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Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the correlation between superintendent's tenure and student academic achievement. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** *What is the correlation between a Superintendent's tenure and student academic achievement? What is the correlation between a Superintendent's tenure, the number of years of school board consistency, and student academic achievement?*

### **Search Process**

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** *superintendent tenure AND student achievement; superintendent tenure AND school board AND student achievement*

### **Search databases and websites:**

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

**Sample Citations Retrieved:** (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy)

Cudeiro, A. (2005). Leading Student Achievement: A Study Finds Superintendents Affecting Instructional Gains through their Strong Relationships with Principals. *School Administrator*, 62(11), 16.

**Abstract/Summary:** The superintendent's role today is so complex that it deals with so many competing issues and is measured by such high standards tied to accountability for results that few are willing to tackle the job these days. With such a seemingly impossible job to tame, it is amazing that some superintendents still can truly affect student achievement. In this article, the author studies superintendents who had, indeed, made a difference in student learning. The author reports on what she learned from interviewing, observing and collecting data about three

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superintendents over a course of four years. She also interviewed their leadership teams and the principals in their districts to determine what the superintendents did that affected their own roles as instructional leaders. The author discovered that the most effective training for principals is district-wide and connects expertise in instructional practice with expertise in supervising instruction.

Goodman, R. H., Fulbright, L., & Zimmerman, W. G. (1997). *Getting there from here. School board-superintendent collaboration: Creating a school governance team capable of raising student achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/62505840?accountid=4840>

**Abstract/Summary:** School board-superintendent collaboration is essential to the success of public education. This report presents findings of a study that focused on board-superintendent collaboration for higher student achievement. Data were collected through a review of state laws and interviews conducted with 132 educators, parents, and other citizens in 10 diverse school districts in 5 states--Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and Texas. The report offers 41 recommendations in 6 categories: (1) Build a foundation for teamwork; (2) get the best and most capable team players; (3) ensure that the team players know their roles and responsibilities; (4) get into team training; (5) adopt good team strategies; and (6) convince others to support the team. Appendices contain profiles of the 10 school districts, including profiles of their student achievement, school board members, and superintendents; job descriptions of superintendents and board members; and a partial bibliography of school district governance.

Goodman, R. H., & Zimmerman, W. G. (2000). *Thinking differently: Recommendations for 21st century school Board/Superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork for high student achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service. Retrieved from: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/16/01/1601.htm>.

**Abstract/Summary:** This publication follows up on a work begun in 1997 that reported a nationwide study of school board/superintendent collaboration for high student achievement. The current report addresses the requisite steps that local school boards, superintendents, state political and educational leaders, and university deans and faculty need to take to develop and strengthen local school board/superintendent leadership. The recommendations in the report are based on the idea that school districts cannot effectively raise student achievement without strong leadership and teamwork from the school board and superintendent. The booklet spells out suggestions that were generated by a broad panel of national educators and that require major changes in state laws, in local policies, and in the graduate and continuing education of superintendents. In addition to a call for developing local board/superintendent leadership teams, it outlines the nature of student achievement, details some of the challenges in trying to implement changes, offers ideas for creating public engagement and community mobilization, and provides tips for attracting and retaining qualified school board members. Many of the

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suggestions involve a shift in attitude and include thinking differently about public engagement, about leadership development, about the role of school boards and superintendents, and about state legislative reform

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides>.

**Abstract/Summary:** This guide identifies practices that can improve the performance of chronically low-performing schools—a process commonly referred to as creating "turnaround schools." The four recommendations in this guide work together to help failing schools make adequate yearly progress.

Land, D. (2002). Local school boards under review: Their role and effectiveness in relation to students' academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(2), 229-278. doi: 10.3102/00346543072002229

**Abstract/Summary:** This report provides a review of literature published in the past two decades on the role and effectiveness of school boards. Though school boards are but one component of school district leadership—the superintendent and other district administrators and staff constituting the other main components—school boards are the focus of this review because they have a distinct role and have been understudied. The report is organized into five major sections. First, a brief history of school boards is presented, and then their current state is described. The charge that school boards are outmoded and should be eliminated cannot be addressed adequately without an understanding of how they have evolved and currently function. Next, school boards and educational governance reforms are examined in order to describe the larger context in which school boards operate and to explore how school boards have been, and might be, reformed in the future. In a separate section, characteristics of effective school boards that have been identified by school board experts are described. Because qualitative and quantitative research on school boards is limited, the final section is devoted to discussion of research limitations and future directions.

Simpson, J. (2013). Superintendent tenure and student achievement. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice*, 9(4), 10-23.

**Abstract/Summary:** A correlational research design was used to examine the influence of superintendent tenure on student achievement in rural Appalachian Kentucky school districts. Superintendent tenure was compared to aggregated student achievement scores for 2011 and to changes in students' learning outcomes over the course of the superintendents' tenure. The

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relationship between superintendent tenure and changes in student achievement scores was statistically significant. A regression test indicated a significant correlation between the two variables, ( $r [44] = 0.75$ ,  $p$  less than 0.01). Data also indicated that students demonstrated significant growth in achievement test scores when superintendents served more than five years in the same school district, as shown by an independent samples t-test ( $t [43] = 2.01$ ,  $p$  less than 0.01). (Contains 4 tables and 3 figures.)

Truslow, K. O., & Coleman, C. J. (2005). Self-efficacy development in school leaders: An alternate paradigm. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice*, 2(2), 18-24.

**Abstract/Summary:** Several theorists have tried to explain the concern of short superintendency tenure. The interests of the researchers involved studying conflict management in relationship to superintendent turnover and congruency with the school board. One research study included all public school superintendents in the United States. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the Thomas-Kilmann Inventory (TKI), an open-ended interview protocol, and the Organizational Leadership Effectiveness Inventory. The research study sought to answer questions related to the conflict management modes of superintendents. A Chi-square test was conducted to identify if there was a larger proportion than expected in any one of the five conflict management modes. The purpose of the second study was to determine if the congruence between the ideal/actual and expected/perceived roles of the superintendent [based on the eight State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) standards between the superintendents and school board presidents in Texas] had an effect on student achievement. The subjects for this study were those responding superintendents and school board presidents, as identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), that have served together for a period of three or more years as a district's leadership team. A Pearson-r correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the similarities between superintendent and school board responses. An ANOVA was also used to determine congruence between superintendents' and board members' responses pertaining to SBEC standards. Results reveal that public school superintendents have significantly different conflict management approaches. These differences in conflict management modes affect the manner in which superintendents relate to and interact with all facets of leadership. The data collected from the survey of superintendents and school board presidents revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between ideal and actual roles of superintendents and school boards. This lack of congruence could play a major role in the creation of conflict by external forces that must be managed by the superintendent.

Waters, T. J., & Marzano, R. J. (2007). School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement. *ERS Spectrum*, 25(2), 1-12.

**Abstract/Summary:** To determine the influence of district superintendents on student achievement and the characteristics of effective superintendents, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted a meta-analysis of research on the influence of

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school district leaders on student performance. This study examined findings from 27 studies conducted since 1970 that used rigorous, quantitative methods to study the influence of school district leaders on student achievement. The authors found a statistically significant relationship between district leadership and student achievement, and that effective superintendents focus on creating goal-oriented districts. The authors also discovered that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, and they identified five district-level leadership responsibilities that have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. The study concludes that school board members need to hire superintendents who skillfully fulfill key leadership responsibilities, support district goals for achievement and instruction, and support district- and school-level leadership in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, stability. (Contains 5 figures.)

### **Referrals**

#### **Organizations:**

- Wallace Foundation: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/Pages/default.aspx>
- National Center for School Leadership: <http://www.ncfsl.org/>
- National Association of School Superintendents: <http://www.nass.us>
- National School Boards Association: <http://www.nsba.org>
- Center on Instruction: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org>

#### **Federally Funded Resources:**

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

#### ***Disclaimer:***

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