressive community, but with still some very entrenched privilege and
institutionalized ideals. It's her experience along with a delivery that is
respectful and open-minded.

Governance. Under the theme of governance, "encourage dialogue with other
members" and "make them feel part of the process" were the highest coded strategies.
Superintendent 3 affirmed the strategy of encouraging dialogue with other members:

The strategy, I really think from the superintendent standpoint, is creating an
atmosphere and an environment where people feel safe to share their experiences
and what they've learned with each other in such a way that . . . It may not be
accepted, and that's okay, but it's heard.

Superintendent 3 added,

> Fostering and building and encouraging that kind of dialogue that is not
>
> confrontational, nor is it demeaning anybody, any others, any others' opinions,
>
> but adding to the mix to come up with the best solution. She just brought a
>
> different ideal to it that was really heard by the rest of the board members.

In order to make a strategist feel part of the process, Superintendent 1 advocated "inviting them to be problem solvers, because these kinds of folks tend to want to problem solve." This was further validated by Superintendent 3 who stated, "The way that I can bring problem-solving to the table for them, that the strategists, they appreciate it greatly."

Relationships. Under the relationships theme, the two most frequently coded strategies were "engage them in strategic thinking" and "affirm and validate their ideas." Superintendent 1 combined the two strategies and stated,

> If they're affirming the vision they have, and then the conflict often becomes the
>
> pragmatic reality of how to move that forward, given some constraints. So, it's
>
> affirming that, but then helping them understand their reality. Sometimes that
>
> validates where they're at, sometimes it gives them pause that just because they
>
> see the vision clearly, not everybody else does.

Superintendent 3 also discussed

> helping engage them in strategic thinking. So, then helping them move from just
>
> that goal that they have that is very global, and wanting to engage them into that
>
> "Okay, so that's where we want to go, what's the best strategy?"

Communication. Under the theme of communication, "open, direct, honest communication" was coded most frequently. Superintendent 3 explained it in simple terms by saying, "Honesty. Honesty. Don't sugarcoat. Yeah. Own it. Be responsible, good or bad. They appreciate that a lot." Superintendent 1 stated similarly, "Be really clear and direct with your communication and tell them exactly like it is." Both superintendents also emphasized the importance of learning the preferred communication style of the strategists. Superintendent 3 elaborated on this point:

> Learn the preferred style of communication of your board members. Board Member 4, super busy. Text and e-mail are her thing, not phone calls, not meeting. If she has questions about agendas or anything, she will e-mail or text me. The other board member, the second strategist needs a lot of processing with me by phone, by e-mail, by text. She needs all three. That's her style. I know if I'm going to get on the phone or anything to do with that particular board member, I have to allot an hour, because she needs to process.

Common vision. Finally, under the theme of common vision, "focus on common goals and vision" and "connect process to vision and outcome" were identified as important strategies. Superintendents acknowledged that strategists can be key catalysts and drivers of accomplishing district goals. However, as Superintendent 1 described, "They can also knock you off the rails." Thus, Superintendent 1 discussed the importance of "developing a common vision, making sure everyone understands the goals of the organization, and then bringing people back to the common vision to focus on a cohesive effort."

Effective strategies used with strategists identified in this study were aligned with a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical framework. Following are some of these strategies:

build trust; include all sides; win-win; agenda linking; superordinate goal; expand the pie; accordion process; ability to compete, intent to cooperate; dialogue; problem solving; political vision; simple, clear message; do your homework; know decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; working the community; build networks; respond positively to danger; count your votes; celebrate everything; uncover informal norms; dig the well early; link agendas; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; empower others; benevolent environment; know who trusts whom; and float the idea. (White et al., 2016, p. 98)

Ineffective strategies. The two ineffective strategies to use with strategists as described by the two superintendents were "don't take away their voice" and "not linking the process to the vision and outcome." Superintendent 1 described the first ineffective strategy:

Not taking away their voice of putting those markers and goals out there. Encouraging them to do so, because that's their authentic voice. But then reminding them that when it comes to vote on an issue it may not have everything you want, but we've agreed that this is the process through our committees and through our discussions."

Superintendent 3 discussed the problem with not linking the process to the vision and outcome:

Early on, not recognizing that even within this process there is an outcome-based

piece of it, because they have a vision of where they want to go. So, not linking

outcome to process early on enough was not effective, because this person felt

like we were doing a lot of talk about the process versus really linking to the

outcome of the vision they wanted—really working hard to pair the outcomes to

the vision versus just staying in process. Early on, there was a kind of

dissatisfaction until realizing they needed to see everything, and then it moved

forward very well.

Planner

Planners demonstrate modest initiative in political ventures and are typically

focused on self-interests rather than organizational interests. Planners gather and analyze

data for potential personal risks, putting constraints on decision-making (Hackman, 2002;

Hackman & Wageman, 2005; White et al., 2016).

Three of the 29 board members were identified as planners, which is

approximately 10% of the board members studied. Two of the five superintendents

reported having at least one planner as a board member. Superintendent 1 described a

strategist board member as being focused on data and looking out for his or her own self-

interest:

What really resonated with a planner was really looking at the issue from self

rather than organizational. Then also wanting lots of different data and

information to actually put a constraint on the decision. Also, wanting to have an

incessant amount of data that wasn't really as relevant to the decision-making

before the board, but was more around second-guessing staff's work and staff's

decisions. And then wanting to really use both of those types of pieces to not

have us make decisions, because people could become unhappy with those

decisions, people would be upset.

Superintendent 2 discussed the planner as focused on appearance and self-interest:

Well, I think, one of the things that made me think that they're planners is, I do

believe they are focused on their self-interests. I think they have other political

aspirations. And so, often, they are driven by making a decision, not necessarily

about the impact of the decision now, but it's about the impact of the decision and

how they can respond to it, potentially even 4 years from now when they're

running for another political office. She just kept pushing and pushing, worried

about herself, and how that would look amongst certain people if we didn't do

this. And she kept saying, "District X just did this, this district just did this, we

need to do this." So, it was more about her own self-interest than about the other

impacts on the district.

Effective strategies. The theme with the highest frequency of coded strategies

was communication with 24 coded strategies, which was closely followed by

relationships with 23 coded strategies (see Table 10). The theme of political acuity had

15 coded strategies, governance had 13 coded strategies, and common vision had six

coded strategies. The following were the most frequently coded strategies across all

themes:

- Provide relevant, timely information

- Listen and ask clarifying questions

- Invest time and energy

- Be responsive

- Say yes when you can

- Clarify roles

- Make them feel part of decision-making

- Focus on common vision and outcomes

Table 10

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Planners

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Planner	**Communication**	Total for all communication codes	**24**
		Provide relevant, timely information	8
		Listen and ask clarifying questions	7
		Be responsive	6
		Provide same information entire board	2
		Explain at a deeper level	1
	Relationships	Total for all relationship codes	**23**
		Invest time and energy	7
		Make them feel valued and respected	4
		Make staff available	3
		Strategic conversations	3
		Be patient	3
		Build and develop relationships	1
		Build trust	1
		Meet with them frequently	1
	Political acuity	Total for all political acuity codes	**15**
		Say yes when you can	5
		Acknowledge their interests/perspective	3
		Give them options	3
		Understand you may never satisfy them	2
		Keep involved and engaged	1
		Be open-minded to questions and ideas	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**13**
		Clarify superintendent and board roles	5
		Make them feel part of decision-making	5
		Use influence of other board members	3
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**6**
		Focus on vision and outcomes	5
		Ask them their purpose and goal	1

Communication. Within the theme of communication, "provide relevant, timely information," "listen and ask clarifying questions," and "be responsive" had the highest number of codes. Superintendent 1 noted,

> They have a need for information and an insatiable need for data. Providing them
> with a reasonable amount of information and taking the time to do that is critical.
> I give them access to cabinet-level staff in case they have questions or need more
> information. I keep feeding them data because I don't want a trustee to feel they
> don't get the information they need. The planner gathers more and more and
> more information, like an insatiable appetite. I'm happy to explain things or
> engage in dialog with her, but I'm not going to let her judgment stop a
> recommendation that I know a whole board needs to see.

> Superintendent 2 discussed the importance of being responsive and stated, "Being responsive is very helpful in having success with this board member. I never want to look unresponsive to them. The big challenge is they always have the need for immediate information, which isn't always possible."

Relationships. Within the theme of relationships, "invest time and energy" was coded the most frequently. Superintendent 1 stated,

> I invest a lot of time personally engaging this board member. I find I spend more
> time with this type of trustee than I do other styles, because they have a need for
> information. Cabinet-level staff also spends a lot of time with them. We really
> work hard with the trustee, providing access and information. Investing time with
> them helps to build the relationship.

Superintendent 2 also discussed the investment of time and explained, "I was just having breakfast with one of the planners this morning. Spending time with them helps me to lead them where we need to go."

Political acuity. Under the theme of political acuity, "say yes when you can" was coded most frequently. Superintendent 1 stated, "I learned early on, if I can say yes on some things, say yes. Because there will be many times when I need to say no. Sometimes saying yes to an interest or idea they have puts tokens in the bank." Superintendent 2 gave an example: "If I just gave them one option, they might not like it. So, I give them three options that are kind of in the same parameters. It gives them choice and makes them feel like I am saying yes to their idea."

Governance. Within the theme of governance, "clarify superintendent and board roles" and "make them feel part of decision-making" were the most frequently coded strategies. In terms of clarifying roles, Superintendent 1 explained,

> And then there also come a point where just letting them know my job is to make the best recommendation and your job is to evaluate that and make your decision along with every other trustee. And so not letting that person be the one controlling around the recommendation. My job is to make these recommendations and explain them. It is not my job to decide. That's their job.

Superintendent 2 also clarified the role of the board:

> It's also reminding the trustee that my recommendation is to the whole board, not the individual trustees. While she may or may not agree with that, my recommendation is to the whole board. The decision must be made by a majority of the board.

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Superintendent 2 described the importance of options and said, "Probably giving them options rather than directly saying, 'I think we should do this.' Kind of leading them there, to where I want to go with the options." Superintendent 1 simply stated, "Give them choices." Superintendent 2 also stated, "They're part of the decision-making, but leading them, maybe, I spend more time probably leading them to where I want them to go. Make them feel they were a part of the decision and direction."

Common vision. Within the theme of common vision, "focus on common vision and outcomes" was the most frequently coded. Superintendent 1 explained, "I am constantly reminding them that they have a perspective and acknowledging their interests. But then, bringing them back to the vision of the district and agreed upon outcomes."

Effective strategies used with planners identified in this study were aligned with a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical framework. Following are some of these strategies:

> win-win; agenda linking; chits; many messengers; command; broken record; meet needs; simple messages; never let 'em see you sweat; do your homework; respond positively to perceived danger; count your votes; use norms; dig the well early; create a benevolent environment; and where snipers dwell, plan meticulously. (White et al., 2016, p. 89)

Ineffective strategies. The ineffective strategies noted by superintendents included "withholding information" and "getting frustrated." Superintendent 1 summarized this and stated, "You never want the planner to feel like you are withholding

information. Be fully transparent with them. Remember they have an insatiable appetite for information and data. You may never fully satisfy them, so don't get frustrated."

Challenger

Challengers are characterized by self-interest, assertive behavior, and confidence in their own vision, ideas, and goals, which inspires a strong desire to lead and make decisions quickly. Challengers see themselves as movers and shakers, efficient, politically strategic, aggressive, and willing to confront the views of others in an attempt to influence outcomes (DeLuca, 1999; Jasper, 1999; Meyer et al., 2005; Polletta, 2004; White et al., 2016).

Two of the 29 board members were identified as challengers, which is approximately 7% of the board members studied. Two of the five superintendents reported having one challenger as a board member. Superintendent 3 described his challenger as "very accusatory and confrontational. She has her own ideas about how things should be done and is very vocal about it." Superintendent 4 described his challenger board member:

> I've had three or four challenger board members over my career. This individual I have now is very difficult to deal with. They got on this board and they want to conquer the world. So much so that this person's gone out already and publicly said he was going to go after a highly popular senator's seat. When he brings topics to the board that he wants to do, they're more global issues and have nothing to do with the school district. He hasn't been shy about his political aspirations whatsoever and he's only been on the board 4 months. He's very focused on himself and not what's in the best interest of the district.

Effective strategies. The theme with the highest frequency of coded strategies was governance with 18 coded strategies, which was closely followed by political acuity with 17 coded strategies, and communication with 14 coded strategies (see Table 11).

Table 11

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Challengers

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Challenger	**Governance**	Total for all governance codes	**18**
		Use other members to regulate challenger	5
		Clarify roles and governance structure	5
		Facilitate discussion with other members	4
		Encourage collaboration	2
		Give others an opportunity to participate	2
	Political acuity	Total for all political astuteness codes	**17**
		Do your homework	5
		Don't debate	5
		Don't play into their desire for conflict	4
		Don't negate their thoughts and ideas	1
		Let them be an expert in something	1
		Don't get defensive	1
	Communication	Total for all communication codes	**14**
		Open, honest, direct communication	5
		Listen, and then listen some more	4
		Ask lots of questions	2
		Seek to understand	1
		Communicate frequently	1
		Frame issues in a positive light	1
	Relationships	Total for all relationship codes	**9**
		Encourage respectful behavior	4
		Be patient	3
		Take a deep breath	1
		Be positive	1
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**8**
		Focus on supporting district priorities	4
		Help them reframe their ideas	3
		Focus on district vision and priorities	1

The theme of relationships had nine coded strategies, while the theme of common vision had eight coded strategies. The following were the most frequently coded strategies across all themes:

- Clarify roles and governance structure

- Use other members to regulate challenger

- Do your homework

- Don't debate

- Open, honest, direct communication

- Listen, then listen some more

- Focus on supporting district priorities

  Governance. Under the theme of governance, the most frequently coded strategies were "clarify roles and governance structure" and "use other members to regulate challenger." Superintendent 3 noted,

> Board members need to know and remember, I am their employee and my staff is not. The staff report to me. Reminding the challenger in particular that he does not direct staff, the board can direct me, but he shouldn't direct staff. This is something we constantly work on.

Superintendent 4 also gave an example of clarifying roles and governance structure:

> The challenger wants to be in charge and thinks they know better than everyone. They believe they are an expert in all areas. I had a superintendent once describe this board member type as "they want to be assistant superintendent of everything." My job is to constantly remind him of his role when he oversteps the boundaries.

Superintendent 3 described a time when she effectively used other board members to regulate the challenger:

I had a challenger try to sabotage my evaluation. As a strategy, other board members got involved with trying to keep him in check. The board members either individually called to meet with him, and I, as a strategy, provided time in the closed session agenda under evaluation of the superintendent for them to talk about it. I didn't tell them to talk about it, but I provided time. I said as I left the room, "I'm providing time for you to talk about my evaluation or anything to do with me as your superintendent, including possibly my contract," and left the room. They did proceed to talk about it and the other members effectively neutralized the challenger.

Superintendent 4 noted,

I will ask him if he has talked to the board president about an issue he is upset about. I also redirect him to the board as a whole. He sometimes wants to unload on staff, so I use the rest of the board as a buffer.

Within the theme of political acuity, the strategies coded with the highest frequency were "do your homework," "don't debate," and "don't play into their desire for conflict." Superintendent 4 described the importance of these strategies:

You better not go back at him and not know your facts, because he knows them. He's smart. Then at that time, rather than try to go at him in a way that challenges him, stop and pause and say, "You bring up great points that I need to go do some further research on, or I need to get some information on. When can we come back and talk about this?" Either bring it back to the board or bring it back to our

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conversation, so that you have time to go check out and get some information. Because you cannot, this particular challenger, you can't challenge him without doing your homework.

Superintendent 3 stated,

A strategy to come back at him to overpower him in a way without your homework being done, mm-mm (negative). That's not an effective strategy. The board president has tried to go at him, and not in a way that she knows what she's talking about, and she looks like a fool. He's like, "Yeah, all right. I got her," because there's some conflict there. Go and do your homework and research. Sometimes I will say, "Yeah, hey. You bring up some great points. I'm not well-versed on that. I'm going to go find out." I find I ask him a lot of times, "Why? Tell me what's behind what it is you want to do." Then it gives me a better understanding whether it's coming from a real personal place, or a social justice place, or backed by the union.

Communication. Within the theme of communication, "open, honest, direct communication" and "listen, then listen some more" were the most frequently coded strategies. Superintendent 3 recommended, "I think those are the two things. Listen, ask questions, go and do your homework and research, and be honest about that." Superintendent 3 also stated,

I do tell him things pretty straightforward. For example, I've asked him, as I do all the other board members, but I seem to have to repeat it with him, "If you have questions about the agenda, please ask me before the meeting and not at the meeting." The response is sometimes, "Well, I think it's important for the public

to hear." I will say, "I understand that." I say, "I also think it's important that we don't put staff on the spot." I said, "I do not ever want to put my staff in a position where they feel that they are put on the spot. So, if you have a question and you know you're going to ask it, and you really want to do it at that time, I still want to know beforehand, so staff can be prepared to respond to that."

Superintendent 3 discussed the strategy of "listen, then listen some more" and stated,

Some of the time, he hears how ridiculous it is when I reframe and probe in a way that helps him see that I really am listening, and not negating his ideas or thought. It really is about being open and listening to his ideas.

Superintendent 4 concurred, "Listen. Listen to what he is saying. Don't close him out. You've got to listen to what he's saying, what he's asking. Don't automatically cut him off because he challenges."

Relationships. Within the theme of relationships, both superintendents discussed the need to promote respectful behavior. Superintendent 3 stated,

I come from a place of respect. I try to model respectful behavior, supporting staff, and I will address it if this board member is not respectful to staff. It might not change his behavior, but it sends a good message to staff and the rest of the board.

Common vision. Under the theme of common vision, Superintendent 3 described how he used the strategy of "focus on district priorities" to work with his challenger board member:

I brought him in last week. He goes, "What do you want?" I said, "Just come on in. How are you doing?" We're going to do more check-ins. I can tell that he wants something. He wants to do something. I'm giving him a job. We've got a bond campaign. I said, "This is going to be your moment, man. You get to go door to door. You get to really do what politicians do, go out and campaign and get this sucker passed. You can put it in your pocket. A 200-million-dollar bond passed on your watch." He just lit up and now is on a mission to pass our bond.

Effective strategies used with challengers identified in this study were aligned with a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical framework. Following are some of these strategies:

include all sides; win-win; agenda linking; chits; many messengers; ability to compete, intention to cooperate; broken record; never let 'em see you sweat; do your homework; know each decision maker's agenda; be aware of political blind spots; coalition building; where snipers dwell, plan meticulously; working the community; build networks; respond positively to danger; dig the well early; management by walking around; be open to their ideas; know who trusts whom; use the accordion approach; and count your votes. (White et al., 2016, p. 95)

Ineffective strategies. Two of the ineffective challenger strategies noted by the superintendents were "saying no" and "debating the challenger." Superintendent 3 said, "Saying no is not effective. Coming right out of the gate and saying no does not work with the challenger. It is really about being open and listening to his ideas." Superintendent 4 emphasized,

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I think what is not effective with him is getting into a debate. He has a different

perspective. Why go down that road and try to change him? He's happy with his

opinion and it won't change. Debating with him will only detract from the

priorities of the district.

Supporter

Supporters are characterized as risk-averse, selfless, and passive devotees,

backers, or advocates of the organization's visions and goals. Supporters seek harmony

and hesitate to take sides, though they make decisions and provide resources that align

with the organization's goals (CSBA, n.d.; DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016).

Two of the 29 board members were identified as supporters, which is

approximately 7% of the board members studied. Two of the five superintendents

reported having one supporter as a board member. In describing his supporter board

member, Superintendent 2 stated,

He's really supportive. And that's just the way that he is. He sees that as his job,

and when he does that, he thinks he's doing a good job. This individual is at

every single event. He probably spends 40-plus hours a week as a board member.

He is at schools every single day. He will be at a football game every week. He

will be at, when he's at his church on Sunday, he's talking about the school

district. Everywhere he goes, it's about supporting the organization's visions and

goals.

Superintendent 5 described her board member identified as a supporter:

I wouldn't specifically say they're risk averse, but they are very selfless, and they

defer to superintendent and her staff when it comes to a recommendation. They

may ask a few questions along the way. They want to be briefed. This board

member wants to have the information, but I think understands his role and

responsibilities the best of any board members. Because he will frequently say in

public, "This is staff's role and staff has done this research. Staff is making this

recommendation."

    Effective strategies. The theme with the highest frequency of coded strategies

was relationships with 21 coded strategies, which was followed by the theme of

communication with 13 coded strategies (see Table 12). The themes of governance had

seven coded strategies, common vision had five coded strategies, and political acuity had

four coded strategies. The following were the most frequently coded strategies across all

themes:

- Get to know them personally

- Invite them to events and activities

- Make them feel valued and validated

- Face to face communication

- Use them to influence others

- Use them to support district vision/goals

- Prepare them in advance of change

Table 12

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Supporters

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
Supporter	**Relationships**	Total for all relationship codes	**21**
		Get to know them personally	6
		Invite them to events and activities	4
		Make them feel valued and validated	4
		Show appreciation	3
		Meet with them face-to-face	2
		Don't take them for granted	1
		Invest time and energy	1
	Communication	Total for all communication codes	**13**
		Provide relevant, timely information	4
		Face to face communication	4
		Be responsive	2
		Listen and ask clarifying questions	2
		Follow-up with them	1
	Governance	Total for all governance codes	**7**
		Use them to influence others	4
		Support them through conflict	2
	Common vision	Total for all common vision codes	**5**
		Use them to support district vision/goals	4
		Focus on vision and priorities	1
	Political acuity	Total for all political acuity codes	**4**
		Prepare them in advance of change	4

Relationships. Within the theme of relationships, "get to know them personally," "invite them to events and activities," "make them feel valued," and "give positive affirmation and strokes" were the most frequently coded strategies. Superintendent 2 stated, "It's important that I get to know him on a personal level. He values having a relationship and appreciates it when I ask him about his family and things that he is interested in." Superintendent 5 concurred and stated, "I always make a point of checking in with this board member on a personal level."

To validate the board member, Superintendent 2 noted,

I need to tell him he's doing a great job and that he's valued when he's at these

events. I probably have to pay him more compliments than any other board

member. He needs to be reassured and I frequently validate him and his feelings.

Superintendent 2 also explained, "Because he loves attending school and district

activities, I always make sure to invite him to things. I make a point of going to certain

events with him."

Communication. Face-to-face communication is a preferred method of getting

information. Superintendent 5 stated, "Face-to-face communication is best. This board

member doesn't like to get information through email, so just having face-to-face

dialogue is the most effective." Superintendent 2 affirmed this point: "I just had a one-

on-one meeting with him this morning. He likes when I follow-up with him after board

meetings." Superintendent 2 also explained, "Whenever I have the chance, I spend time

with him."

Governance. The strategies of "use them to influence others," "use them to

support district vision and goals," and "prepare them in advance of change" were closely

aligned. Superintendent 5 stated, "This board member wants to have information, usually

to support staff, our recommendation, and the direction we are headed as a district."

Superintendent 5 also explained, "The supporter is similar to the developer in that they

realize they need to mentor and share some of what they've experienced over the years to

help mentor and coach new board members in their role."

Superintendent 2 noted, "When I can, I try to give him the information he needs in advance of issues, especially change. Giving him a heads up is important. It helps him to support the district." Superintendent 5 concluded,

I think the nature of the supporter is that they're supporting you no matter what. And as a superintendent, I think you really appreciate those board members who truly understand their role, but they're not a rubber stamp kind of person. They're so looking out for the best interests of our students in our district. I've worked with many different kinds of board members over my years of being a superintendent. When you have a board member who's a supporter, I think you realize how special that person is.

Effective strategies used with supporters identified in this study were aligned with a number of the strategies outlined in the research associated with the theoretical framework. Following are some of these strategies:

build trust, testimonials from trusted sources, approval of power structure, go slow to go fast, agenda linking, superordinate goal, expand the pie, many messengers, problem solving, meet their needs, simple messages, do your homework, celebrate everything, use norms, management by walking around, and benevolent environment. (White et al., 2016, p. 87)

Ineffective strategies. The two ineffective strategies discussed by the superintendents included "not investing enough time" and "discounting or ignoring feelings." Superintendent 2 stated,

At times, he needs more strokes than any of my other board members. I need to spend time with him and check in about how things are going. One time he said

he was very frustrated, and I said, "Well, your frustration actually sounds a little

bit like you were almost on the edge of being angry." And he said, "I was." I

tried to validate him and his feelings. Really, almost again, reassure him that,

"Okay, I get that you were angry. Going forward, here's what we're going to try

and do so you don't feel that way again."

Superintendent 5 noted,

Just continuing to probe and ask questions. If there's a concern, something this

board member is uncomfortable with, continue to ask those questions and then

when I find out where those questions are and where those tension points may be,

and I provide a response. I'd provide the response to all five board members.

And then sometimes I'll respond to that board member first and then say, "I'm

going to share this with the rest of the board too." So, I find that to be effective

before, during, after, whatever the situation may be.

Adaptor

Adaptors are pragmatists who generally support organizational changes and team

decisions, provided they do not perceive personal risk. An adaptor is one who presents a

passive, cooperative, political style balanced between self-interest and organizational

interests (Bobic et al., 1999; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Kirton, 1976; White et al.,

2016).

None of the 29 board members in the study were identified as adaptors by the

exemplary superintendents. Therefore, there were no coded effective strategies to use

with adaptors as part of this study. The following strategies were identified from the

political styles framework and were noted here for reference:

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build trust; go slow to go fast; agenda linking; praise and recognition; many

messengers; command; broken record; meet their needs; simple messages; do

your homework; use norms; management by walking around; be open to their

ideas; create a benevolent environment; where snipers dwell, plan meticulously;

know who trusts whom; and conflict strategy of smoothing. (White et al., 2016, p.

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Analyst

Analysts are passive and oriented toward self-interest over organizational interest.

They are primarily focused on tasks over relationships and will seek evidence, proof, and

detailed analysis before risking a change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Boulgarides & Cohen,

2001; DeLuca, 1999; Rowe & Boulgarides, 1992; White et al., 2016).

None of the 29 board members in the study were identified as analysts by the

exemplary superintendents. Therefore, there were no coded effective strategies to use

with analysts as part of this study. The following strategies were identified from the

political styles framework and were noted here for reference: "build trust, use concrete

examples, approval of power structure, go slow to go fast, chits, many messengers, co-

option, command, broken record, meet their needs, and link agendas" (White et al., 2016,

p. 84).

Effective Strategies for All Political Styles

The theme with the highest frequency of coding for effective strategies to use

with all political styles was relationships, with 40 codes (see Table 13). Communication

was a close second with 36 codes. Political acuity and governance both had 28 codes,

followed by common vision with 16 codes. The effective strategies with the highest

Table 13

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With All Political Styles

Style	Theme	Code	Frequency
All Styles	**Relationships**		**40**
		Build strong relationships	9
		Get to know them personally	8
		Invest time and energy	7
		Build trust	7
		Meet one-on-one	3
		Acknowledge their perspective	2
		Own your mistakes	1
		Be available	1
		Don't get defensive	1
		Be patient . . . take a deep breath	1
	Communication		**36**
		Open, honest, direct communication	6
		Communicate and check-in frequently	5
		Provide relevant, timely information/data	5
		Listen…then listen some more	4
		Be responsive and follow through	4
		Learn preferred communication style	4
		Never surprise the board	2
		Information one gets, they all get	2
		Be transparent	2
		Ask clarifying questions	1
		Give board direct access to key staff	1
	Political acuity		**28**
		Adapt style to meet the board's style	6
		Understand their political reality	5
		Identify their interests	4
		Lay the groundwork for future decisions	4
		Give options when possible	3
		Give board credit for successes - create wins	2
		Use their knowledge and expertise	1
		Don't take sides with board members	1
		Draw upon their strengths	1
		Don't debate . . . Let go of ego	1
	Governance		**28**
		Develop board capacity and governance team	5
		Provide leadership and guidance	5
		Clarify roles and governance process	4
		CSBA conference and training	4
		Governance handbook/norms/beliefs	3
		Operate as a governance team	2
		Board members regulate board members	2
		Don't pit board members against each other	1
		Board self-evaluation	1
		Arranged seating at board meetings	1
	Common vision		**16**
		Focus on common mission/vision/goals	6
		Identify shared priorities	4
		Align individual interests with district goals	4
		Show them the good work in the schools	2

frequency of coding across all themes were build strong relationships; get to know them personally; invest time and energy; build trust; open, honest, direct communication; communicate and check-in frequently; provide relevant, timely information/data; listen, then listen some more; be responsive and follow through; learn preferred communication style; adapt style to meet the board's style; understand their political reality; identify their interests; lay the groundwork for future decisions; develop board capacity and governance team; provide leadership and guidance; clarify roles and governance process; focus on common mission/vision/goals; identify shared priorities; and align individual interests with district goals.

Within the theme of relationships, the strategies that had the highest frequency of coding were "build strong relationships;" "get to know them personally;" "invest time and energy;" "build trust;" and "open, honest, direct communication." Within the theme of communication, the strategies that had the highest frequency of coding were "open, honest, direct communication;" "communicate and check-in frequently;" provide relevant, timely information/data;" "listen, then listen some more;" "be responsive and follow through;" and "learn preferred communication style."

The themes of political acuity and governance had the same frequency of codes. Strategies identified within the political acuity theme included "adapt style to meet the board's style," "understand their political reality," "identify their interests," and "lay the groundwork for future decisions," while strategies identified within the governance theme included "develop board capacity and governance team," "provide leadership and guidance," "clarify roles and governance process," and "CSBA conference and training." Finally, under the theme of common vision the most frequently coded strategies were

"focus on common mission/vision/goals;" "identify shared priorities;" and "align individual interests with district goals."

The importance of building relationships was emphasized by Superintendent 1 when he said, "You cannot underestimate the building of that relationship. Knowing them as a person, knowing about their family, knowing about their interests, and letting them know about you." Superintendent 2 agreed and noted, "I spend a lot of time getting to know them. I can tell you everything about every one of my board members and their family and their kids and grandkids. I develop relationships where I build a level of trust with the board. Even when I screw up, like I did with the one board member, I'm able to recover from that pretty quickly."

The importance of navigating relationships and the different political styles was emphasized by Superintendent 5:

It's that building relationship piece that really I think resonated with them because it's not only the relationship that you have with your board, but it's also how you navigate those relationships on a day to day basis with the people that you interact with and how you become part of a community.

She continued to discuss this concept:

They all have different styles as we can see. Understanding their personality and how they respond is important. And I think having those one on one meetings is the way that you find out how best to continue to build that relationship with each board member and understanding their personalities. Sitting down with the board members and asking, "Tell me about what you're most proud of and what you see

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are the biggest challenges and where do you want to see this district be in the next three to five years and how can I support you?"

Superintendent 3 further stated, "We go to the CSBA conference together as a team-building experience. I arrange meals together, so they can get to know each other, as well as their spouses or significant others." Superintendent 4 attributed longevity to relationship building when he said, "I think I've been able to stay longer because I build those relationships. You have to build trust and relationships. Let them know who you are." Superintendent 2 noted,

> Making sure that there's an understanding and an agreement of how and when [the] superintendent is communicating to build that relationship is important. And that's something that you have to probably ask early on with that relationship that you have with your governance team. I think the transparency piece of being honest, but also taking time to understand the personalities [on] your board is really important too.

Superintendent 5 gave the following advice:

> I think a key piece of advice for new superintendents and even superintendents who've been doing this for a while is you've got to listen and learn. You have to learn the organization, the culture and where people are coming from and where those tensions spots are. And those are the times where you have to think maybe differently. I really think it's a give-and-take process and that's part of knowing where your board members are with certain things that are really close to the heart for them."

A number of the political strategies identified through interviews were validated and triangulated by reviewing numerous artifacts from the five school districts. These artifacts included a review of district websites, a review of board agendas and minutes for at least two meetings per school district, and a review of other artifacts such as governance handbooks and governance norms and beliefs. The analysis of board agendas and minutes was a valuable exercise in that the data collected validated examples given by superintendents during the interviews. This included insight into the issues that may have been important to different political styles as well as strategies employed by the superintendent. The governance handbooks included relevant information that also validated the strategies used by superintendents with all political styles. Excerpts from some of the governance handbooks included "effective governance," "professional governance standards," "mission statement," "vision statement," "governance roles and responsibilities," "performing governance responsibilities," "provide support through our behavior and actions," "governance team culture," "governance norms and beliefs," "handling concerns," and "requests for information."

Summary

Chapter IV included a presentation and analysis of the collected through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach. The presentation and analysis of data include the quantitative data collected from the survey and the qualitative data collected from face-to-face interviews. As a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, the researcher administered the surveys first and then conducted the interviews. The presentation and analysis of data was organized by and responsive to the research questions used in the study:

1. How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?

2. What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Four of the five superintendents identified their political style as a strategist, while one superintendent identified as a developer. The political styles of the 29 board members studied were: 10 arrangers, five balancers, four developers, three strategists, three planners, two challengers, and two supporters. None of the board members were identified with the political style of an adaptor or analyst.

The strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with board members were organized into five different themes: relationships, communication, governance, political acuity, and common vision. The strategies for each political style were then analyzed to identify the most frequently coded themes, most frequently coded strategies within each theme, and the most frequently coded strategies across all themes. A summary of the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members is shown in Table 14.

There were many strategies identified that work with multiple political styles. There were also a number of strategies unique to a particular style, emphasizing the point that superintendents need to adapt their own style to the different political styles of board members. All superintendents were emphatic that building strong relationships and having effective communication strategies are imperative to a healthy governance team, working together to successfully lead the district toward accomplishing its mission, vision, and goals.

Table 14

Summary of Effective Strategies Used With Different Political Styles

Political style	Strategies
Arranger	Open, honest, direct communication; identify and understand their motivation; focus on district vision and goals; align personal interests with district priorities; build relationships, get to know them; clarify governance roles and structure.
Balancer	Get to know them personally; invest time and energy; provide relevant, timely information; use them to influence others; help them work with other board members.
Developer	Build relationships; get to know them personally; build trust; frequent, timely communication; encourage tendency to develop others; use them to support district goals.
Strategist	Ground them in reality and pragmatism; use their experience and expertise; make them feel part of the process; engage them in strategic thinking; Open, direct, honest communication; focus on common vision and goals.
Planner	Provide relevant, timely information; listen and ask clarifying questions; invest time and energy; be responsive; say yes when you can; clarify roles; make them feel part of decision-making; focus on common vision and outcomes.
Challenger	Clarify roles and governance structure; use other members to regulate challenger; do your homework; don't debate; open, honest, direct communication; listen, then listen some more; focus on supporting district priorities.
Supporter	Get to know them personally; invite them to events and activities; make them feel valued and validated; face-to-face communication; use them to influence others; use them to support district mission/vision/goals; prepare them in advance of change.
Adaptor	No board members in study were identified as adaptors.
Analyst	No board members in study were identified as analysts.

Chapter V discusses the major findings in greater detail, as well as the unexpected findings and conclusions. Chapter V also discusses implications for action and recommendations for further research. Finally, the chapter ends with concluding remarks and reflections.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter V provides a summary of the purpose, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, and population sample. The demographic data of the superintendents who participated in the study are also summarized. In addition, the chapter presents major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions. Chapter V ends with implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it was the purpose to identify and explain the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of school board members.

Research Questions

1. How do unified school district superintendents perceive their own political style and the individual styles of their school board members?
2. What are the strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different styles of school board members?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study used a mixed-methods approach to combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allowed the researcher to make explicit the implicit theories that guided the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillan &

Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, this study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach by which quantitative data were collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Numerical data were collected through a quantitative method were collected using a survey to identify the political styles of superintendents as well as the political styles of board members as perceived by superintendents. As a qualitative method, data were then collected through interviews with superintendents to identify strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

Quantitative research methods focus on the collection and analysis of numerical data. The quantifiable data may be collected through polls, surveys, questionnaires, or by analyzing and interpreting preexisting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One benefit of a quantitative method is that it potentially reduces some bias and may be more reliable. A disadvantage is that certain issues studied may be too complex or not be conducive to the use of numerical data (Patton, 2015). In this study, a political styles matrix survey was administered to select superintendents to determine their own political style as well as the political style of their board members.

Qualitative research design is used to find understanding, gain meaning, and describe behaviors (Patton, 2015). Qualitative research may also be used to describe and examine perceptions and to gain knowledge about a phenomenon or a group of people (Patten, 2017). The purpose of a qualitative study is to explore, find meaning, and gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, cultures, issues, or phenomena. Qualitative research questions usually begin with "what" or "how" because they are exploratory in nature. Furthermore, qualitative research explores issues and people and

does not try to be predictive (Patton, 2015). As a qualitative methods approach, interviews, observations, and artifacts are all appropriate types of data to use when developing themes and drawing conclusions from multiple realities and understanding a phenomenon from a participant's perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). When collecting data, the researcher conducts the research in the field and is considered an instrument of the research. After data collection, the researcher creates themes and finds meaning from the data that were collected. The final report in qualitative methods is usually narrative in nature (Patten, 2017). In this study, interviews were used to collect data to describe superintendents' perceptions of the political styles of their board members as well as the strategies superintendents used to work with the different political styles.

The benefits and focus of a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design were determined to be aligned with the purpose statement and research questions this study sought to answer. As discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in an explanatory research design, the quantitative data are gathered first, followed by the collection of qualitative data to further explain and expand upon the quantitative data. Collecting quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data through interviews also allows the researcher to triangulate the data and add depth and credibility to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gather important data regarding the political styles of board members through the Political Styles Matrix Survey. The researcher then used those data to further explore strategies used by superintendents to work with the different political styles through interviews with

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superintendents. In order to collect data, identify themes, and describe the lived

experience of superintendents, this sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was

selected as the most effective approach (see Figure 4, repeated here for ease of reference).
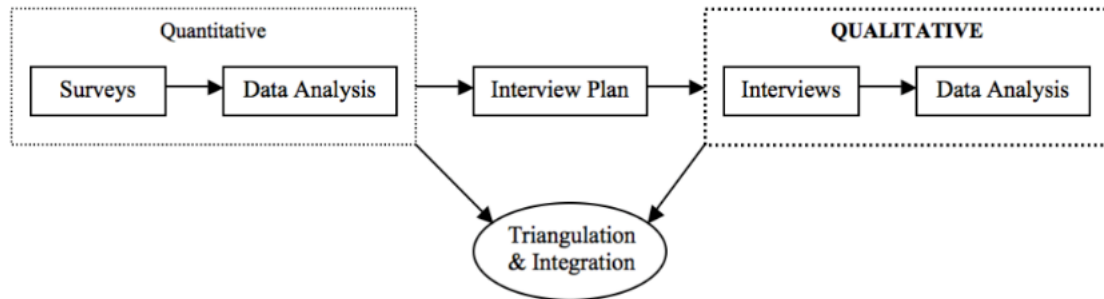

Figure 4. Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. From *Research Design: Qualitative,*
Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches, by J. W. Creswell, 2003. Thousand Oaks, CA:
Sage.

Population

The population is a group that researchers intend to study and make

generalizations about with the findings of the study. Additionally, the population is a

group of individuals who have one or more distinguishing characteristics that

differentiate them from other groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017).

The larger population of this study was school district superintendents. The

superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he or

she is responsible for managing the budget, implementing policy, following state and

federal regulations, and for all other aspects of running a school district. Serving as a

school district superintendent is a complex and challenging job, while one of the most

difficult challenges is working with the school board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski,

2013).

At the time of this study, there were nearly 14,000 public school districts in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). This means that there were also about 14,000 school district superintendents. It was not realistic or feasible to study such a large population due to time, geography, and financial constraints. The population for the study was initially narrowed geographically to focus on superintendents in California. However, there were approximately 1,026 superintendents representing school districts in California (CDE, 2019). This population was still too large to make it feasible to survey or interview all potential participants of the study. The population was then narrowed to a target population. The narrowing of the population made it a more feasible study.

Target Population

The target population is a smaller group identified within the population from which a sample will be studied. Often, a target population is identified due to the delimitations of time, money, geography, and other barriers that make it difficult to study every individual within the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2017). Because it is not practical to study all 1,026 superintendents in California, a target population of unified school district superintendents was selected for this study. Within California, there are approximately 344 unified school districts (CDE, 2019). To make the study more feasible, the researcher focused on unified school district superintendents in the Northern California regions of the Sacramento area and the San Francisco Bay area. The Sacramento area includes the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba. The San Francisco Bay area includes the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma

(Bellisario et al., 2016). These regions included approximately 73 unified school districts (CDE, 2019).

Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population the researcher intends to generalize. The sample identifies who specifically will be studied from within the broader population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A sample can also be described as a subset of the target population, which represents a larger and broader population (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2015). The researcher used purposeful sampling for the mixed-methods approach of the study, which took a sample from the target population who met the needed characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful sampling allowed for the use of criteria to identify superintendents to be respondents to surveys and participate in face-to-face interviews.

The study sample included five exemplary superintendents from the target population (see Figure 5, repeated here for ease of reference). In order to be considered exemplary, the selected participants needed to meet at least four of the following criteria:

- Shows evidence of positive governance team relationships.
- Has a minimum of 3 years of experience as a superintendent in his or her current district.
- Is identified by the county superintendent as exemplary in working with board members.
- Is identified by a panel of experts who were knowledgeable of the work of superintendents.

- Has received recognition as an exemplary superintendent by a professional

    organization such as ACSA.

- Has received recognition by his or her peers.

- Has a membership in professional associations in his or her field.

- Has participated in CSBA Master's in Governance program training or other

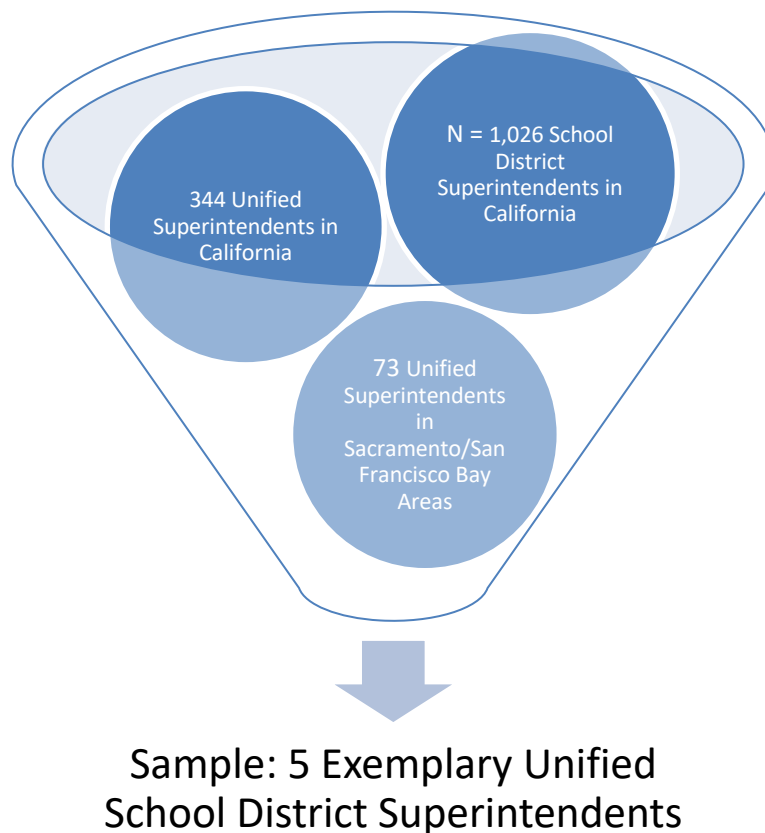   governance training with at least one board member.

Figure 5. Superintendent population sample funnel. Adapted from Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts, by California Department of Education, 2019 (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp).

Demographic Data

This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study surveyed and interviewed five exemplary unified school district superintendents from the target population who met an established set of criteria. The five superintendents who participated in the study ranged in age from 51 to 60 years old and consisted of two females and three males. The superintendents had between 4 years and 20 years of experience as a superintendent, including between 3 years and 7 years in their current district. The enrollment of the school districts ranged in size from 9,000 students to 50,000 students. Table 2 (repeated here for ease of reference) represents the demographics of the superintendents who participated in the study.

Table 2

Demographics of Superintendents in Study

Superintendent	Gender	Age	Total years as superintendent	Years in current district	District enrollment
Superintendent A	M	51-60	7	7	14,000
Superintendent B	M	51-60	6	6	50,000
Superintendent C	F	51-60	4	4	16,000
Superintendent D	M	51-60	20	6	9,000
Superintendent E	F	51-60	12	3	20,000

Major Findings

The major findings from this study were aligned to the themes that were identified through the data collection and coding process, along with the supporting research. The major themes included relationships, communication, governance, political acuity, and common vision. In addition, there was a major finding in the area of leadership and adapting one's political style to work with the different political styles of board members.

Finding 1: Relationships and Trust

Building relationships with board members helps to develop trust. All of the exemplary unified school district superintendents interviewed emphasized the importance of using strategies related to building relationships and developing trust with the board. Strategies aligned with building and developing relationships appeared the most frequently when discussing effective strategies used with all political styles, with 28% of the coded responses. Relationship strategies also appeared the most frequently as effective strategies to use with balancers, developers, and supporters. Specific examples of relationships strategies included "build strong relationships," "get to know them personally," "build trust," and "invest time and energy."

Houston and Eadie (2002) emphasized that "board-savvy superintendents devote considerable time and attention to building and maintaining a close, and productive working partnerships with their boards" (p. 73). Building trust is a necessary strategy in order to have positive working relationships with the board and should be a priority of every superintendent (Harris, 2009; Townsend et al., 2007; White et al., 2016). A number of researchers discussed the importance of building trust in order to develop and maintain healthy and positive relationships (Covey, 2006; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2007; White et al., 2016). When trusting relationships are fostered, a superintendent can develop and maintain a positive rapport with the board (Eller & Carlson, 2009; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Additionally, building trust is a critical element of developing effective teams (Harvey & Drolet, 2005).

Finding 2: Communication

Communication strategies are critical across all political styles. Superintendents emphasized not only the frequency of communication but the need to use a variety of communication styles as well. This included learning the preferred communication style of each board member. Communication strategies accounted for 25% of the coded responses. Communication strategies had the highest number of coded strategies for arrangers and planners, while they were the second most frequently coded for balancers, developers, and supporters. Specific communication strategies included "open, honest, direct communication," "communicate and check-in frequently," "provide relevant, timely information/data," "listen . . . then listen some more," "be responsive and follow through," and "learn preferred communication style."

Effective communication is a critical political strategy for a superintendent to possess (Finnan et al., 2015; Harris, 2009). A comprehensive study by Kowalski et al. (2011) indicated that the amount of time superintendents spend communicating with boards has increased significantly. An increase in communication has a positive impact on a superintendent's relationship with school board members (Finnan et al., 2015). Using communication effectively goes beyond information shared verbally. The superintendent needs to continually make sure the board feels informed (Donlan & Whittaker, 2019; Foersch, 2012). This information needs to be shared equally with all board members regardless of whether or not the superintendent has a positive relationship with an individual board member (Eller & Carlson, 2009; Vaughn, 2010). It can be a sign of an unhealthy governance team when board members and the superintendent frequently surprise each other. Any information shared must be honest and accurate in

order to not compromise the integrity or credibility of the information and the relationship. When information is not shared equally or is not accurate, distrust may surface between the superintendent and the board (Caruso, 2004; Townsend et al., 2007; Vaughn, 2010).

Finding 3: Governance, Training, and Clarifying Roles

Exemplary superintendents use specific strategies to enhance the governance team, which includes training, team building, and clarifying roles. Governance strategies were the most frequently used strategies with challengers and strategists. They were also frequently used with other political styles as well. Across all political styles, governance strategies were the third most coded theme with approximately 20% of the total codes. Some of the most prevalent strategies noted within the governance theme included "develop board capacity and governance team," "provide leadership and guidance," "clarify roles and governance process," "CSBA conference and training," and "governance handbook/norms/beliefs." Of particular note was the need for superintendents to provide leadership and guidance to the board.

Board member training is essential for creating conditions that meet the needs of all board members. Effective training can assist board members in understanding how to work with each other and the superintendent effectively and provide clarity of roles (Brierton et al., 2016; Caruso, 2004; Foersch, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011). The training can also educate board members regarding how to work effectively with people from different views and backgrounds. The training can improve the board member's understanding of his or her role as a board member and how to work well as a governance team (Brierton et al., 2016; Donlan & Whittaker, 2019; Harris, 2009).

Governance training can also facilitate board members holding high standards for themselves and others (Townsend et al., 2005). A competent governance team can institutionalize and model a culture of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors to work together effectively with all members (Kowalski et al., 2011). This also circles back to the importance of collaboratively developing a shared vision, purpose, and goals (Brierton et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2005). In addition, governance training assists the superintendent in identifying certain behaviors in board members and gives him or her the skills and knowledge to respond appropriately (Callan & Levinson, 2011).

Finding 4: Political Acuity and Adapting Political Style

Exemplary superintendents use political acuity and astuteness to adapt their own political style based on the circumstance and political style of their board members. Superintendents emphasized the need to adapt their own political style based upon the style of their board members, both individually and collectively. They also acknowledged that this is something they developed over time and wished they had more of an understanding of how to work with different political styles when they first became a superintendent. Political acuity strategies were the most frequently coded strategies to use with strategists, along with governance strategies. They were the second most used strategies for arrangers and challengers. Additionally, political acuity strategies were discussed as important strategies across all political styles, accounting for approximately 20% of all coded strategies. Strategies identified within the political acuity theme included "adapt style to meet the board's style," "understand their political reality," "identify their interests," "lay the groundwork for future decisions," and "give options when possible."

Superintendents need to be politically aware and astute to understand the politics and political styles of board members (Caruso, 2004; Kowalski, 2013; White et al., 2016). This does not mean superintendents get involved in the politics of the board; rather, they understand how to navigate the politics. This includes understanding the lens, political context, and position of the board, especially when dealing with controversial or difficult issues (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016). Superintendents also need to have an understanding and be politically aware of the impact that their recommendations will have on board members (Darfler-Sweeney, 2018; Vaughn, 2010). Sometimes, one of the most valuable political strategies a superintendent can use is to step back and scan the political landscape (Harvey et al., 2013; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Heifetz and Linsky (2002) described this strategy as "getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony" to step back in the midst of action and ask yourself, "What is really going on here?" (p. 51). "Staying alive" is crucial to leadership. Heifetz and Linsky believed, "When you take personal attacks personally, you unwittingly conspire in one of the common ways you can be taken out of action" (p. 51).

Finding 5: Focus on Common Vision

Focusing on a common vision is an important element in guiding the actions of the board. This was a strategy that was found to be important across all political styles. Even though it was not the highest coded strategy with any of the political styles studied, it was emphasized by the exemplary superintendents as being critical. Across all political styles, common vision strategies accounted for approximately 8% of the coded strategies.

The most frequently coded strategies were "focus on common mission/vision/goals," "identify shared priorities," and "align individual interests with district goals."

Establishing a common vision and goals can drive personal behaviors that affect the entire team (Harris, 2009; Muhammed, 2012; Townsend et al., 2005). Board members become motivated to support the success of the goals when they feel they are part of the process of developing shared goals, which are aligned with the vision and purpose (Brierton et al., 2016; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Additionally, this practice aligns board member actions with the goals and values of the district. If a board member attempts to micromanage, get involved with the daily operations of the district, or push his or her own personal agenda, bringing the focus back to the vision and goals of the district can be an effective strategy. Furthermore, it grounds the board when the district is dealing with challenging political issues (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Caruso, 2004; Harvey et al., 2013). Having a common vision and goals that were collaboratively developed also gives the board a shared moral imperative and a unity of purpose (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Finding 6: Use a Variety of Strategies

Using a variety of strategies is important when working with the board. It is a matter of using the right strategy, or strategies, given the identified political style of the board member, the issue being addressed, and a variety of other factors that may or may not be within the control of the superintendent. Superintendents must take a proactive role in displaying the leadership to guide the board, which includes being able to use the right strategy at the right time.

The increasing complexity and political aspects of the job require superintendents to become more politically astute and aware, especially when working with the board (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Caruso, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). Superintendents have to be able to navigate the politics, especially when it comes to working with board members, both individually and collectively (Björk & Keedy, 2001). In addition, Caruso (2004) discussed the importance of being a board-savvy superintendent, which includes the need for superintendents to become better equipped for the politics of the superintendency. This is especially true when it comes to understanding the different agendas and political styles of board members (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016).

Unexpected Findings

There were three unexpected findings from this research. The first was there were significantly more board members identified with assertive political styles than any other style. The second was that most superintendents identified themselves as strategists. The third was the more assertive the political style of the board member, the more the strategies were focused on governance and political acuity, and not on relationships.

Fifteen of the 29 board members (53%) studied had assertive political styles: arranger, challenger, and strategist. Ten of the 29 board members (35%) studied were identified as arrangers. Of the board members, 41% were identified with moderately engaged political styles: planner, balancer, and developer. While only two board members (7%) were identified as supporters, which is a passive political style along with analyst and adaptor. If a board has a higher proportion of assertive political styles, it can be argued that the superintendent needs to be more actively engaged with managing the

board by using the political strategies associated with governance and political acuity that are outlined in this study.

The second unexpected finding was that four of the five superintendents identified themselves with the political style of a strategist. The fifth superintendent identified as a developer. This was not so much of an unexpected finding as much as it was an affirmation of the political style of most superintendents. Superintendents have to be actively engaged and focused on organizational interests in order to navigate the politics of their position. They also need to be strategic thinkers who can think and plan multidimensionally.

The final unexpected finding was that relationship strategies were not the highest coded strategies for arrangers and challengers, which are assertive political styles. Although relationship strategies were identified as most effective for all political styles and the board as a whole, governance and political acuity strategies were identified as most effective with arrangers and challengers, although this does not diminish the fact that all the superintendents emphasized the importance of building relationships and trust with all board members.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Building Relationships and Trust With Board Members

Based on the findings of this study and supported by research, it is concluded that superintendents who get to know board members personally, invest time and energy with them, and build trust will be more successful in developing strong relationships with the board. Strong relationships will lead to a more effective governance team. Strategies that build relationships were emphasized by all superintendents as effective strategies to

use with board members. It was also the highest coded theme of all of the themes.

Superintendent 5 stated,

> It's that building relationship piece that really I think resonated with them because
> it's not only the relationship that you have with your board, but it's also how you
> navigate those relationships on a day-to-day basis with the people that you
> interact with and how you become part of a community.

When trusting relationships are fostered, a superintendent can develop and maintain a

positive rapport with the board (Eller & Carlson, 2009; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Conclusion 2: Effective Communication

It is concluded that superintendents who fail to communicate effectively with

their board members will struggle to develop relationships and effectively lead the

district. All superintendents discussed the need to have open, honest, direct

communication with the board and to communicate and check in frequently.

Additionally, they emphasized the importance of listening and learning from

conversations with the board. Finally, learning the preferred communication style of

each board member will help the superintendent to interact and engage with the board

more effectively. Effective communication is a critical political strategy for a

superintendent to possess (Finnan et al., 2015; Harris, 2009).

Conclusion 3: Governance Team, Training, and Team Building

It is concluded that superintendents who spend time developing the governance

team, training board members, and clarifying roles will have a stronger governance team

and structure that is better equipped to make decisions and lead the district. It is

imperative the superintendent continually develops the board's capacity, provides

leadership and guidance, clarifies roles and the governance process, and takes the board

to CSBA and other trainings. Additionally, the board should codify how it operates by

developing a governance handbook that includes norms and beliefs. Board member

training is essential for creating conditions that meet the needs of all board members.

Effective training can assist board members in understanding how to work with each

other and the superintendent effectively and provide clarity of roles (Brierton et al., 2016;

Caruso, 2004; Foersch, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Conclusion 4: Political Acuity and Adapting Political Style

It is concluded that superintendents who do not develop the political acuity to

identify the political styles of board members, effectively implement strategies, and adapt

their own political style to the political styles of board members will not work effectively

with the board and will have a short tenure in the district. Superintendents must

understand the political reality of their board members, identify their interests, adapt their

style to the style of their board members, and have the political acuity to match effective

strategies to the style of their board members in any given situation. Superintendents

need to be politically aware and astute to understand the politics and political styles of

board members (Caruso, 2004; Kowalski, 2013; White et al., 2016). This does not mean

superintendents get involved in the politics of the board; rather, they understand how to

navigate the politics. This includes understanding the lens, political context, and position

of the board, especially when dealing with controversial or difficult issues (Callan &

Levinson, 2011; Vaughn, 2010; White et al., 2016).

Conclusion 5: Focus on a Common Vision

Based on the findings of this study and a review of literature, it is concluded that superintendents who work with the board to focus on a common vision, mission, and purpose will have greater success with moving the district in a positive direction with coherency. All of the exemplary superintendents discussed the importance of continually focusing the board on a common mission and vision. This included identifying shared goals and priorities, aligning individual interests with district goals, and showing board members the positive outcomes. Focusing on a common vision is especially important when working with board members who have an assertive political style and are focused on their own self-interests. Establishing a common vision and goals can drive personal behaviors that affect the entire team (Harris, 2009; Muhammed, 2012; Townsend et al., 2005). Board members become motivated to support the success of the goals when they feel they are part of the process of developing shared goals, which are aligned with the vision and purpose (Brierton et al., 2016; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Conclusion 6: Use a Variety of Strategies

It is concluded that superintendents who use a variety of strategies to work with the different political styles will have a stronger working relationship with board members and will be better equipped to navigate politics and lead the district. Although building relationships was identified as the most important strategy to work with the board, relationship strategies alone will not make for a successful superintendency. It is imperative that superintendents are able to effectively utilize a variety of strategies to navigate the politics of the district and political styles of board members. The increasing complexity and political aspects of the job require superintendents to become more

politically astute and aware, especially when working with the board (Björk & Keedy,

2001; Caruso, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2011; Muhammed, 2012). Caruso (2004) discussed

the importance of being a board-savvy superintendent, which includes the need for

superintendents to become better equipped for the politics of the superintendency. This is

especially true when it comes to understanding the different agendas and political styles

of board members (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Muhammed, 2012; White et al., 2016).

Conclusion 7: Provide the Board and District With Leadership

Based on the findings of this study as supported by literature, it is concluded that

student achievement and outcomes will be negatively impacted when a superintendent

does not provide the board and the district with effective leadership. Effective leadership

includes engaging and guiding the board in a healthy and productive way.

In order to display effective leadership, superintendents are expected to exhibit

knowledge and skills aligned with the roles that characterize a superintendent.

Superintendents need to be effective communicators. Across all of their roles, they need

to serve as motivators, collaborators, and experts in organizational change theory and

development, leadership theory, technology, diversity, equity, and relationships. They

also need to be the ethical and moral compass of the district (Glass et al., 2000; Björk,

Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; Kowalski & Björk, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011).

A number of researchers have discussed the importance and impact of the

superintendent and effective leadership on the success of school districts. Marzano and

Waters (2009) determined that there is a correlation between district-level leadership and

student achievement. Fullan (2005a) has many recommendations that overlap or support

the work of Marzano and Waters (2009) when discussing effective superintendent

leadership. Superintendents need to lead with a "compelling, driving conceptualization" in which they have a clear understanding of where the district needs to go and how to get there (Fullan, 2005a, p. 12). Fullan (2005a) also discussed effective leaders as having a moral purpose, understanding the change process, developing relationships, creating culture, fostering knowledge and learning, building capacity, and creating coherence.

Implications for Action

The ability of superintendents to identify the political styles of board members and then utilize strategies to work with board members individually and collectively is critical. Superintendents who are not able to navigate the political styles of board members will struggle to be effective and will likely have a short tenure. The following discusses implications for action to build the capacity and ability of superintendents to navigate the politics and work more effectively with their board.

Implication 1: Political Styles Training in Superintendent Academies

The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and The School Superintendents Association (AASA) have new and aspiring superintendent academies. These academies have modules that include communication and board relationships; however, they do not include modules focused on working with the political styles of board members. It is critical that new and aspiring superintendents are equipped with the ability to identify the political styles of board members and use effective strategies to work with them as they enter the role of a superintendent. Learning these political strategies as superintendents will give them a greater opportunity to successfully navigate the politics of working with the board. Developing and including the political styles modules in the academies will accomplish this purpose.

Implication 2: Political Styles Conference Strands

ACSA, AASA, and the National Association of School Superintendents (NASS) all have conferences focused on the professional development of school district superintendents. A conference strand should be added to the conferences that uses the political styles framework and research as the foundation for sessions. The sessions should include an overview of the political styles and the political styles framework as well as the effective strategies to work with the different political styles as identified through this research study. Additionally, sessions should include specific political strategies to work with all political styles and the board as a whole. In order to train superintendents at a deeper level, the themes identified in this study should be used to explore the strategies at a deeper level. These themes include building relationships and trust, communication, developing an effective governance team, political acuity, and focus on a common vision.

Implication 3: Coaching for New Superintendents

Every new superintendent should be assigned an exemplary superintendent as a coach for their first 2 years. The coaches should be identified through established criteria as well as trained on effective coaching methods and the political styles framework. Additionally, a specific curriculum should be developed to provide relevant and timely support to new superintendents and superintendents in crisis. The coaching should include helping the superintendents to manage their efforts to invest the necessary amount of time and energy into working effectively with the board. This will ensure that superintendents receive the ongoing support and development they need as new superintendents, especially when learning how to work with the board effectively.

Implication 4: CSBA Training and Conference

The California School Boards Association (CSBA) serves as a valuable resource for school boards and superintendents. In particular, the CSBA Masters in Governance program and the annual conference provide important professional development opportunities. The Masters in Governance program should add a module that focuses on the political styles framework and the findings of this research. The same should be incorporated into sessions at the annual conference. Making the political styles framework and effective political strategies an integral part of the professional learning of school board members will build the capacity and effectiveness of governance teams as board members learn to work together collaboratively and in the best interest of the district.

Implication 5: Governance Handbook

Every school district should develop and adopt a governance handbook. The governance handbook should include a set of protocols that guide how the board and superintendent operate as a governance team. Topics covered in the governance handbook should include effective governance, professional governance standards, district mission and vision statements, governance norms and beliefs, governance roles and responsibilities, governance team culture, structures and processes to support effective governance, and any other relevant governance team agreements. Governance handbooks serve as an important foundational document that grounds the board in a common agreement. Governance handbooks also assist the superintendent as a point of reference when working with the various political styles of board members.

Implication 6: Searching for New Superintendents

As discussed in this study, the job of the superintendent is becoming more complex and political. At the same time, the length of tenure of superintendents is decreasing. In searching for new superintendents, search firms should identify the political style of the superintendent candidate as well as the political styles of board members. Knowing this in advance of employment may ensure a better match between the board and the superintendent. It will also assist the superintendent with employing effective strategies to work with the political styles of the board members upon being hired by a new district, increasing the likelihood of success. Additionally, search firms should work with superintendent candidates to help them understand the substantial amount of time and energy they need to regularly invest in their board.

Implication 7: Political Acuity Tool and Resource for Superintendents

Building upon the foundational work of *Political Savvy* (DeLuca, 1999) and *The Politically Intelligent Leader* (White et al., 2016), a political acuity tool and resource guide should be developed for superintendents based upon the findings of this study. A resource similar in style to *Becoming a Resonant Leader* (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008) could be developed to guide superintendents through identifying and reflecting upon their own political style and the political styles of their board members. This could include an inventory or assessment tool used to assist with the identification process. Superintendents would then be guided through the process of identifying, using, and reflecting upon effective strategies. This resource could also be used as the guiding curriculum for superintendent training modules and coaching programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and research of the study, there are several recommendations for further research. The role of the superintendent will continue to become increasingly complex and challenging. This is especially true when navigating the politics and political styles within and outside of the organization. These recommendations are intended to expand upon and take a deeper look at issues that surfaced during this study.

Recommendation 1: Meta-Analysis of the Political Styles Dissertations

It is recommended that a meta-analysis study be conducted using the 10 dissertations from the political styles thematic. There were 10 researchers who conducted studies based upon the political styles framework. Each researcher focused on a different target population. Some of the target populations included superintendents of unified school districts, rural school districts, suburban school districts, and high school districts. Other studies focused on Latina women who serve as superintendents, or specific geographic locations such as Northern California or Southern California. A future research study could analyze the data and findings across all of the studies to draw new conclusions and add to the research of effective strategies superintendents use to work with the political styles of board members.

Recommendation 2: Replicate Study From the Perspective of Board Members

It is recommended that a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study be conducted in which board members are interviewed to identify strategies that they use with other board members to create an effective governance team. One observation that came out of this study was that board members sometimes struggle to work effectively

with other board members. This may lead to or be a sign of an unhealthy governance team and can have a negative impact on the district. The data and findings from the perspective of board members could be used by CSBA and other organizations to help train and work with school district governance teams.

Recommendation 3: Study Identified Strategy Themes at a Deeper Level

It is recommended that a phenomenological qualitative study be conducted to look at one or more of the strategy themes at a deeper level. Building relationships, effective communication, governance, political acuity, and focus on a common vision were findings of this study. A future researcher could take any one of these findings and conduct a study at a deeper level with a focused approach. This would provide additional data and add to the research on this subject.

Recommendation 4: Strategies Used by Women in Superintendent Positions

It is recommended that a comparative study be conducted to determine whether or not there are different strategies that women and men use when working with different political styles. A part of this study could include an analysis of the percentage of men and women identified for each political style. This study would add to the body of research and could be used for different professional development opportunities with organizations such as ACSA.

Recommendation 5: Superintendent Political Style, Effectiveness, Longevity

It is recommended that a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study be conducted to identify and analyze the political styles of superintendents to determine if there is a difference in the strategies used by each of the identified political styles. Part of this study could also explore the effectiveness of the superintendent in working with the

board. Additionally, the study could seek to determine any correlation between their

identified political style, relationship with the board, and longevity as the superintendent.

Recommendation 6: Effective School Board Professional Development

It is recommended that a qualitative phenomenological study be conducted to

identify how superintendents effectively provide for the professional development of

school board members and the governance team. One of the findings of the political

styles study was the importance of building the capacity of board members and

developing a healthy governance team. There were examples given of CSBA training

opportunities as well specific strategies superintendents use to guide and develop board

members. A study specifically focused on this topic could examine school board

professional development at a deeper level and influence school board training programs.

Recommendation 7: Effective Strategies City Managers Use

It is recommended that this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study be

replicated to research effective strategies city managers use to work with the different

political styles of city council members. The relationship between city managers and city

council members is similar to the relationship between superintendents and school board

members. A research study focused on city managers would add to the body of research

and provide additional professional development opportunities for them. This study

could also be replicated for county government executive directors and others in similar

public agency positions.

Recommendation 8: Effective Strategies Nonprofit Directors Use

Finally, it is recommended that further research include a sequential explanatory

mixed-methods study to identify effective strategies nonprofit executive directors use to

work with the board of their nonprofit organization. Politics and different political styles exist at every level of every organization. Nonprofit organizations are not exempt from this reality. A new body of research could open up another opportunity in the nonprofit sector to have a better understanding of political styles and effective strategies to work with the different political styles. This may prove a valuable tool with helping nonprofit directors to develop stronger relationships and work more effectively with their board members, much like the research behind superintendents and school boards.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

According to Aristotle (350 B.C.E.), "Human beings are by nature political animals" (p. 5). We live in a society that feels as if it is becoming more politically charged and divisive at the local and national level every day. As politics impacts all aspects of life, it also pervades the educational system, including the relationship between the superintendent and the school board. As Griffin (2005) pointed out, "The rules of the game have changed" (p. 54). The role, complexities, and pressures of being a superintendent have increased. With this change, expectations and relationships between boards and superintendents are increasingly strained, leading to more conflicted and mistrusting relationships. This can lead to a high turnover in superintendents, resulting in potential instability in the organization that affects the quality of education and programs within a district. It is imperative that superintendents and school board members work together effectively as a high-functioning governance team to reverse these trends.

As a superintendent of 7 years, I was excited, honored, and humbled to conduct this important study. As the research is compelling, so too are the stories of the superintendents who work selflessly every day to lead their school districts. The

exemplary superintendents I interviewed openly shared the tribulations and successes of navigating the politics of the superintendency and working with the school board. They gave valuable insight into strategies they use every day to effectively work with the different political styles of school board members.

As this study validated, working with the school board is first and foremost about building relationships and trust as well as communicating effectively. These are important life skills that are paramount to any healthy relationship and team. The challenge lies with navigating the politics within a politically charged, complex system and leading the district in a positive direction toward accomplishing its vision and mission.

The strategies identified and research conducted through this study will be beneficial to aspiring, new, and veteran superintendents for years to come. My hope is that the findings will be incorporated into future professional development opportunities for superintendents and school boards. As politics becomes more confrontational and divisive at the national level, it is imperative that school boards and superintendents work together collaboratively and purposefully at the local level to provide a world class education for our students, families, and communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Brandman University Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Bradley Tooker,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the
Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for
you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your
records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB
immediately at BUIRB@brandman.edu. If you need to modify your BUIRB application for
any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with
your research. The Modification form can be found at the following
link: https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,
Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
BUIRB Chair
ddevore@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu

APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate

Letter of Invitation

Study: Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents Use to Work with the Political Styles of School Board Members

August ____, 2019

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a mixed methods research study about Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents Use to Work with the Political Styles of School Board Members. The main investigator of this study is Bradley Tooker, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study, because you are a superintendent within a unified school district, who met the criteria for this study because of your known expertise as a superintendent who works effectively with school board members.

Five unified school district superintendents from California will participate in this study through an electronic survey and an interview. This is part of a larger study being conducted by a team of researchers studying 50 exemplary superintendents in California. Participation in the survey should take 15-20 minutes. Participation in the interview should require about one hour of your time. Both are entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this mixed methods study is to understand the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it is the purpose of this study to identify the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, you will be sent an email link to the electronic Survey Monkey survey. Participants will complete the survey and submit their responses. A face-to-face interview will be scheduled that will last approximately one hour. For the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow you to share your experiences as a unified school district regarding strategies you use to work with the different political styles of board members. The interview session will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient for you to arrange time for the interview questions, so for that purpose online surveys will also be used in order to facilitate responses.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, but your feedback could help identify the strategies superintendents use to work effectively with the different political styles of board members. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me by email at btooker@mail.brandman.edu. You can also contact Dr. Keith Larick by email at larick@brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Bradley Tooker

Bradley Tooker
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University

APPENDIX C

Brandman University Research Participants Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB   Adopted   September 2018

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents Use to Work with the Political Styles of School Board Members

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Bradley Tooker, Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to understand the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by unified school district superintendents. In addition, it is the purpose of this study to identify the political strategies unified school district superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

By participating in this research study, I agree to participate in an electronic survey using Survey Monkey, which will take 15–20 minutes. In addition, I agree to participate in a semi-structured, audio-recorded interview, which will take place in person or by phone, and will last about one hour. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences as a superintendent, who has experience working with the different political styles of school board members. Completion of the electronic survey and interview will take place in August through November 2019.

I understand that:

1. The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at my office or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience. Electronic surveys will also be utilized that will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

2. I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to determine effective strategies that superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants at the participant's request.

3. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Bradley Tooker, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mr. Tooker may be contacted by phone at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or by e-mail at btooker@mail.brandman.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Keith Larick at larick@brandman.edu.

4. The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of three years by the investigator in a secure location and then destroyed.

5. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

6. I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618 Telephone (949) 341-9937. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party   **Date**

_____   _____
Signature of Witness (if appropriate)   **Date**

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX E

Political Styles Matrix Survey

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Thank you for sharing your time, experience and expertise in creating a better understanding of the political strategies that superintendents use in working with school board members.

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study is to understand the political styles of superintendents and school board members as perceived by superintendents. In addition, it is the purpose to identify and describe the political strategies superintendents use to work with the different political styles of board members.

You have been selected for participation because of your expertise in working with your governance team. The results of this study will assist superintendents to manage the decision-making process with school board members. The political framework used in this study was taken from the book: The Politically Intelligent Leader; White, Harvey & Fox, 2016.

 Your participation is greatly appreciated.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Click on the agree button that you have received and read the informed consent form and Participants Bill of Rights document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the disagree button.

The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

The survey will not open for responses unless you select agree to participate.

◯ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in this study. You have been provided a code that must be entered in the box below. This code insures the security and privacy of the information that you provide.

◯ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this survey.

</div>

Demographic Information

* Please choose the code provided to you by the researcher from the dropdown list below.

Tell us a little about yourself.

* Total years of experience as a superintendent (in any district)

* Years of experience as superintendent in this district

* Years of experience in this district

* Gender

◯ Female

◯ Male

◯ Non-binary

* Your current age

* Level of your terminal degree

◯ M.A./M.S.

◯ Ed.D.

◯ Ph.D.

Tell us about governance training you have participated in.

Indicate which governance training you have participated in.

- [ ] CSBA governance training

- [ ] Governance training using an external consultant

- [ ] Other governance training

- [ ] None

Directions: For purposes of identification and confidentiality assign each of your board members a number 1-7. Please read the definitions carefully prior to completing the survey. You may use the definitions sent to you as part of your information packet as a reference while completing the survey.

DEFINITIONS

The following section defines terms as they are used in this study. These terms were collaboratively developed by a team of peer researchers studying political styles and strategies of superintendents. The definitions are organized around the nine political styles matrix based on initiative and interest. The styles are listed as self-interest, blended interests and organizational interest for each initiative: passive, engaged and assertive. For purposes of this study political style is defined as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people.

Passive Political Styles

- **Analyst.** Analysts are passive and oriented toward self-interest over organizational interest. They are primarily focused on tasks over relationships and will seek evidence, proof, and detailed analysis before risking a change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Boulgarides & Cohen, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Rowe & Boulgarides, 1992; White et al., 2016).

- **Adaptor**. Adaptors are pragmatists who generally support organizational changes and team decisions, provided they do not perceive personal risk. An adaptor is one who presents a passive, cooperative political style balanced between self-interest and organizational interests (Bobic, Davis, & Cunningham, 1999; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Kirton, 1976; White et al., 2016).

- **Supporter.** Supporters are characterized as risk-averse, selfless, and passive devotees, backers, or advocates of the organization's visions and goals. Supporters seek harmony and hesitate to take sides, though make decisions and provide resources that align with the organization's goals (CSBA, 2016; DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016).

Moderately Engaged Political Styles

- **Planner.** Planners demonstrate modest initiative in political ventures and are typically focused on self-interests rather than organizational interests. Planners gather and analyze data for potential personal risks, putting constraints on decision making. (Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; White et al., 2016).
- **Balancer.** Balancers blend self and organizational interests. Focused on the prevention of disequilibrium, balancers use their knowledge of the organization's culture to diplomatically shift their support, when needed to maintain stability, harmony, and equanimity.   (Sheehan, 1989; White et al., 2016).
- **Developer.** Developers work behind the scenes to coach or challenge others to build skills that can positively influence advance organizational interests to which they are fully committed. Developers exhibit a high level of self-awareness of their own knowledge and skill (DeLuca, 1999; Goleman, 2000; Rath, 2007; White et al., 2016).

Assertive Political Styles

- **Challenger.** Challengers are characterized by self-interest, assertive behavior and confidence in their own vision, ideas, and goals, which inspires a strong desire to lead and make decisions quickly. Challengers see themselves as movers and shakers, efficient, politically strategic, aggressive, and willing to confront the views of others in an attempt to influence outcomes (DeLuca, 1999; Jasper, 1999; Meyer, Jenness, & Ingram, 2005; Polletta, 2004; White, et al., 2016).
- **Arranger.** Arrangers use a political style in which they are assertive in pursuing their goals that are a blend of both organizational priorities and their own self-interests.   They build a power base by connecting with many people. Arrangers will take risks to advance their goals and are strategic in combining resources (DeLuca, 1999; Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014; White et al., 2016).
- **Strategist.** Strategists are visionary, open to new ideas, and collaborative. They empower others and model the organization's values. Supporting organizational interests over self-interests, they strategically use a variety of approaches to propose new initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders, elicit commitment and make purposeful decisions (DeLuca, 1999; Dergel, 2014; White, et al., 2016).

Instructions: Decide what style best matches your preferred political style and that of each board member . Use the definitions as a reference point for making your decision about each board member's placement in the Styles Matrix. All of your responses are coded and confidential.

Style Matrix

* Indicate the style that best matches your preferred political style and that of each board member. If you work with five board members, leave numbers 6 and 7 blank. Please keep a separate record of which board member corresponds to each number below for use during the interview.

	Challenger	Arranger	Strategist	Planner	Balancer	Developer	Analyst	Adapter	Supporter
Superintendent (self)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Board member 7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The purpose of this pilot survey is to identify any concerns with the instrument. If there was anything in this survey you found to be confusing, misleading or unclear, please describe that below.

Thank you for your participation. I look forward to talking with you about the strategies you use to work with board members of different political styles.

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APPENDIX F

Audio Release

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Strategies Exemplary Unified School District Superintendents
Use to Work with the Political Styles of School Board Members

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

I authorize Bradley Tooker, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give
Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or
authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information
obtained during the interview, without any linkage to my identity, may be published in a
journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed
above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or correlated to
the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above
release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or
organization utilizing this material.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party   **Date**

APPENDIX G

Political Styles Interview Protocol

My name is Bradley Tooker. I am currently serving in my seventh year as a school district superintendent and have been in public education for 27 years. I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am a part of a team conducting research to understand the political styles of superintendents and identify strategies exemplary superintendents use to work with different political styles of board members. The nine political styles used in this study are depicted by White, Fox, and Harvey's (2016) framework of politically intelligent leadership, which you have already used in a survey to identify the political styles of your board members.

Political styles, as used in this research, are composed of a set of values, preferences, and priorities that are reflected in leader behaviors and attitudes in working with individual board members. Political strategies are actions or methods used to influence the behavior of others.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview on political strategies and participating in our electronic survey prior to this interview. This interview is intended to explore further information which you provided in the electronic survey. For your reference, I am providing you with the matrix of political styles showing where you placed yourself and your board members and a description of the different political styles for your reference that you may use at any point during the interview.

Our team is conducting approximately 50 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you share, along with the others, will hopefully provide a clear picture of the thoughts and strategies exemplary superintendents use to work with different political styles of board members in their organizations and will add to the body of research currently available.

The questions I will be asking are the same for everyone participating in the study. The reason for this is to try to guarantee, as much as possible, that all interviews with participating superintendents will be conducted in a consistent manner.

Informed Consent

I want to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). For ease of our discussion and accuracy, I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent sent to you via email. I will have the recording transcribed to a Word document and will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas. The digital recording will be erased following review and approval of the transcription.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document? If so, would you be so kind as to sign the hard copy of the IRB requirements for me to collect?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview, you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the conversation altogether.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

Important Note for the Interviewer: To ensure validity and reliability, please ask each question for every Board Member and the Superintendent.

Questions

To ensure validity and reliability in our data collection, I will repeat some questions for each of the styles you have identified on your Board.

Strategies and Styles

1. Board Member (#). has a style identified as _____. Can you share a story about a time when this Board Member demonstrated some of the characteristics of this style?

    ○ ALTERNATE: Board Members #__ and #__ have been identified as _____. Can you share a story about a time when Board Member #__ demonstrated some of the characteristics of this style and then share a story for Board Member #__?

2. What strategies did you use to work with this style?

Conflict and Strategies

3. On occasions that posed a potential conflict with this Board Member, either with you or other Board Members, what strategies did you use *before, during* or *after the conflict?*

Effectiveness

4. What strategies did you use that were not effective with this Board Member?

Effective Political Strategies

5. Having worked with this Board Member through different governance issues, what would you say is the most effective strategy you have used to reach a successful outcome?

After you have asked questions about each board member:

1. You identified your political style as _____. What have you learned about your own political style in working with your Board?
2. What are the strategies that have worked extremely well with all the Board Member styles?
3. What are the strategies that are only effective with certain Board Member styles?
4. Are there any other ideas you have about strategies you have used with your Board that you would like to share?

Prompts can be used at any point that you feel that the answer was not sufficient in detail. You may not ask any of them but they are there to be used if needed.

1. "What did you mean by …"
2. "Do you have more to add?"
3. "Would you expand upon that a bit?"
4. "Why do think that was the case?"
5. "Could you please tell me more about …"
6. "Can you give me an example of …"
7. "How did you feel about that?"
8. "Why do you think that strategy was so effective?"

Political Styles (White et al., 2016)

Nine Political Styles

Goal / Initiative	Self-Interests	Blended Interests	Organizational Interests
Assertive	Challenger	Arranger	Strategist
Engaged	Planner	Balancer	Developer
Passive	Analyst	Adaptor	Supporter

White et al. (2016) Politically Intelligent Leader Framework

2 Continuums: Goals + Initiative

Self-Interest	Blended-Interests	Organizational

Goal Allegiance Continuum

Passive	Engaged	Assertive

Initiative Continuum

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Political Style Definitions
The following section defines terms as they are used in this study. These terms were collaboratively developed by a team of peer researchers studying political styles and strategies of superintendents, as noted in the Preface. The definitions are organized around the nine political styles matrix based on initiative and interest. The styles are listed as self-interest, blended interests and organizational interest for each level of initiative: passive, engaged and assertive.

Passive Political Styles
Analyst. Analysts are passive and oriented toward self-interest over organizational interest. They are primarily focused on tasks over relationships and will seek evidence, proof, and detailed analysis before risking a change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Boulgarides & Cohen, 2001; DeLuca, 1999; Rowe & Boulgarides, 1992; White et al., 2016).

Adaptor. Adaptors are pragmatists who generally support organizational changes and team decisions, provided they do not perceive personal risk. An adaptor is one who presents a passive, cooperative political style balanced between self-interest and organizational interests. (Bobic, Davis, & Cunningham, 1999; Church & Waclawski, 1998; Kirton, 1976; White et al., 2016).

Supporter. Supporters are characterized as risk-averse, selfless, and passive devotees, backers, or advocates of the organization's visions and goals. Supporters seek harmony and hesitate to take sides, though make decisions and provide resources that align with the organization's goals (CSBA, 2016; DeLuca, 1999; White et al., 2016).

Moderately Engaged Political Styles
Planner. Planners demonstrate modest initiative in political ventures and are typically focused on self-interests rather than organizational interests. Planners gather and analyze data for potential personal risks, putting constraints on decision making. (Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; White et al., 2016).

Balancer. Balancers blend self and organizational interests. Focused on the prevention of disequilibrium, balancers use their knowledge of the organization's culture to diplomatically shift their support, when needed to maintain stability, harmony, and equanimity. (Sheehan, 1989; White et al., 2016).

Developer. Developers work behind the scenes to coach or challenge others to build skills that can positively advance organizational interests to which they are fully committed. Developers exhibit a high level of self-awareness of their own knowledge and skill (DeLuca, 1999; Goleman, 2000; Rath, 2007; White et al., 2016).

Assertive Political Styles
Challenger. Challengers are characterized by self-interest, assertive behavior and confidence in their own vision, ideas, and goals, which inspires a strong desire to lead and make decisions quickly. Challengers see themselves as movers and shakers, efficient, politically strategic, aggressive, and willing to confront the views of others in an

attempt to influence outcomes (DeLuca, 1999; Jasper, 1999; Meyer, Jenness, & Ingram, 2005; Polletta, 2004; White, et al., 2016).

Arranger. Arrangers use a political style in which they are assertive in pursuing their goals that are a blend of both organizational priorities and their own self-interests. They build a power base by connecting with many people. Arrangers will take risks to advance their goals and are strategic in combining resources (DeLuca, 1999; Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014; White et al., 2016).

Strategist. Strategists are visionary, open to new ideas, and collaborative. They empower others and model the organization's values. Supporting organizational interests over self-interests, they strategically use a variety of approaches to propose new initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders, elicit commitment and make purposeful decisions (DeLuca, 1999; Dergel, 2014; White, et al., 2016).

Political Styles Matrix Survey Feedback Form

Survey Critique by Participants

As a doctoral student and researcher at Brandman University your assistance is so appreciate in designing this survey instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument.

Below are some questions that I appreciate your answering after completing the survey. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the survey items.

You have been provided with a paper copy of the survey, just to jog your memory if you need it. Thanks so much.

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the survey, from the moment you opened it on the computer until the time you completed it? _____

2. Did the portion up front that asked you to read the consent information and click the agree box before the survey opened concern you at all? _____
   If so, would you briefly state your concern _____
   _____

3. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? _____ If not, what would you recommend that would make it better? _____
   _____

4. Were the directions to, and you understood what to do? _____
   If not, would you briefly state the problem _____
   _____

5. Were the brief descriptions of the rating scale choices prior to your completing the items clear, and did they provide sufficient differences among them for you to make a selection? _____ If not, briefly describe the problem_____
   _____

6. As you progressed through the survey in which you gave a rating of # through #, if there were any items that caused you say something like, *"What does this mean?"* Which item(s) were they? Please use the paper copy and mark those that troubled you?   Or if not, please check here: _____

Thanks so much for your help

APPENDIX I

Field Test Participant Feedback Questions

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation**. Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview… (I'm pretty new at this)?

APPENDIX J

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation.

1. How long did the interview take? _____ Did the time seem to be appropriate?

2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?

3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?

4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?

5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?

6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?

7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX K

National Institutes of Health (NIH) – Protecting Human Research Participants

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Bradley Tooker** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of Completion: 05/15/2018

Certification Number: 2819669

NIH National Institutes of Health
Office of Extramural Research