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New Jersey Superintendents' Perceptions of the PSEL Standards and their Application to the Summative Evaluation Process of School Principals

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ABSTRACT

It is difficult to imagine a focus for research with greater social justification than research about successful educational leadership. Therefore, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, this study explores the "elements" of the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) from the perspective of New Jersey school superintendents to determine what they consider to be most important when formally evaluating New Jersey public school principals. Second, this study will also distinguish what are the essential, compared to important, leadership skills and responsibilities that a building principal must demonstrate as defined by the PSEL standards and determined by Chief School Administrators through the summative evaluation process.

The research design for this study is quantitative, utilizing a survey methodology as the primary data collection tool. The survey was developed using the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) and subject to review by a panel of experts.

This study uses the literature on the original work by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996 and revised in 2008 that developed national standards for school leaders. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) replaced these standards in 2015 (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). The researcher used the framework created by Hallinger to investigate which of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) are perceived to be the most important by New Jersey chief school administrators when they evaluate building principals. Which of the responsibilities, roles, tasks, and skills embedded in the PSEL standards are most important to be effective as a building principal as perceived by New Jersey chief school administrators?

Results from this study revealed that variables were statistically significant in some of the

standards, as well as their elements within the study. The study found considerable variation in how Superintendents rated the Standards. Superintendents rated Standard 1 (Mission, Vision, and Core Values), Standard 2 (Ethics and Professional Norms), and Standard 8 (Engagement of Families and Communities) as clearly more important than others. The locality of superintendents, as well as their prior teaching experienced clearly influences the perceptions of school superintendents' evaluative practices of school principal evaluations.

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Thank you to my Mom and Dad for sacrificing a lot for me when I was young. I realize that your happiness comes from my success. You taught me from an early age that education is the key to success. This degree proves that hard work and focus will always overcome tiredness and doubt. I love you.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my best friend and girl of my dreams, Angela. As the mother of our four children, your continued motivation and encouragement helped me to complete this project. I realized a long time ago when we met that you would make me a better person every day and always keep me focused on my goals. I never imagined the sacrifices and time that you would have to provide so that I could complete this research. You are my rock, and a portion of my degree is yours for keeping me on track when I was ready to give up. I look forward to moving forward professionally so that our family can benefit together from this tremendous accomplishment. I love you more!

DEDICATION

Appreciation is expressed to all the individuals who have contributed in many ways to the development and completion of this dissertation. I want to dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my family, Angela, Joseph, Anthony, Lorenzo, and Giavanna. When I began this journey many years ago, I had hopes that I would one day finish this tremendous task and still be able to be the husband and father to these five individuals who are my world. There is no reservation in my mind that without their unwavering love, support, and patience that I could have completed this process. It was my family who carried the load throughout this process, and I am incalculably grateful for their full support. Thank you for sacrificing our time together so that I could complete this document for our family. I hope that throughout this process, you all realize that staying focused on something important requires a strong family and a willingness to sacrifice time for love. I also hope that your future is improved due to my time staying focused because that will sincerely be the reward for every minute of this process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although teachers, supervisors, and central office administrators all provide forms of leadership, school principals are the foundation for instructional leadership at the school level (Sergiovanni, 1998). School leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, principals strongly shape the conditions for high-quality teaching and are the prime factor in determining whether teachers stay in high-needs schools. High-quality principals, therefore, are vital to the effectiveness of our nation's public schools, especially those serving the children with the fewest advantages in life (The Wallace Foundation, 2018).

The role of the principal in a school over the past twenty years has changed dramatically. This transformation of the principal position was precipitated by school systems that grew more complex and less likely to be managed by one person. The job, with all its new demands—improving student performance, operationalizing bullying legislation, teacher evaluation, improving and maintaining school safety, etc.—is almost untenable (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Today's school principals are asked to create equilibrium within the school while facing heightened accountability measures, lower school budgets, and increased safety concerns.

Logically, principal evaluation systems should measure individuals' abilities to perform effectively (Stronge, 1991). In 1994, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) began to take on this task by defining standards for effective school leadership. After further research into what roles and responsibilities define effective school leaders, the standards

were revised in 2008. The goal of this change was to allow the standards to be used more as a guide to help direct performance-based competency than as a checklist to determine if administrators are engaged in a set of measurable activities (Sanders & Simpson, 2005).

These standards that defined effective educational leadership have again recently evolved into a new set of standards called the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), which were released in October 2015. The PSEL standards and their "elements" provide an overall framework for evaluating and developing school leaders. The PSEL standards were developed to respond to the new context of public education as well as to recent research studying the influence and impact of school principals on teaching and learning (NPBEA, 2015).

This study investigates the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), asking, "Which PSELs are perceived to be the most important by New Jersey chief school administrators when they evaluate building principals?" In other words, which of the responsibilities, roles, tasks, and skills embedded in the PSEL standards are most important to be effective as a building principal as perceived and understood by New Jersey Chief School Administrators?

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

As the research on principal leadership, in general, has developed into a growing body of scholarly literature, the research on principal evaluation systems remains surprisingly thin. This lack of research is alarming since nearly 60% of a school's total effect on student achievement is attributed to effective teacher and principal practices (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Although a set of national standards has been in place for approximately twenty years, the task of principal evaluation is still an emerging enterprise. Clearly, a systematic study of school administrators'

performance assessment is needed (Furtwengler & Furtwengler, 1998; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993). There is limited empirical research that examines the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) and their influence on principal evaluation since the standards have just recently replaced the ISLLC standards in 2015. Principals have increased safety and managerial expectations within their buildings; however, principals' performance is most directly related to increased student performance (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Principals are second to teaching as an influence on the success of students (Leithwood, 2004), yet the focus of what components of the PSEL standards determine if a school principal is considered effective can be viewed inconsistently in the educational leadership community.

Purpose of the Study

It is difficult to imagine a focus for research with greater social justification than research about successful educational leadership. Therefore, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, this study explores "elements" of the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) from the perspective of New Jersey school superintendents to determine what they consider to be most important when formally evaluating New Jersey public school principals. Second, this study will also serve the purpose of distinguishing what are the essential, compared to important, leadership skills and responsibilities that a building principal must demonstrate as defined by the PSEL standards and determined by Chief School Administrators through the summative evaluation process.

Conceptual Framework

The scope of what defines a building principal as being effective can range from one evaluator to another. For decades, building principals have taken on increased responsibilities, and the focus of the position has evolved from managing a school to becoming an instructional leader. Throughout these changes, principal evaluation has not received attention, often because of conflicting standards of performance and inconsistent evaluation instruments. The researcher used the framework on effective principal leadership developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to explore New Jersey chief school administrators' experiences and perceptions of effective instructional leadership through their evaluative practices of building principals. This framework generalizes the actions of school principals and their alignment with effective school leadership. According to Hallinger and Murphy, expectations for school principals are often grounded in theoretical conceptions of leadership that compete with the day to day managerial functions associated with running a school. Logically, personnel evaluation systems should measure individuals' abilities to perform effectively (Stronge, 2006). Unfortunately, according to Stronge (2013), there is little connection between principals' evaluation results and the quality of their work. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptual framework on principal leadership led to the development of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). This scale consisted of three dimensions and ten principal behaviors and practices. Each of these dimensions, behaviors, and practices are embedded in the PSEL standards investigated in this study.

The standards movement clearly has increased accountability for principals. This study uses the literature on the original work done by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996 and revised in 2008 that developed national standards for school

leaders. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) replaced these standards in 2015 (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). The researcher used the framework created by Hallinger to investigate which of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) are perceived to be the most important by New Jersey chief school administrators when they evaluate building principals. Which of the responsibilities, roles, tasks, and skills embedded in the PSEL standards are most important to be effective as a building principal as perceived by New Jersey chief school administrators?

The research design for this study is quantitative, utilizing a survey methodology as the primary data collection tool. The survey was developed using the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) and subject to review by a panel of experts.

The researcher wanted to explore the perceptions that New Jersey Chief School administrators had concerning what are the most essential and important Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) when they evaluated building principals. Subsequently, the following research questions were developed.

Research Questions

1. How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation?

    a. To what extent are NJ school superintendents utilizing the PSEL standards to evaluate their current population of principals?

    b. What components of the PSEL standards do superintendents feel are essential and important?

2. How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the nature of their districts?

   a. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on gender?

   b. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on district demographics?

   c. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on administrative experience?

   d. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on their teaching experiences before becoming a school superintendent?

Significance of the Study

This study is of interest because the literature examining the influence, or lack thereof, of the PSEL standards on principal evaluation is limited. The focus of this study specifically investigated which of the ten PSEL Standards' "elements" New Jersey chief school administrators deem to be essential to a principal's summative evaluation. The survey data from this study will provide current and future principals, as well as principal preparation programs, with up-to-date knowledge about the perceptions chief school administrators have of the PSEL standards as they relate to principal evaluation. This is important to principals because they continue to be faced with systematic change in schools, focusing on school safety, increased student achievement on standardized tests, and countless accountability mandates that could affect their tenure. The perceptions of the chief school administrators will assist principals in narrowing the focus of what their evaluators deem to be essential to be a successful principal. This study is also important to chief school administrators who will gain a knowledge base to

reflect upon how they evaluate principals on the new standards compared to what daily expectations they have for principals.

Furthermore, if principals were provided with data on which of the PSEL "elements" are perceived to be most important, they might reflect on their daily routines, which may assist with improving the school and student achievement within the school.

Limitations of the study

The primary goal of this study was to investigate New Jersey Chief School Administrators' perceptions of the importance of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) to gain a deeper understanding of the most essential "elements" to the evaluation process of building principals. The focus of perception is a limitation because perceptions are not always accurate because they can reflect individual bias. The participants for this study are all public-school CSAs located in New Jersey, therefore, limiting the representativeness of the study to private or parochial school districts. The size of this research study was also a limitation because it did not include the perceptions of Chief School Administrators outside of the state of New Jersey, nor other administrators' perceptions of the PSEL standards within the school district. Also, the data used in this study are from current superintendents in New Jersey, not retired New Jersey superintendents. Finally, it was assumed that all CSAs had the ability to receive and use the computer-based software as a mechanism for the survey. Some district firewalls could have prevented some CSAs from participating in completing the survey for this study.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made while conducting this study.

- It was assumed in this study that the chief school administrators answered the questions honestly and offered the requested information without bias to skew information about their evaluative practices or principals' performance.

- It was assumed in this study that chief school administrators who were selected to participate responded to the survey and answered the questions.

- It was assumed that the PSEL survey instrument being used to conduct the research was reliable and appropriate for the research being conducted.

Definitions of Terms

21st Century Skills a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2016).

AchieveNJ – the improved educator evaluation and support system proposed to the State Board of Education on March 6, 2013, for implementation throughout New Jersey in 2013-14 (New Jersey, 2014).

Principal Evaluation Instrument – The actual tool used by central office administration in order to appraise the success of the principal in a given school year. The evaluation instrument may be formative or summative, or both. Either the superintendent or his or her designee evaluates the high school principal.

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) – educational standards that replaced the ISLLC standards in 2015.

Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) – introduced in 1996 and revised in 2008 that defined effective educational leadership. These standards were replaced in 2015 by the PSEL Standards.

Chief School Administrator – the Superintendent of Schools or the Administrative Principal if there is no Superintendent.

Evaluation – means an appraisal of an individual's professional performance in relation to his or her job description and professional standards and based on, when applicable, the individual's evaluation rubric.

Evaluation rubric – means a set of criteria, measures, and processes used to evaluate a Principal in a specific school district or local education agency.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I provides a short background relating to the topic being studied.

Chapter II includes a review of the literature related to the research problem statement and guiding research questions.

Chapter III identifies the methodology that guides this study. Furthermore, the methods used to answer the research questions are explained.

Chapter IV presents the data and statistical findings of the study.

Chapter V discusses the important findings as they correspond to the research questions and the overall purpose of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the study

Are there specific responsibilities, roles, tasks, and skills embedded in the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) that are most important to be effective as a building principal as perceived and understood by New Jersey Chief School Administrators? To validate this study within the current literature, empirical studies about principal evaluation, effective school leadership, and professional standards were examined. Principal and Chief School Administrator variables were also examined through empirical studies.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) from the perceptions of Chief School Administrators related to principal evaluation. The study surveyed current New Jersey Superintendents and their evaluative practices of building principals to gather pertinent data on what roles, tasks, and skills are most important to be effective as a building principal as perceived and understood by New Jersey Chief School Administrators.

This chapter serves the purpose of introducing the literature search process, the analysis of the issues in the studies examined, inclusion criteria for the studies, and the theoretical framework, as well as the review of literature topics.

Literature Search Procedure

The literature review accessed various online education, psychology, and business databases, including ERIC, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Academic Search Premier, as well as print editions of peer-reviewed educational journals, literature reviews, dissertations, and

educational books. In addition to the various online databases, the search engines Google and Google Scholar were used to find historical background information on the topics.

Methodological Issues in Studies

I encountered numerous methodological issues in studies examined in the literature review process. The most evident concern was the lack of quantitative research on the topic of evaluating building principals using the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. One reason for the limited research is that the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders replaced the ISLLC standards just four years prior to this study, and the PSEL Standards are still being disseminated across the country.

Inclusion Criteria

The research used in this literature review had to contain the following criteria to be included:

- Peer-reviewed research including dissertations and department of education reports

- Published within the last 25 years

- Studies that included K-12 public schools

- Studies that focused on perceptions of building principals and chief school administrators

- Studies that examined principal evaluation tools

- I included the historical background on the emergence of professional standards for evaluating principals

- Text focused on educational leadership

- Text focused on the conceptual framework for this research study

- Any literature found in educational reports that meets the above criteria

- Studies relating to changes in accountability standards such as Annual Yearly

  Progress (AYP) and AchieveNJ

Theoretical Framework

Decades ago, two views of instructional leadership were included in the literature. The first view was considered "narrow," and the second was seen as "broad." Instructional leadership, in the narrow sense, was a separate responsibility for building principals. This perception directly impacted staff development, supervision, instruction, and curriculum. School climate and mission were not included in the behaviors of principals. In 1985, Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy set forth a "broad" view of instructional leadership. Many researchers have found Hallinger and Murphy's framework of instructional leadership to be accurate and comprehensive (O'Donnell & White, 2005)

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) proposed a model of instructional leadership that focused on three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of building principals. It built on prior research. The three dimensions were *defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program,* and *promoting a positive school learning climate*. Each of these dimensions is divided into ten instructional leadership functions, as outlined in Figure 1 below:
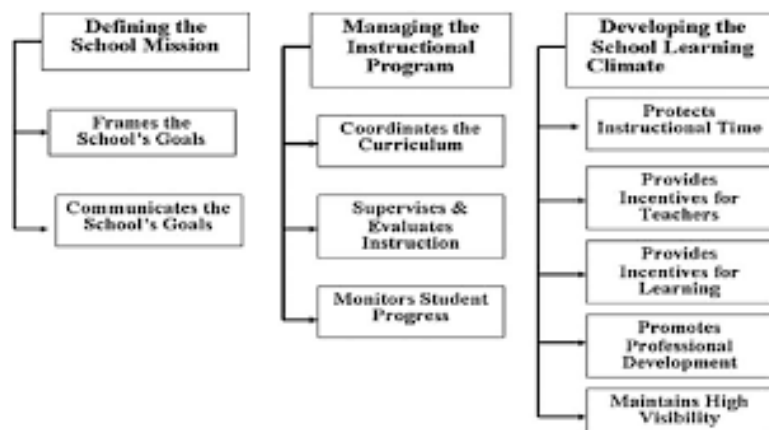
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework based on Hallinger and Murphy's framework on principal leadership.

Defining the School's Value and Mission

At the general level, vision is about moral purpose and possibilities, concepts forged from values and beliefs on which school improvement is scaffolded. At the center of school improvement, values and missions are the "bedrock of school improvement" (Fullan, 2002). According to Fullan (2002), schools do not progress well without a defined school mission, and they rarely evolve without the guiding hand of leadership (p.14). Mission statements have traditionally been defined as a written declaration that communicates the purpose of an organization (Bart & Hupfer, 2004; Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016). Student focus is at the center of effective school missions. Student-centered values hold significance in schools with clear mission statements and effective leadership. The spotlight is on the children and youth— what is in the best interests of students. It is imperative that effective leaders run child-centered schools and districts. To effectively implement this type of focus, progressive administrators create a means of developing structures, policies, and operating systems.

Effective leaders spend more energy than their peers in communicating the mission of the school. According to Murphy (2015), teachers in schools with robust school improvement leadership and clear direction from their principal are more aware of and can clearly communicate the school's mission and goals. Schools that have a clear direction have the ability to improve. Morrissey (2000) confirms that the mission influences the instructional program and the learning climate, which in turn shape the behaviors of teachers and students.

Managing the Instructional Program

Hallinger (2010) referred to instructional leadership as resilient leadership concentrated on curriculum and principal instruction. He defined instructional leadership as the act of principals influencing the culture of teaching and learning through their practices and

interactions with teachers and learners in efforts towards achieving effective curriculum delivery and coverage. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) contended that principals aspiring to be instructional leaders lacked the guidance to really know what is expected from this term.

Effective school leadership today must combine the traditional school leadership duties such as teacher evaluation, budgeting, scheduling, and facilities maintenance with a deep involvement with specific aspects of teaching and learning. Effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003). Research conducted by King (2002), Elmore (2000), and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2000) confirmed that this important role extends beyond the scope of the school principal to involve other leaders as well.

The key players in instructional leadership include the following:

1) Central office personnel (superintendent, curriculum coordinators, etc.)

2) Principals and assistant principals

3) Instructional coaches.

Some key elements of instructional leadership include the following:

1) Prioritization: Teaching and learning must be at the top of the priority list on a consistent basis. Leadership is a balance of management and vision (NAESP, 2001). While leaders cannot neglect other duties, teaching and learning should be the area where most of the leaders' scheduled time is allocated.

2) Scientifically based reading research (SBRR): Instructional leaders must be well informed of SBRR and effective reading instruction to assist in the selection and implementation of instructional materials and to monitor implementation. Leaders' participation in professional development sessions will help them remain informed and will provide a focus for monitoring.

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Henry Mintzberg critiqued the planning and the design schools of management in 1989. According to Mintzberg, these roles or expectations for a manager's behavior fall into three categories: informational (managing by information), interpersonal (managing through people), and decisional (managing through action)

ISLLC Standards evolve

National standards for school leaders developed in 1996 when the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) drafted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. These standards, as well as their "functions," offered an overall context for the development and management of school leadership (CCSSO, 1999).

Murphy and Shipman's (1998) study provided a summary as to the evolution of the ISLLC standards. In the study, it was reported that the ISLLC standards quickly began to influence the school administration profession, both directly and indirectly. When the standards were developed, there was a growing need for a major overhaul (Griffiths, 1988). The national standards also drew strength from a growing concern with the quality of leadership preparation throughout the profession. Interest was stimulated by the fact that the national standards captured a vision of school administration that was beginning to take hold across the various quadrants of the profession—research, development, policy, and practice.

By the early 2000s, the 1996 ISLLC Standards were the focus of political debate within the conversations of educational leaders who wished to extend the ownership beyond the original state and association participants who drafted the original standards (Murphy, 2015). The 1996 ISLLC Standards were incorporated into principal preparation programs and evaluation systems, so it was viewed as problematic to make major changes after the significant improvement in educational leadership since they were first introduced. In 2008, the ISLLC Standards were

revised. The original six standards were kept intact, while the sub-domains were expanded upon and made stronger. From quiet creation to an important document in the educational field, the ISLLC standards became directional in nature, not measurable for school administrators.

Professional Standards of Educational Leaders

The American fixation with performance standards since the turn of the century has become a global trend (Leithwood, 2003; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 2003). Building principals find themselves at the crossroads of accountability and school improvement with an increased expectation to function as "instructional leaders." Given the passage of formal government standards for education, principals who ignore their role in monitoring and improving school performance do so at their own risk (Bolam, 2003, 2001; Jackson, 2000; Lam, 2003; Leithwood, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003).

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to describe the set of national standards currently used as a professional guide for any school leader. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) authored the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) in 2015. These standards and their "elements" provide guideposts that are student-centric, outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The PSEL Standards have been informed by an extraordinary amount of research into educational leadership over the past ten years (Murphy, 2017). More importantly, the substance of how the PSEL Standards are framed emphasizes what school leaders should be doing to create schools where the environment includes supports and care that all students can reach ambitious levels of academic learning (Murphy, 2017).

Standard 1: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard 2: Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 3: Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 4: Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 5: Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard 6: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 7: Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 8: Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 9: Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 10: Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Principal Evaluation (Effectiveness)

Scholars over the last thirty-five years have found that effective principals are more likely than their less-effective colleagues to take responsibility for instruction (Robinson et al., 2008; Wellisch et al., 1978). In their study of effective schools, blame is not laid on others or on the failure within schools. Indeed, their review of effective schools determined that "schools where teachers attributed more responsibility to the principal in a greater number of areas were significantly more likely to be successful" (Robinson et al., 2008).

The research on the impact teachers have on their students is clear. Teacher quality is the most critical factor in explaining student learning (Hughes, 2003; Lewis, 2008). Furthermore, the achievement of students is contingent on what the teacher does (Marzano et al., 2005) rather than the school that the child attends (Hattie, 2009).

If categorically teachers and teaching are at the center of the school improvement discussion, it is critical to emphasize the impact that school administrators have, as leaders of the learning process, in effective schools. Robinson et al. (2008, p. 668) certify this conclusion in their study, finding "that a school's leadership is likely to have more positive impacts on student achievement and well-being if it is able to focus on the quality of learning, teaching, and teacher learning." In addition to the school administration's impact on student learning, school leaders are leaders of the learning process (Hallinger, 2003). Principals impact student learning indirectly through their interactions with staff, influence on teacher's instructional strategies, and the overall satisfaction of the staff (Blase and Kirby, 2009).

Superintendent and Principal Relationship

Every school district includes a multitude of individuals who are rooted in the parameters and are expected to work as a team in the best interest of the school district. Effectively working

as a team can have its challenges, depending on the variables within the relationships of the team. According to LaFasto and Larson's (2001) research on work teams, the most effective schools have the most effective administrative teams. Although a district has many teams, the group that includes the superintendent and principals is arguably the most powerful and important (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

Waters and Marzano (2006) studied chief school administrators and presented convincing evidence of an important connection between superintendents and principals. At the top of their key findings was a report that emphasized the relationship between the leadership behaviors of the chief school administrator and the performance of the school principal as a significant element in successful schools. Successful chief school administrators had a positive influence on the performance of principals, who, in turn, had a positive impact on instruction. It is through the principals, who are the school-level change agents, that the chief school administrator's influence impacts the students and staff (Marzano et al., 2005). The importance of the school principal is unquestionable. Understanding how the leadership practices of chief school administrators influence school principals, however, may hold the key to improving career satisfaction, efficacy, and career longevity of principals.

As Waters and Marzano (2006) demonstrated in their study of chief school administrator leadership, the relationship between the chief school administrator and the principal is significant. Chief school administrators should, therefore, examine the extent to which their leadership can influence the job satisfaction and performance of principals.

Superintendent Perceptions

Hallinger and Murphy (1987) implied that leadership must be defined through observable practices and behaviors that are implemented by principals (p. 55). Bossert et al. (1982)

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concluded that principal leadership made a significant difference in school performance and that there was continued interest in understanding the relationship between school leadership and learning (Bossert et al., 1982).

Critical to the understanding of how and why superintendents evaluate the role of instructional leader is the need for understanding how these leaders approach leadership practice and how this approach supports systems of evaluation and learning (Morgan et al., 2002; Spillane et al., 2004) Prior to a focus on instructional leadership, school leaders were viewed as managers with duties that can primarily be described as managerial, clerical, and practical (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). However, with the growing challenges faced by current school principals, their duties are managerial, clerical, and practical in the evaluation process (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Practical and Research Significance

The literature review has several goals related to the research study in this dissertation.

1. Provide insights into outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders.

2. Explore the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) Standards' "elements" from the perspective of New Jersey school superintendents to determine what they consider to be most important when formally evaluating New Jersey public school principals.

3. To provide data for superintendents in the construction of principal evaluations based on the results of the study.

4. Use the data from the study to develop interview questions for superintendents to determine the core values of prospective candidates.

5. Distinguish the essential, compared to important, leadership skills and responsibilities that a building principal must obtain as defined by the PSEL standards and determined by Chief School Administrators through the summative evaluation process.

6. Based on principals' perceptions of the PSEL standards, develop an evaluation tool that incorporates their perceptions.

7. Provide professional development based on principals' perceptions of what skills are essential.

8. Use the data from the study to develop Principal's Leadership Academies for school districts.

Conclusion

According to Hallinger (2008), "Among the educational trends that emerged during the past 20 years, few have been more significant or widespread than the continuing focus on principal effectiveness" (p. 2).

With accountability measures being increased in the past decade for principals, more knowledge is needed, especially from the chief school administrator's perspective on the standards most essential to principal effectiveness. Such knowledge is important on many levels because it will present information to principals on how to improve their practices and facilitate a school that improves instructional practice and improves student achievement. Collaborative efforts between the chief school administrators and the principal to improve the practices within the school will assist teachers and ultimately impact the academic performance levels of the students in the school.

Within the context of the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL), recent research is embedded into each standard, which responds to the new context of public education

as well as to recent research studying the influence and impact of school principals on teaching and learning.

Chapter III provides an explanation of the design and methodology of the researcher's study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) and their "elements" from the perspective of New Jersey school superintendents to determine their level of utilization of these standards when they formally evaluate New Jersey public school principals. Also, this study distinguishes the most essential, compared to important, leadership skills and responsibilities that a building principal must demonstrate as defined by the PSEL standards and determined by Chief School Administrators through the summative evaluation process. No study related to the PSEL standards nor the perspectives of school superintendents' use of the standards to evaluate school principals was located in the literature. This study aims to identify the components of a school principal's professional responsibilities that are deemed essential, compared to important, according to school superintendents, to assist principal effectiveness. The results of this study will provide current and future principals as well as principal preparation programs with up-to-date knowledge of the perceptions of chief school administrators on the new PSEL standards as they relate to principal evaluation.

As suggested in Chapter II, school principals continue to be faced with systematic change in schools that focus on school safety, increased student achievement on standardized tests, and countless accountability mandates that could affect their tenure. This study will provide a correlational perspective on these factors and their contribution to the perceived evaluative practices of New Jersey school superintendents.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was quantitative, using a survey methodology as the primary data collection tool. The survey was developed using the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) as the construct model, specifically, the "elements" for each standard. The PSEL standards provide guideposts that are student-centric, outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The results from the survey instrument relied primarily on descriptive statistics to determine the ranking of the PSEL standards and to summarize data. Survey content validity was obtained through expert review.

A solicitation letter with a link to an online survey instrument developed through Qualtrics was emailed to all 540 public-school chief school administrators in New Jersey. The list of current NJ chief school administrators was acquired from a database posted on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website. The online survey consisted of three sections and took 20 minutes or less to complete. The first section asked school superintendents to rank the ten (10) PSEL standards in order of importance from least to most important based on their evaluation criteria when they evaluate principals in the district. The second part of the survey consisted of thirty (30) questions. Each question in this section was created using the "elements" of each PSEL standard. The number of elements for each standard varies to describe prominent aspects of the work involved. The first three "elements" were chosen for each standard to create 30 multiple choice questions for the second section of the survey. The third section was a set of eight (8) demographic questions developed to acquire information on the respondent sample, paying careful attention to ensure respondent anonymity. This section included information to

determine trends in the responses based on gender, geographic location of the school district, the experience of the superintendent, and evaluative theory used by the school district. This forced response survey allowed the participants to skip questions if they wished not to answer. The researcher used survey questions that required the respondents to provide an actual response.

Research Questions

1. How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation.

    a. To what extent are NJ school superintendents utilizing the PSEL standards to evaluate their current population of principals?

    b. What components of the PSEL standards do superintendents feel are essential and important?

2. How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the nature of their districts?

    a. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on gender?

    b. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on district demographics?

    c. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on administrative experience?

    d. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on their teaching experiences before becoming a school superintendent?

Null Hypothesis

1. Null Hypothesis 1. No statistically significant relationship exists between New Jersey Superintendents and their utilization of the PSEL standards.

2. Null Hypothesis 2. No statistically significant relationship exists between superintendent perceptions of the PSEL standards and their gender.

3. Null Hypothesis 3. No statistically significant relationship exists between superintendent perceptions of the PSEL standards and their district demographics.

4. Null Hypothesis 4. No statistically significant relationship exists between superintendent perceptions of the PSEL standards and their administrative experience.

5. Null Hypothesis 5. No statistically significant relationship exists between superintendent perceptions of the PSEL standards and their experiences before becoming a school superintendent.

6. There will be a negative relationship between superintendent focus on school maintenance and staff evaluation.

Instrumentation

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, which replaced the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards in 2015, has been informed by an extraordinary amount of research into educational leadership over the past ten years (Murphy, 2017). For this study, the PSEL standards and some of the 83 "elements" will be used to survey the current school superintendents and study the components of the standards that are most crucial to an administrator's daily tasks. The forced response survey also eliminated the option of a "nonresponse" type choice, such as "I don't know" or "not applicable."

Research Design

       This research was conducted utilizing an on-line survey design. The survey used a data collection tool specifically designed for this study, accessed through Qualtrics Inc. (https://www.qualtrics.com/). The concept model for the online survey was based on the current Educational Leadership Policy Standards: PSEL 2015 (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The PSEL 2015 Standards were designed to respond to the gradual changes in public education and to align the influence school leaders have on teaching and learning (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Construct validity for the 48-item forced response multiple selection survey was acquired through expert review. A reliability alpha of .95 was obtained using the Cronbach's Alpha function in SPSS. The results from the survey instrument relied primarily on descriptive statistics to determine the ranking of the PSEL standards and to summarize data.

       Descriptive statistics were used to report the results for each of the ten Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL). To explore any differences in survey responses based on the demographic data collected, the following statistical analyses were employed: Spearman's rho, the Mann-Whitney test, and the Kruskal-Wallis test.

       A Spearman's rho correlation was used to assess the nonparametric statistical dependence between the ten PSEL standards and their elements. The purpose of this correlation is to assess the strength of the relationship between each of the ten standards and three of its elements.

       The Mann-Whitney U test was used as an equivalent of the two-sample t-test. The statistical data collected from the survey results contain no assumptions, unlike the t-test, relating to the perceptions of the superintendents' answers to the survey questions. Testing investigated

significant differences between the perceptions New Jersey Superintendents have relating to the rankings of the ten standards in the survey.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if perceptions of the superintendents' use of the ten standards were significant. A significant Kruskal-Wallis test can help to determine if New Jersey Superintendents' perceptions of the PSEL standards are influenced by multiple variables included in the survey.

Sample and Data Collection

All evidence explored in this study was from feedback from currently employed New Jersey school superintendents. New Jersey has 540 public school superintendents/chief school administrators. There are also eighty-eight charter school superintendents/chief school administrators that the researcher did not survey in this study. I looked to determine whether school superintendents considered certain PSEL standards to be more important than others during the evaluative process of school principals. Subjects for this study were recruited from email addresses gathered from the New Jersey Department of Education website.

Assumptions and the Role of the Researcher

The researcher assumed that the participants for this study answered the survey questions honestly and willingly. Other assumptions include that New Jersey Superintendents who completed the survey use the PSEL Standards to evaluate principals. Lastly, the researcher assumed that New Jersey Superintendents who participated by responding to the survey are the individuals who answered the questions.

Ethical considerations were addressed in various ways. First, the researcher sent the survey directly to the school superintendents, which eliminated the possibility of other parties within the district answering the questions. Second, a letter was sent to introduce the study,

explain the research, the data collection process, and the analysis of the findings. All data for this study were kept anonymous, and all printed documents that included the data results were shredded at the end of the study.

Summary

To determine the perceptions that Chief School Administrators have of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, a quantitative survey methodology was instituted to determine descriptive and correlational data. The population studied included current New Jersey public school superintendents. This included surveying 540 superintendents who were emailed directly to limit the amount of delay in the process of collecting the data. In the email, a solicitation letter with a link to the online survey was included. The survey questions were created based on the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL).

The quantitative data were collected from the online survey, which included questions relating to the PSEL Standards and the "elements." Data such as gender, district configuration, administrative experience, and experience of the superintendents before becoming a superintendent were all collected. These variables were then analyzed to determine the relationships to the perceptions of the superintendent's evaluation of principals.

Chapter IV provides a thorough description of the analysis and results from all facets of the data collection.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

School leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Logically, principal evaluation systems should measure individuals' abilities to perform effectively (Stronge, 1991). To assist in the evaluation of building principals, national standards have been in place for approximately twenty years. Clearly, national standards and a systematic study of school administrators' performance assessment is needed (Furtwengler & Furtwengler, 1998; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993.).

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, this study explored the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) Standards from the perspective of current New Jersey public school superintendents to determine what they considered to be most important when formally evaluating New Jersey public school principals. Second, this study served the purpose of distinguishing what are the essential, compared to important, leadership skills and responsibilities that a building principal must demonstrate as defined by the PSEL standards and determined by Chief School Administrators through the summative evaluation process.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation.

   a. To what extent are NJ school superintendents utilizing the PSEL standards to evaluate their current population of principals?

   b. What components of the PSEL standards do superintendents feel are essential as opposed to important?

2. How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the nature of their districts?

   a. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on gender?

   b. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on district demographics?

   c. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on administrative experience?

   d. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on their teaching experiences before becoming a school superintendent?

A letter of solicitation (see Appendix A) was distributed to a list of 540 New Jersey public school Superintendents through their district email addresses explaining the research being conducted and requesting the data from the link to the survey. As mentioned, the survey was housed online using Qualtrics Inc. The distribution of the survey was repeated three times during the months of December and January to increase the number of responses. The response rate after the three email attempts was 20.2%, which translated to 109 completed surveys returned.

The survey (see Appendix B) consisted of three sections. The first section of the survey asked school superintendents to rank the ten (10) PSEL standards in order of importance from least to most important based on their evaluation criteria when they evaluate principals in the district. The second part of the survey consisted of thirty (30) questions based on the PSEL standards, which required the Chief School Administrators to answer multiple selection questions relating to the ways they are using the standards in the summative evaluations of

school principals. The third section was a set of eight (8) demographic questions developed to

acquire information on the respondent sample, paying careful attention to ensure respondent

anonymity. This section included information to determine trends in the responses based on

gender, the geographical location of the school district, the experience of the superintendent, and

the evaluative theory used by the school district. This forced response survey allowed the

participants to skip questions if they wished not to answer. The researcher used survey questions

that required the respondents to provide an actual response. The forced response survey also

eliminated the option of a "nonresponse" type choice, such as "I don't know" or "not applicable."

Findings from the survey are presented in this chapter. The participants' experience in

education, as well as their current demographic identity, is used to answer the research questions.

Superintendents' perceptions of the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership will be

analyzed and discussed by providing their Likert scale responses. The importance that New

Jersey Superintendents place on the Professional Standards when they evaluate principals is

explained by analyzing the responses of the survey. The chapter concludes with the presentation

of the results of the research questions for this study.

Sample Characteristics

The purpose of gathering demographic information from New Jersey Superintendents

was to understand if these identifiable items influence their perception of the Professional

Standards for Educational Leadership. There were eight background variables: gender, district

demographics, district configuration, administrative experience, previous administrative

experience, evaluative tool used in the district, education level, and years as a superintendent.

Demographics were separated into two categories. Individual Superintendent

characteristics (Table 1) identifies personal characteristics such as gender, educational level, and

work experience of the respondents, while Superintendent District characteristics (Table 2)

includes the locality and type of district and the evaluation tool being used there.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of respondents by individual characteristics.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Individual Respondent Characteristics
N=109

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	36	33.30
Male	72	66.70
Years of Administrative Experience		
1-10 years	13	12.10
11-15 years	25	23.40
16-20 year	33	30.80
21 or more years	35	32.40
Prior Administrative Experience		
Primary (PreK - 3)	37	33.94
Elementary (K-5)	62	56.88
Middle (6-8)	67	61.48
Secondary (9-12)	45	41.28
Districtwide	60	55.00
Prior Teaching Experience		
Primary (PreK - 3)	8	7.10
Elementary (K-5)	49	45.00
Middle (6-8)	63	57.79
Secondary (9-12)	60	55.01
Districtwide	61	54.50
Highest Degree Earned		
MA/MS	34	31.80
Ed.S	2	1.90
Ed.D or Ph.D.	67	62.60
Other	4	3.70
Missing	4	3.70

Gender. Superintendents were asked to identify their gender. Of the 109 respondents.

98.2% (n =107) of the superintendents responded to the item. 66.7% (n =72) reported male

gender and 33.3% (n = 36) reported to be female. The number of males outnumbered female

respondents by 2:1.

Education level. Ninety-six percent (n=107) of the respondents reported educational

levels, with 62.6% (n = 67) reporting doctoral degrees, while 31.8% (n = 34) had master's level

education. Approximately six percent reported degrees other than a master's or doctoral, with

1.9% (n = 2) holding educational specialist degrees and 3.7% (4) reporting other educational

credentials.

In analyzing other degree types, not including master's, educational specialists, or

doctoral degrees, the data observed two superintendents holding Juris doctorates, one

superintendent with an MBA degree and another one near completion of the Ed.D.

The educational levels of the respondents also varied by gender. Slightly more males

(53%) held superintendent positions with only a master's degree; only 47% of females with that

educational degree held a superintendent position. Forty-four percent of the female respondents

(n = 16) held master's level degrees while 55% (n = 20) held doctoral-level educations. Twenty-

five percent (n = 18) of the males held the superintendent position with a master's degree, 2.8%

(2) had educational specialist degrees, 66% (n = 67) held doctorates, and 5.6% (n = 4) held other

credentials.

Prior teaching experience. While all the respondents reported being teachers in their

prior career**,** more than half of the superintendents identified as former middle and secondary

school teachers. Approximately fifty-five percent (n=60) were high school instructors and 58%

(n=63) taught grades 6-8. Forty-five percent (n = 49) taught in the K-5 elementary levels, and only 7% (n=8) taught in the pre-K environment.

Administrative experience. Superintendents were asked to report their years of administrative experience. In the sample of 109, 107 reported various levels of experience. Thirty-four percent n = (n = 35) reported having 21 or more years of experience, while 30.8% (n = 33) had 16-20 years in administration. 23.4% (n = 25) reported 11-15 years of administrative experience and 12.1% (n = 13) reported 6-10 years. Only .9% (n =1) of superintendents had less than five years' experience. It appears that 63.2% (n = 68) of the respondents, almost two-thirds, had 16 or more years of administrative experience.

In analyzing the cross tabs of gender and experience, of the 31% (n = 33) of respondents claiming 16-20 years' experience, 73% (n = 24) were males. Of the one-third (n = 22) reporting more than 21 years of experience, 63% of the superintendents were male.

Only 12% of the respondents had 6-10 years of experience, with 56% (n = 9) being male. The sample contained only one individual, a female respondent, with less than five years of experience.

Experience Prior to Current Position. Of the 109 superintendents identifying their level of administrative experience prior to their current position, thirty-seven (33.9%) reported having pre-kindergarten experience, while 62 (56.9%) had grade K-5 level. In addition, 67 (61.5%) superintendents had previously worked in a middle school setting, and 45 (41.3%) administrators had been employed at the secondary level. Overall, 60 respondents (55%) had districtwide experience (see Table 1).

School District Characteristics

Table 2 below shows the distribution of respondents by district characteristics.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of School District Characteristics (N = 109)

	Frequency	Percent
School Setting		
Urban	11	10.2
Suburban	79	73.1
Rural	18	16.7
District Type		
Grades PreK - 12	51	45.5
Grades 7-12	15	13.4
Grades PreK - 8	46	41.1
Evaluation Tool Used		
Danielson	22	20.4
Marzano	5	4.6
Stronge	27	25.0
Other	54	50.0
Missing	4	3.6

District demographics. Superintendents were asked to describe the district demographic of the school district they currently lead, and variations in locality were observed. Of the 107 respondents, 73.1% (n = 79) were from suburban districts and 16.7% (n = 18) were from rural areas in New Jersey. Only 10.2% (n = 11) of respondents were from urban areas in the state. Table 1 displays information on the locality of the school districts of responding superintendents.

District Type. The percentage of superintendents reporting a secondary school within their district was approximately 20% less than those at a lower level. Between 84 and 89% work in districts including grades pre-K – grade 5, and 83 – 87% claimed to have grade 6-8 in their district. Fewer superintendents were from districts that include high schools. Only 55 – 57% had

grade 9-12 levels in the district they currently lead. Table 2 lists the grade levels of the school districts reported by superintendents.

Current evaluative tool used in the district. Approximately half of the superintendents (n = 54) reported using another model that was not listed in the survey, while 45.4% (n=49) of districts used either the Danielson or Stronge models. Only 4.6% (n=5) of the superintendents used the Marzano evaluation model. Table 1 shows that the Danielson model was the school administrator evaluation tool of choice for 20.4% (n=22) of school districts in New Jersey, while 25.0% (n=27) used the Stronge model.

Although nearly half of superintendents (n=54) stated their district used another assessment model, only 35 superintendents supplied further information. Data in Table 1 shows approximately 65% of the superintendents entered other model names, with 42.9% (15) using the Marshall model and 37.1% (13) using the NJPSL PEPL measure for assessment. 11.4% (4) used the MCREL, while single-digit numbers (1) were each reported for the use of the Focal Point, State MMPR, and Multidimensional Principal Performance Rubric models.

Results for Research Question 1

The research question was:

1. *How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation?*

To answer the first research question, two subsidiary questions were answered by the analysis. The first subsidiary question was:

S1: To what extent are NJ school superintendents utilizing the PSEL standards to evaluate their current population of principals?

The Professional Standards of Educational Leadership are a paradigm of standards that communicate expectations for practitioners in educational leadership. These expectations are not static, meaning they do not prescribe specific actions. The standards offer rather a direction of practice for administrators to adapt their application to their individual needs and contexts. The standards also can guide educational leadership practice and promote its outcomes.

Superintendents were asked to rate the importance of the ten PSEL standards on a 1-10 scale, with 1 being the highest importance. In a separate measure, the administrators had to rate the importance of each element within the standards and measure the importance of each aspect. The ratings available were (Essential, Important, Somewhat Important, and Not Important.) Descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the responses from the superintendents in this study for this part of the study. Table 3 reports the results of this analysis.

Table 3
Mean rating (1-10) of the PSEL standards

	M	*Mdn*	*Mo*	*s*
Standard #1: Mission, Vision, Core Values	2.34	3.00	1.00	3.13
Standard #2: Ethics and Professional Norms	3.71	3.00	1.00	2.92
Standard #3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	5.45	5.00	3.00	2.82
Standard #4: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	5.65	6.00	7.00	2.27
Standard #5: Care and Support for Students	3.63	3.00	2.00	2.37
Standard #6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel	6.21	7.00	7.00	2.14
Standard #7: Professional Community of Teachers and Staff	5.95	6.00	8.00	2.42
Standard #8: Engagement of Families and Community	6.62	7.00	9.00	2.44
Standard #9: Operations and Management	7.82	9.00	10.00	2.46
Standard #10: School Improvement	5.73	5.00	4.00	2.82

The mean rating of Standard 1 was 2.34, with a median of 3 and a standard deviation of 3.13. The median and mode indicate that most superintendents perceive the Mission, Vision as a key component when evaluating principals.

Like Standard 1, the second standard was also rated very high by the respondents. The mean rating was 3.71, with a median of 3 and a mode of 1. This means that superintendents believe effective principals must act ethically and perform according to professional norms.

The third standard of Equity and Cultural Responsiveness yielded a mean rating of 5.45 with a median of 5 and a mode of 3. While some superintendents believed this was in the mid-range, others rated it higher. When evaluating school principals, the respondents believe that principals should strive for equity and cultural responsiveness within their daily practices, and they use this standard throughout the evaluation process.

In rating Standard 4, which measures Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, the observed mean was 5.65 with a median of 6 and a mode of 7, indicating a rating in the bottom third of our scale. From the responses in this part of the study, it is evident that superintendents

perceive this standard to be important and evaluate principals based on their development of a curriculum that is rigorous and coherent.

The observations in Standard 5, which rated Community of Care & Student Support, had a mean of 3.63 with a median of 3 and a mode of 2. According to this standard, effective leaders cultivate an inclusive and supportive school environment that promotes academic excellence. Superintendents responded that they feel this standard is very important for evaluating principals.

A significant difference is observed in the rating of Standard 6, which assesses the Professional Capacity of School Personnel. The mean was 6.21 with a median and mode of 7, indicating responses at the lower end of the scale. Superintendents feel that hiring, recruiting, and developing the professional capacity of the staff is not as important as other standards, according to their responses to the survey.

Similar to the last standard, Standard 7, Professional Community of Teachers & Staff, exhibits data at the lower end of the scale. The reported mean is 5.95, with a median of 6 and a mode of 8. According to this analysis, Superintendents did not believe this standard was as important as other standards.

Continuing in descending order, the eighth standard, which measures Family Engagement, had a mean of 6.62 with a median of 7 and a mode of 9. Superintendents responded that this standard did not hold as much weight as other standards in this study.

Repeating the pattern with low ratings, the ninth standard showed a similar rating. When rating Operations & Management, the superintendents reported a mean of 7.82, a median of 9, and a mode of 10. The responses by the Superintendents reflect their belief that operations and management are not weighted as heavily as the initial standards.

The tenth standard incorporates School Improvement. The final standard rated by superintendents covered how well principals focus on school improvement. The data observed a mean of 5.73, a median of 5, and a mode of 4, which were all within the central range of our rating scale. Questions relating to the topic of school improvement portray to the reader that superintendents feel that the topic of school improvement is a typical need within every principal evaluation.

In summary, the ratings of the standards showed considerable variation. Superintendents rated Standard 1 (Mission, Vision, and Core Values), Standard 2 (Ethics and Professional Norms), and Standard 8 (Engagement of Families and Communities) as clearly more important than others.

S2: What components of the PSEL standards do superintendents feel are essential as opposed to important?

A series of elements support each standard and assists with visualizing what work is necessary to meet each standard. The number of elements varies for each of the ten standards. To correlate the respondents' overall answers in the survey, three elements from each standard were used to question the respondents in the survey.

To answer this question, New Jersey Superintendents were asked to indicate the level of importance they place on thirty (30) statements when they develop an annual summative evaluation for a principal in their school district. Each of the thirty statements included one element from the ten standards. The respondents chose from four levels of importance for each statement. Respondents indicated that the element was essential if it was perceived to be mandatory for a principal's performance. An indication that the element was important suggests that the Superintendent feels that the principal should demonstrate, but it is not mandatory for a

principal's role. An indication that the element is somewhat important signifies something the

principal does not have to possess but could be important. An indication of the element being

insignificant means the Superintendent does not feel that the item is necessary for evaluating

principals. Tables 3 and 4 report the rating and level of importance documented by NJ

superintendents when they selected the level of importance of the PSEL Standards relating to

what components of the PSEL standards they feel are essential as opposed to important.

Superintendents were asked to rate the individual elements of each standard as Essential,

Important, Somewhat Important, or Insignificant. Table 4 below shows the descriptive statistics

of the three elements within each standard.

In Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values, 88% of the sample thought that the

elements of Developing a Mission and Collaborating with school members were critical for

school principals' effectiveness, with 43% reporting Mission Development as Essential versus

45% ranking it as important. The third element was ranked less important, with only 58%

believing that Articulation and Cultivation of Core values was essential, and approximately 36%

rated it as important. Many superintendents agreed with the strength of the elements as they

relate to a school's mission, vision, and core values. The responses of the superintendents show

that an effective mission and vision statement, as well as collaboration and core values within the

school, are strong indicators of how effective school principals are when evaluated by

superintendents.

In Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms, each of the three elements was ranked as

essential or important by the respondents. The first element, acting ethically, was ranked

essential or important by 88% of superintendents, while the third element had a similar response

rate, with 86% ranking Placing Children at the Center of Education as essential. Acting with

integrity was ranked essential by 73% of the sample members, indicating that superintendents perceived that effective educational leaders act ethically and according to the professional norms to promote success within the school and should be evaluated similarly.

Like the high rankings in the above standard, all the elements in Standard 3 were rated essential or important by most of the chief administrators. Eighty percent of our sample perceived Treating Each Student Fairly as essential; Recognizing and Respecting Students' Strengths and Students having Equitable Access to Services were ranked essential by 55 – 60% of the respondents.

The responses of the superintendents ranking Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment (Table 4) showed significant differences in the weight of the elements in comparison to the first three standards. Less than half expressed these elements as being essential, although 49 – 60% believed in their importance. Implementing coherent systems of C.I.A. was essential to 36% of the superintendents when they assessed their principals. Aligning systems of C.I.A along grade levels appealed to them less (29%), while Promoting Instructional Practices was perceived essential by close to half of the 109 respondents. The responses of the superintendents in this study show that most of the respondents believe that implementing a strong curriculum and promoting instructional practices is important when evaluating principals.

Over 92% of the respondents felt the three elements in Standard 5: Care and Support of Students held weight in the evaluation of school principals. Over eighty percent of superintendents felt that maintaining a safe and caring environment was essential to the educational process when evaluating their subordinates, while 64% agreed that acceptance of all students held the same value in principal evaluations. Coherent systems of social support were viewed as essential by only 38% of the sample. This indicates that Superintendents perceive the

first two elements of Standard 5 as being essential. Principals who care and support students in a safe and caring environment are perceived as effective administrators by their Superintendents.

The elements of Professional Capacity of School Personnel within Standard 6 shows differences within the aspects of the standard. The first factor, assessing the weight of Recruiting and Hiring Effective teachers, was ranked as Essential by 64% of the chief administrators. Less than a quarter of the superintendents ranked the other factors, Plan & Manage Staff Turnover and Develop Staff Professional Knowledge, as being essential. Superintendents feel more strongly about recruiting and hiring effective teachers than they do about planning and managing staff turnover and the development of the professional capacity of their school personnel.

In Standard 7: Professional Community of Teachers & Staff, Development of Effective Professional Development, close to 92% of our respondents ranked two elements, Empowering Teachers & Staff and Establishing and Maintaining a Professional Culture in a more positive manner. Over half of superintendents believed empowering teachers and maintaining professional culture were essential aspects of an effective principal. Less than a quarter of the superintendents have similar beliefs about professional development.

In Standard 8: Engagement of Families & Community, around 60% ranked the element of Approachable, Accessible and Welcoming as an essential measure. Close to half the superintendents perceived the element of creating positive relationships with families and engaging in regular communication as important in evaluating their principals. Almost all the superintendents (91 – 99%) perceived this standard as important or essential, signifying its importance of family engagement within a principal's evaluation.

In Standard 9, over 60% of the superintendents thought that all three elements were important, and less than 30% thought the elements were essential. The strength of the responses signifies that Instituting and Managing Operations, Managing Staff Resources, and Acquiring Fiscal Resources were important indicators when assessing the effectiveness of principals.

In Standard 10: School Improvement, 41– 47% of the superintendents ranked both Seeking to Make School More Successful and Use Methods of Continued Improvement as essential in the evaluation of a principal's skills set, while over 50 thought both factors were important. Less than a third saw Prepare the School for Improvement as essential, and over half of the superintendents saw its importance in the assessment procedure of principal's evaluations.

Table 4

Percentage Distribution of PSEL Rankings

Standard	Elements	essential	important	somewhat important	insignificant
1	Development of a mission	43.1	45.0	10.1	0.9
	Collaboration with school members	45.9	47.7	5.5	0.0
	Articulate and cultivate core values	58.0	35.7	3.6	0.0
2	Act ethically and professional	87.5	9.8	0.0	0.0
	Act with integrity, fairness, trust	73.2	24.1	0.0	0.0
	Place children at center of education	85.7	11.6	0.0	0.0
3	Each student is treated fairly	80.4	17.0	0.0	0.0
	Recognize and respect student strengths	54.5	40.2	2.7	0.0
	Students have equitable access to services	58.9	38.4	0.0	0.0
4	Implement coherent systems of C.I.A.	35.7	59.8	1.8	0.0
	Align systems of C.I.A. along grade levels	28.6	58.9	9.8	0.0
	Promote instructional practices	47.3	49.1	0.9	0.0
5	Maintain a safe and caring environment	83.0	14.3	0.0	0.0
	Acceptance of all students	64.3	30.4	2.7	0.0
	Coherent systems of social supports	37.5	55.4	4.5	0.0
6	Recruit and hire effective teachers	64.3	30.4	2.7	0.0
	Plan and manage staff turnover	24.1	58.9	12.5	1.8
	Develop staff professional knowledge	22.3	65.2	9.8	0.0
7	Develop effective professional development	22.3	63.4	11.6	0.0
	Empower and entrust teachers and staff	51.8	39.3	5.4	0.9
	Establish and sustain a professional culture	50.9	42.9	3.6	0.0
8	Approachable, accessible, and welcoming to families	59.8	33.0	3.6	0.9
	Create positive relationships with families	49.1	43.8	3.6	0.9
	Engage in regular communication with families	41.1	50.0	5.4	0.9
9	Institute and manage operations	26.8	65.2	5.4	0.0
	Manage staff resources	29.5	62.5	4.5	0.9
	Seek and acquire fiscal resources	20.5	67.9	7.1	1.8
10	Seek to make school more successful	41.1	50.9	4.5	0.9
	Use methods of continued improvement	47.3	44.6	5.4	0.0
	Prepare the school for improvement	32.1	55.4	9.8	0.0

The research investigated how superintendents ranked the standards and their association with their perception of the individual elements. To analyze the strength of the association between the ranking of the standards and the ratings of each element, a non-parametric correlation was used. The results of the Spearman rho Correlation are below in Table 5.

Table 5: Spearman Rho Correlation of the PSEL Standards and three of their elements

	rho(sig.)
Standard 1	
Development of a mission	.352**
Collaboration with school members	.261**
Articulate and cultivate core values	0.152
Standard 2	
Act ethically and professional	0.352
Act with integrity, fairness, trust	0.101
Place children at center of education	-0.148
Standard 3	
Each student is treated fairly	.377**
Recognize and respect student strengths	.199*
Students have equitable access to services	0.186
Standard 4	
Implement coherent systems of C.I.A.	0.156
Align systems of C.I.A. along grade levels	.233*
Promote instructional practices	.216*
Standard 5	
Maintain a safe and caring environment	0.034
Acceptance of all students	.189*
Coherent systems of social supports	0.051
Standard 6	
Recruit and hire effective teachers	0.001
Plan and manage staff turnover	0.028
Develop staff professional knowledge	0.051
Standard 7	
Develop effective professional development	0.098
Empower and entrust teachers and staff	0.106
Establish and sustain a professional culture	0.083
Standard 8	
Approachable, accessible, and welcoming to families	.284**
Create positive relationships with families	.325**
Engage in regular communication with families	.347**
Standard 9	
Institute and manage operations	0.011
Manage staff resources	-0.086
Seek and acquire fiscal resources	-0.055
Standard 10	
Seek to make school more successful	0.074
Use methods of continued improvement	0.047
Prepare the school for improvement	0.018

* indicates the level of significance $p < 0.05$
** indicates the level of significance $p < 0.01$

While most of the elements in the above table were not significant, Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 had some significance. At least one or two elements in each of these five standards proved significant.

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, Core Values Correlated with the elements of Development of a Mission (1), Collaboration (2), and Cultivating Core Values (3).

A Spearman rho nonparametric correlation was used to analyze the association between Standard 1: Missions, Vision and Core Values and its elements. The analysis showed positive correlations with the first two elements of Standard 1.

An examination of the rank of the first standard of Mission, Vision, and Core Values Development and its correlation with the rank of the Mission Development component of that standard showed moderate association (r_s = .35, n =109, $p < .001$). These results suggest that the respondents who ranked Standard 1 as important had a similar ranking for the Missions Development of that standard.

Secondly, results of the second Spearman correlation found a weak but positive association between the overall ranking of Standard 1: Missions, Visions and Core Values and the ranking of Element 2: Collaboration with School Members (r_s = .26, n =109, $p < .001$). The relationship suggests that superintendents who ranked the Missions standard higher were moderately likely to do the same when ranking the Collaboration element.

Thirdly, in measuring the association between the overall ranking of Standard 1 and the ranking of Element 3: Articulating and Cultivating Core Values, the data showed a low but non-significant correlation (r_s = .15, n =109, $p = 0.12$). The relationship suggests a very weak and non-significant relationship.

Standard 2: Ethics & Professional Norms with Elements of Acting Ethically (4), Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and Trust (5), Child Centered Education (6)

In analyzing the overall and element rankings for Standard 2: Ethics & Professional Norms, the data only observed one significant correlation in the three sub-rankings. When viewing the results of the analysis between Standard 2 and Element 4: Acting Ethically, there was a moderate positive association between the ranking of both variables (r_s = .35, n =109, p < .001). The variation in the rankings was 12%. Superintendents who ranked Standard 2 with Ethics and Professional Norms highly were apt to respond in a similar nature when rating Element 4.

Testing the association between the overall ranking of Standard 2 and its Element 5: Acting with Integrity, Fairness & Trust, showed a weak and non-significant association between the standard and this particular element (r_s = .10, n =109, p = .30). The final element, Placing Children at the Center of Education, produced a very low, negative, and non-significant association (r_s = -15, n =109, p = .12).

Standard 3: Equity/Cultural Responsiveness with Elements of Students Treated Fairly (7), Student Strengths (8), and Students Equitable Access to Services (9)

In looking at the data for Standard 3: Equity & Cultural Responsiveness, the three elements all had significant associations. In Element 7: Students Treated Fairly, the correlation was moderate and significant at the .01 level (r_s = .38, n =109, p < .001). Fourteen percent of the variation is due to the superintendents ranking the variables as moderately important.

In the second element of Standard 3, Students' Strength, the data observed a weak but significant correlation of .20 (r_s = .20, n =109, p = .04). Superintendents equally rated both the standard and the element as not being that important or essential.

The last element, Students Equitable Access to Services, had similar statistics with a low significant correlation (r_s = .19, n =109, p = .05), with only 3% of the variation accounted for by rankings. Again, superintendents ranked these items as not essential or important.

Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment with Elements of Implementing systems of C.I.A (10), Grade Alignment of C.I.A (11), and promoting instructional practices (12)

When analyzing Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment and its elements, only the last two factors were ranked as significant by the respondents. The first element, Implementing Systems of C.I.A. (10), obtained a low but insignificant association between ratings of these factors (r_s = .16, n =109, p =.11).

Both Elements 11 and 12 had weak but significant associations. In Element 11: Grade Alignment, the correlation was .23 (r_s = .23, n =109, p = .02) and in Element 12: Promoting Instructional Practices, the correlation was .22 (r_s = .22, n =109, p = .02). Between 5 and 6% of the variation in those rankings was due to confirmation of the superintendent's ratings.

Standard 5 Care & Support of Students with Elements of Safe /Caring Environment (13),

Acceptance of All (14), Social Supports (15)

Only one of the elements in Standard 5 was significant. Element 14: Acceptance of All had a very weak but significant correlation ($r_s = .19$, n =109, p = .05) with approximately 4% of the variation due to the relationship between rankings. Both Element 13: Caring Environment ($r_s = .03$, n =109, p = .72), and Element 15: Social Supports ($r_s = .05$, n =109, p = .60), exhibited low correlations that were insignificant.

Standard 6 Professional Capacity of School Personnel with Elements of Recruit Effective

Teachers (16), Manage Staff Turnover (17) and Staff Professional Knowledge (18)

In Standard 6, all three elements had mostly insignificant correlations. Element 16: Recruiting Effective Teachers, had no association in the rankings. ($r_s = .00$, n =109, p = .98), Element 17: Managing Staff turnover had a very weak association ($r_s = .03$, n =109, p = .77), as did Element 18: Developing Staff Professional Knowledge ($r_s = .05$, n = 109, p = .60).

Standard 7: Professional Community of Teachers with Elements Develop Effective

Professional Development (19), Empower Teachers and Staff (20), and Establish and Sustain a

Professional Culture (21)

Standard 7 and its elements produced weak results. Element 19: Develop Effective Professional Development ($r_s = .10$, n =109, p = .31), Element 20: Empower Teachers/Staff ($r_s = .11$, n =109, p = .28) and Element 21: Establish and Sustain a Professional Culture ($r_s = .08$, n =109, p = .39) were all insignificant.

Standard 8 Engagement of Families and Community with Elements of Approachable &

Accessible to Families (22), Positive Relationship with Families (23), & Regular Communication

with Families (24)

Like the literature on family involvement and engagement (Ferlazzo, 2011), the

superintendents validated its importance. Although the associations were weak, the factors in

Standard 8 were all significant. Element 22: Approachableness and Accessible to Families had a

low correlation (r_s = .28, n =109, p < .001) with 8% of the variation due to the relationship

between rankings. Both elements had correlations significant at the .001 levels. Element 23:

Establishing Positive Relationships with Families exhibited a moderate association with Standard

8 (r_s = .33, n =109, p < .001), as did Element 24: Maintaining Regular Communication with

Families (r_s = .35, n =109, p < .001). Variation in those two elements were 11 and 12%,

respectively.

Standard 9: Operations & Management with Elements of Institute & Manage Operations

(25), Manage Staff Resources (26), and Acquiring Fiscal Resources (27)

The three elements in Standard 9 did not exhibit significance at the .05 levels and

produced weak single digit associations. Element 25: Institute and Manage Operations exhibited

a very weak correlation (r_s = .01, n =109, p = .91) while Element 26: Manage Staff Resources,

(r_s = - .09, n =109, p = .37) and Element 27: Acquiring Fiscal Resources (r_s = -.06, n =109,

p = .57) were both negative, indicating there could have been some variation in the rankings of

elements as related to the standard.

Standard 10: School Improvement with Seek to Make School more Successful (28) Use

Methods of Continued Improvement (29) and Preparing the School for Improvement (30).

Again, we see a similar pattern with variation in the ratings of the last element and its three standards, which were all low. Element 28: Seeking to Make the School More Successful (r_s = .07, n =109, p = .44), Element 29: Using Methods of Continued Improvement (r_s = .05, n = 109, p = .62), and Element 30: Preparing the School for Improvement (r_s = .02, n =109, p = .85) were all nonsignificant.

Results for Research Question 2

The research question was:

2. How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the

   personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the

   nature of their districts?

To answer the second research question, four subsidiary questions also needed to be

analyzed.

S1: Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on

gender?

The research investigated gender differences within the responses of superintendents

when they ranked the importance of each standard. The sample of 109 superintendents included

36 females and 71 males. As portrayed in Table 6, The Mann Whitney U test was used to

investigate differences between the two groups when ranking the PSEL standards. The data did

not find a statistically significant difference between the mean rankings of male and females

superintendents. This means there was no gender bias within the superintendent's responses to

the survey questions.

Table 6
Analysis of PSEL and Gender

	Median (Male)	Median (Female)	Mann Whitney U	sig
Standard #1: Mission, Vision, Core Values	3.00	3.50	1257.00	0.80
Standard #2: Ethics and Professional Norms	2.50	3.00	1302.00	0.97
Standard #3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	4.50	5.00	1280.00	0.92
Standard #4: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	6.00	6.50	1203.00	0.54
Standard #5: Care and Support for Students	3.00	3.00	1209.50	0.57
Standard #6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel	7.00	6.50	1276.50	0.90
Standard #7: Professional Community of Teachers and Staff	6.00	6.00	1276.50	0.90
Standard #8: Engagement of Families and Community	7.00	6.00	1445.50	0.33
Standard #9: Operations and Management	8.50	9.00	1211.00	0.57
Standard #10: School Improvement	5.00	5.50	1296.50	0.99

S2: Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on district demographics?

Group differences among superintendents from various regions in New Jersey were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis Test. The data did not observe significant gender differences in the responses of the superintendents.

There were significant differences in two categories, rural-suburban. The rural localities had significant differences with both the urban and suburban categories. The means of the superintendents' responses from 11 urban, 78 suburban, and 11 rural districts were used to investigate differences among groups. The investigation of these responses showed that Family Engagement was the only standard exhibiting significance between groups.

In Standard 8, the data recorded mean differences that were significant. The mean response of 11 Superintendents from Urban districts was 7.64 with a standard deviation of 2.34. The 79 suburban superintendent responses exhibited a mean of 6.82 with a standard

deviation of 2.39. The final 19 superintendent responses had a mean of 5 with a standard

deviation of 2.28.

Table 7
Analysis of PSEL and Locality

	Urban Median	*Suburban Median*	*Rural Median*	*Kruskal-Wallis*	*sig*
Standard #1: Mission, Vision, Core Values	5.00	3.00	3.50	5.79	0.22
Standard #2: Ethics and Professional Norms	2.00	3.00	3.50	5.69	0.22
Standard #3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	4.00	5.00	4.00	2.41	0.66
Standard #4: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	6.00	6.00	5.00	4.93	0.3
Standard #5: Care and Support for Students	4.00	3.00	3.00	2.57	0.63
Standard #6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel	5.00	7.00	7.00	3.80	0.43
Standard #7: Professional Community of Teachers and Staff	6.00	6.00	7.50	4.61	0.33
Standard #8: Engagement of Families and Community	9.00	7.00	5.50	3.67	0.04
Standard #9: Operations and Management	9.00	9.00	8.00	7.61	0.11
Standard #10: School Improvement	6.00	5.00	7.00	0.89	0.93

S3: Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on

administrative experience?

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to investigate differences in the rankings of the

standards based on superintendents' administrative experiences. The data did not find significant

differences in the ranking of the standards due to the superintendents' administrative experience

prior to becoming a superintendent.

S4: Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on

their teaching experiences before becoming a school superintendent?

In assessing differences in rankings amongst superintendents working at different educational levels, the analysis of the rankings is dependent on school type, PreK-12, Grade 7 - 12 level, and PreK - 8 grades.

As shown in Table 8 below, only Standard 1 was rated with significance by the Superintendents who responded to the survey (KW=6.72, p =.04). In the PreK - 12 category, the mean rank of Standard 1 was 64.51 for the 51 superintendents previously employed as a teacher in that educational environment. In the Grade 7 – 12 category, 15 superintendents reported that they taught in this area; the mean rank was 56.33. In the final category, assessing experience in the PreK teaching environment, forty-six respondents taught in the PreK – 8 area, and their mean ranking of the standard was 47.67.

Table 8
Analysis of PSEL and Teaching Experience before becoming a Superintendent

	PK-12 Median	*Grade 7-12 Median*	*PreK-8 Median*	*Kruskal-Wallis*	*sig*
Standard #1: Mission, Vision, Core Values	64.51	56.33	47.67	6.72	0.04
Standard #2: Ethics and Professional Norms	58.36	53.77	55.33	0.35	0.84
Standard #3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	56.29	52.57	58.01	0.326	0.85
Standard #4: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	49.7	70.6	59.45	5.55	0.06

Standard #5: Care and Support for Students	57.32	46.67	59.79	1.69	0.43
Standard #6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel	50.67	66.8	59.61	3.66	0.16
Standard #7: Professional Community of Teachers and Staff	50.28	61.97	61.61	3.49	0.18
Standard #8: Engagement of Families and Community	55.7	68.33	53.53	2.45	0.29
Standard #9: Operations and Management	58.97	51.93	55.25	0.7	0.7
Standard #10: School Improvement	57.12	44.3	59.79	2.64	0.27

Summary

Chapter IV contains the results and data analysis of research questions 1-2. Comparisons of the way New Jersey Superintendents rank the importance of the PSEL standards were examined through descriptive statistics and documented. The analysis of the results supports the notion that cultivating an inclusive and supportive school environment that promotes academic excellence is the most important focus in evaluating school principals. The survey data were examined using analysis and descriptive statistics to determine the perceptions superintendents have of the hierarchy of the PSEL standards. The raw percentage data showed that superintendents believe effective principals must act ethically and perform according to

professional norms. Further discussion of the results along with implications for policy, practice, and further research takes place in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

This study was completed to explore New Jersey Public School Superintendent's perceptions of the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL) and their "elements." The study analyzed superintendents' utilization of these standards when they formally evaluate New Jersey Public School Principals. The study surveyed only New Jersey superintendents that evaluate building principals in public schools. Charter schools, vocational schools, and Special Education Commission School districts were excluded from this study. Insights from this study will provide current and future principals, as well as principal preparation programs, with up-to-date knowledge of the perceptions chief school administrators have on the PSEL standards as they relate to principal evaluation. In addition, the findings from this study are important to chief school administrators, who will gain a knowledge base to reflect upon how they evaluate principals on the new standards compared to what daily expectations they have for principals.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings as they relate to the two research questions, as well as each of the subsidiary questions. A discussion of how the findings relate to the literature and the relationship between the quantitative results is included. Chapter 5 concludes with the implications of this study and recommendations for future research studies.

This study surveyed 540 New Jersey Superintendents during the 2019-2020 school year. Descriptive statistics analyzed and provided an explanation of the results for each of the ten Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL). To explore any differences in survey responses based on the demographic data collected, Spearman rho, the Mann-Whitney test, and the Kruskal-Wallis test were employed. Of the 540 surveys sent out, 109 Superintendents responded for a 20% response rate. Respondents largely corresponded to the population in terms

of individual and district characteristics. The sample was selected by sending a survey to all New Jersey public school Superintendents multiple times during the winter recess break of the 2019-2020 school year. Email addresses were acquired from a database stored on the New Jersey Department of Education's website. Data collected was analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation, Mann-Whitney Test, and the Kruskal-Wallis Test. Survey data were analyzed using chi-square analysis to determine frequencies and significance of expected versus observed outcomes

Research Questions

1. How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation?

   a. To what extent are NJ school superintendents utilizing the PSEL standards to evaluate their current population of principals?

   b. What components of the PSEL standards do superintendents feel are essential as opposed to important?

2. How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the nature of their districts?

   a. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on gender?

   b. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on district demographics?

   c. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on administrative experience?

   d. Do the perceptions of the PSEL standards by school superintendents differ based on their experiences before becoming a school superintendent?

Research Question 1

How, and to what extent, are New Jersey school superintendents applying the

Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) in principal evaluation?

The goal of this research question was to determine through the analysis of responses to

the survey whether New Jersey Superintendents use the PSEL standards when they evaluate

building principals. According to the survey data (109), the ratings of the standards showed

considerable variation. Superintendents rated some standards as clearly more important than

others. While there was uniformity within the superintendents when they ranked the first five

standards, there was disparity within their responses when rating the last five standards. They

did not perceive that all the standards were critical to the evaluation process of principals.

At the center of school improvement, values and missions are the "bedrock of school

improvement" (Fullan, 2002). This statement is supported by the responses of the sample in this

study. Standard 1 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders had the highest rating

by New Jersey Superintendents. When ranking the ten standards, the sample of superintendents

perceives the development, advocacy, and enactment of a mission is crucial to the evaluation

process of principals.

On the contrary, Standard 9, which encompasses the responsibility of school principals to

manage school operations and resources, was scored very low by the sample. New Jersey

Superintendents perceived this standard to be the lowest-ranked standard out of the ten.

Research Question 2

How do the perceptions and utilization of the PSEL standards differ by the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents and by the nature of their districts?

The goal of this research question was to determine if the personal and professional characteristics of school superintendents influenced the perceptions they have on the evaluation of building principals when they evaluate them.

The gender balance of respondents to the survey instrument consisted of double the number of males when compared to females. The analysis did not yield a gender bias within the respondents' perceptions. Male and female superintendents do not perceive specific PSEL standards within principal evaluations differently based on gender. Male and female superintendents in New Jersey believe all ten PSEL standards are important components for principal evaluation.

When analyzing the locality of the superintendents who participated in the study, urban superintendents perceived Standard 8 as more significant than any other demographical area superintendent. A consideration for this perception is the importance urban superintendents feel parents are to a child's success. Families have a profound impact on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Benson & Martin, 2003). When evaluating building principals, urban Superintendents feel Standard 8, Family Engagement, is more necessary than suburban and rural superintendents do.

New Jersey Superintendents' experiences do have an impact on the decisions they make within the school district, according to the study. The respondents in this study included superintendents with PreK-12 experiences as teachers and administrations. These experiences influence their perceptions of how they evaluate school principals. When evaluating principals, the respondents feel that all ten standards are important and must be integrated within the

principal's daily procedures. The type of evaluation tool used in each school district was not consistent, as there is no one standard evaluation tool in the state of New Jersey. However, all superintendents who responded to this study confirmed the necessity for all standards to be understood by building principals.

Delimitations of the Study

One or more of the following delimitations may apply to this study.

- One delimitation for this study is that only Chief School Administrators from the state of New Jersey were surveyed.

- The sample of Chief School Administrators was limited to public school Chief School Administrations; therefore, conclusions cannot be generalized to charter or private school districts.

- Only the perceptions of the CSA's evaluation of building principals were included in this study. Assistant Principals, Directors, and Supervisors are also evaluated by the CSA in some districts; however, this perception was not included in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, further investigation is necessary to examine the significance the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders play in principal evaluation. The following recommendations should be considered for additional study into the area of principal evaluation.

1. There is a lack of research that has studied the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders and their effects on principal effectiveness. Further research of these standards will further improve areas that building principals are evaluated on by school superintendents.

2. A study could be conducted to determine if superintendents of charter, private, and religious schools use the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders and what standards they perceive to be important when evaluating their building principals and the standards that are perceived as most important.

3. This study revealed the perceptions of New Jersey Superintendents on the PSEL. Additional research could explore if there is a difference relating to principals who are evaluated by evaluators other than the district superintendent.

4. A longitudinal study could be conducted to determine if building principals who are evaluated by various superintendents in their career have varying evaluative results.

5. Additional studies could be conducted to examine how superintendents in states other than New Jersey use the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders to evaluate building principals.

6. This study could generate an improved response rate by changing the method to a qualitative focus group and utilize county superintendent meetings to conduct interviews using a qualitative method.

7. Future research could be conducted using an electronic survey at a state conference to increase numbers in the sample size.

8. In the survey, a nonbinary choice under the gender section can be provided to give a choice for respondents who do not identify themselves as male or female.

9. The current research could be expanded by adjusting its demographic variables. Future surveys could include race/ethnicity, age, years of Superintendent experience, and a nonbinary choice for gender.

10. Future research could investigate differences in superintendent's perceptions by counties.

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Appendix A

Solicitation Letter to Participate in the Study

SOLICITATION/RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Chief School Administrator:

My name is Kevin Hajduk and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. I am interested in better understanding how current school superintendents evaluate building principals, especially their perception of what they believe to be important in the summative evaluation. The questions are based on the *Professional Standards of Educational Leadership*, which recently replaced the ISLLC Standards in 2015. This study is being undertaken as a doctoral dissertation at Seton Hall University and has been approved by the IRB Committee at Seton Hall. Please answer the following questions honestly. There is no right or wrong answer. Your responses are completely anonymous. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Respectfully,
Mr. Kevin Hajduk
Seton Hall University
South Orange, NJ

Appendix B

Survey Questions

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Survey

New Jersey Superintendents' perceptions of the PSEL standards and their application to the summative evaluation process of school principals

PART A: The ten (10) principles listed below are considered the essential characteristics a principal must possess and/or develop to be a successful building leader. Please rank these ten (10) principles in order of importance as they relate to your evaluation criteria when you evaluate the principals in your school district.

Rank each statement 1 through 10 with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important. Each number may only be selected once or you will be returned to the top of this page and not permitted to continue. If you rate the first statement #2, you cannot rate any of the other statements #2. If you do, then the previous line you had rated #2 will be erased in place of your current rating. You have to use all #'s, 1 - 10, without repeating a value.

A principal should develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

A principal should act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

A principal should develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

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A principal should manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

A principal should act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

PART B: Indicate the level of importance you place on each of the following statements when you develop an annual summative evaluation for a principal in your school district.

Definition of terms: *essential* – the statement is mandatory for a principal's role.
Example: school safety
important – the statement is something a principal should have but is not mandatory for a principal's role.
Example: classroom walkthroughs
somewhat important – the statement is something a principal does not have to possess but can be important.
Example: sense of humor
insignificant – the statement is irrelevant to the principal's role.
Example: nice car

1) The Principal's development of an educational mission for the school.

    essential   **important**   **somewhat important**   **insignificant**

2) The Principal's development of an educational vision using relevant data and in collaboration with members of the school and the community.

    essential   **important**   **somewhat important**   **insignificant**

3) The Principal articulates, advocates and cultivates core values that define the school's culture.

    essential   **important**   **somewhat important**   **insignificant**

4) The Principal acts ethically and professionally in personal conduct, relationships with others, and all aspects of school leadership.

    essential   **important**   **somewhat important**   **insignificant**

5) The Principal acts according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness,

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transparency, trust, and collaboration.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

6) The Principal places children at the center of education and responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

7) The Principal strives to ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

8) The Principal recognizes, respects, and employs each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

9) The Principal ensures that each student has equitable access to effective teachers.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

10) The Principal implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

11) The Principal aligns and focuses systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

12) The Principal promotes rigorous instructional practices that are consistent with knowledge of child learning and the needs of each student.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

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13) The Principal builds and maintains a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets the needs of each student.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

14) The Principal creates and sustains an environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

15) The Principal provides coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the needs of each student.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

16) The Principal recruits, hires, support develops and retains effective and caring teachers.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

17) The Principal plans for and manages staff turnover and succession.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

18) The Principal develops teachers' and staff members' professional knowledge, skills, and practice through differentiated opportunities for learning and growth.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

19) The Principal develops workplace conditions for teachers and other professional staff.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

20) The Principal empowers and entrusts teachers and staff with collective responsibility for meeting the academic social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.

essential important somewhat important insignificant

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21) The Principal establishes and sustained a professional culture of engagement and commitment to shared vision, goals and objectives pertaining to the education of the whole child.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

22) The Principal is approachable, accessible, and welcoming to families and members of the community.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

23) The Principal creates and sustains positive, collaborative, and productive relationships with families and members of the community.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

24) The Principal engages in regular and open two-way communication with families and members of the community about the school, students, needs, problems, and accomplishments.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

25) The Principal institutes, manages, and monitors operations and administrative systems that promote the mission and vision of the school.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

26) The Principal strategically manages staff resources, assigning and scheduling teachers and staff to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

27) The Principal seeks, acquires, and manages fiscal, physical, and other resources to support curriculum instruction and assessment.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

28) The Principal seeks to make school more effective for each student, teachers and staff, families, and the community.

     essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

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29) The Principal uses methods of continuous improvement to achieve the vision, fulfill the mission, and promote the core values of the school.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

30) The Principal prepares the school and the community for improvement.

essential   important   somewhat important   insignificant

Part C: Demographic Information. Please check/circle the appropriate response or provide the requested information about yourself. Please be advised that providing this information is strictly voluntary.

Gender: Male_____   Female_____

District Employed: a) Urban   b) Suburban   c) Rural

District Type: a) Grades K – 5   b) Grades K – 8   c) Grades K – 12
                   d) Grades 9 – 12   e) Grades 7 – 12   f) other_____

Administrative Experience: a) 1 – 5 yrs.   b) 6 – 10 yrs.   c) 11 – 15 yrs.   d) 16 – 20 yrs.
                               e) 21 or more

Level previously employed as an administrator: (click all that apply)

a) Pre-school   b) grades K – 5   c) grades 6 – 8
d) grades 9 -12   e) district wide   f) other_____

Evaluation Tool that you currently use to evaluate building Principals:

a.) Danielson   b.) Marzano   c.) Stronge   c. Other_____

Education: a) BA/BS +15   b) MA/MS   c) MA+/MS+   d) Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Undergraduate Major:_____
Graduate Major: _____
Doctorate earned in (if applicable): _____

Teaching Experience: a) 1 – 5 yrs. b) 6 – 10 yrs. c) 11 – 15 yrs. d) 16 – 20 yrs. e) 21 or more

A H O M E F O R T H E M I N D, T H E H E A R T A N D T H E S P I R I T

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE!
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Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter

December 5, 2019

Kevin Hajduk

Re: Study ID# 2020-036

Dear Mr. Hajduk,

At its December 4, 2019 meeting, the Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled "New Jersey Superintendents' perceptions of the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders and their application to the summative evaluation process of school principals" as submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval as exempt. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Office of the Institutional Review Board
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