

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comment [RE1]: If you are following APA, include the paper title in the header on each page (left-justified and in all caps) and the page number (right-justified).

In recent years, schools and school districts have had to adapt to the changing tide in educational reform. Schools and districts are now held accountable by the government and by the public for student achievement. The results from high-stakes assessments are widely publicized, which has caused principal and superintendents to scrutinize carefully how their schools operate and perform (Ediger, 2002). As a result, the role of the site principal has become a critical part of a successful school district since the increased accountability at the site level has made it necessary for superintendents and school boards to delegate and shift many of the decisions regarding educating students to their principals at the school sites (Duke, 2004).

Comment [RE2]: If possible, be more specific by changing to "since 2001" or whatever year is relevant.

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This current laser-like focus on student achievement has also altered the traditional role of superintendents. Superintendents today are held accountable for the achievement results of students in their school district and, therefore, are responsible to lead the instructional capacity of the entire school district (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

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Difficult challenges brought about by the changing role and expectations of district leadership have caused some superintendents to express doubt in their abilities to meet the daunting expectations of their stewardship. In 2003, Fuller et al. conducted a study based on a survey of 100 of the nation's largest urban superintendents. The study identified three pressing challenges: (a) the structure of the job prevents superintendents from doing what they were hired to do; (b) local school decisions and dynamics are

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driven by employment demands instead of **by** student achievement; (c) **c**losing the achievement gap is the skill that seems to be in the lowest supply among superintendents.

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Therefore, **u**rban superintendents face daunting challenges. **S**uccessful **s**uperintendents have found allies **f**or their cause by finding and using effective site principals. According to one study, principals referred to themselves as “mini-superintendents” because they deal with decisions regarding staff development, community politics, budgets, entrepreneurship, leadership, and board relations (McPherson & Crowson, 1993). The principal is an extension of the superintendent and

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the success of the superintendent is **l**inked **d**irectly to the successes or **t**he failures of their site principals. This interdependent relationship **b**etween a superintendent and his or her principals **m**eans that selecting the right principal candidates **i**s **p**ossibly the most important decision **a** superintendent makes (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009).

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One reason **w**hy the superintendent’s hiring decisions **a**re so critical is **t**hat effective principals have a significant impact on student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Research has demonstrated that the significant positive relationship between effective principals and student achievement is second only to the role of a student’s classroom teacher (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2005). Furthermore, the potential influence of an effective principal goes beyond the direct observable effects. Over time, effective principals are able to identify, hire, train, and retain **a**dditional effective teachers, which can compound the influence of the site principal (Young, 2007). The hiring of the right principal can make a significant difference in a school’s academic performance.

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