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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS'
EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL PERFORMANCE
OF MICHIGAN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

Ted J. Culver

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1987

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS'
EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL PERFORMANCE
OF MICHIGAN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Ted J. Culver, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1987

The changing concepts of the role and function of education as well as the economic and social developments in our society have placed new and increased demands on our educational system. The concept of a regional education service agency as an approach to providing improved services to K-12 school districts is a method adopted in Michigan. This agency is called an intermediate school district (ISD).

The purpose of the study was to discover the difference between what K-12 superintendents expect from an ISD and their perceptions of the value of the services received. The data gathered could provide decision makers at the ISD and state levels information with which to make decisions in the areas of services and funding. The findings could also assist in establishing the concept that the use of local superintendents as a client system for the purpose of assessing needs and evaluating program services is essential.

The six service areas that were used in the study were special education, regional media centers, career and vocational education, data processing, professional development, and administrative services. These were the independent variables. The dependent

variables were the local superintendents' expectations and perceptions of performance derived from the responses to a survey.

The target population was the 525 K-12 local superintendents in Michigan, from which a random sample of 226 was taken. A mailed questionnaire was used to collect data and a t test was used to test the difference between group means of expectations and perceptions of performance in each of the service areas. Results illustrated a statistically significant difference between the group means in each service area. Expectations rated higher than perceptions of performance.

The study leads to suggestions for further research related to ISDs. Using the local superintendents as a client system would provide an appropriate opportunity to assess needs and evaluate existing programs as well as provide an opportunity for local input on an ongoing basis. The study also suggests that criteria be developed to identify effective ISDs that can be used as a model for other ISDs as well as provide a model of effectiveness for ISD leadership.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The leadership, guidance, and compassion displayed by my advisor, Dr. Lawrence Schlack, played an integral role in my completing this dissertation. For that reason, I will be forever grateful to Larry. Also playing an important role in this project were the two other dissertation committee members, Drs. Charles Warfield and George Woons. Their support was appreciated.

Through the formative years of my education my mother, Gladys Culver, displayed an unusual amount of patience and faith in me. I am eternally grateful to her. Also, my mother-in-law, Mabel Bauerle, played a major part in this project by proofreading the rough drafts.

In a good friend and colleague, David Fultz, I have had someone I could always count on to answer questions and provide a word of support. Thanks Dave.

My daughters, Tammy and Becky, have been supportive throughout this effort. There were many hours and days that I could not tend to some of their needs because of working on this dissertation. Their understanding was of great assistance.

To save the best for the last, I thank my wife, Rosalyn, for her support, faith, and understanding. She has not only played a major role in this particular venture, but also in my entire college career as well. She always believed in me and such confidence provided a

great deal of motivation for me to attain the level of education that I have.

Ted J. Culver

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

During the past quarter century, the demand for expanded and improved educational services from our schools has increased dramatically. Stephens (1973) reported that the two precipitating factors that account for much of the ferment are: (a) economic and social developments in our society, and (b) changing concepts of the role and function of education. Improving services that are offered students through local and statewide school systems is, and should be, a continual process. Stephens (1977) listed four basic approaches to improving local and statewide school systems: (a) consolidation of small local systems into larger systems, (b) special services from state agencies, (c) formation of cooperatives among local systems for special purposes, and (d) regional educational service agencies (RESAs). The regional approach to providing improved services is the method adopted in Michigan.

The regional units in Michigan are called intermediate school districts (ISDs). Emerson (cited in Blomquist, 1975) described the intermediate school district as follows:

The Intermediate School District is the middle echelon of a state system of schools made up of a State Education Office, numerous local school districts (public corporations), and less numerous Intermediate School Districts (also public corporations). One echelon is not over

another, either command-wise or status-wise. Each performs its own logically assigned and assumed tasks in an excellent manner. The statute is over each and all of them.
(p. 3)

This description provides the concept under which the ISD now operates.

Since the inception of the ISD in Michigan, what little research that has been conducted has in large part focused on role expectations, structure, and function of the ISD or certain administrators within the ISD. Boss (1963) and Blomquist (1975) conducted research on the role expectations of the ISD superintendent. Hawkins (1981) studied the role expectations of the vocational-technical director.

The structure of the ISD in Michigan was addressed by Britton (1969) from a purely economical standpoint. The conclusions made in his report included reducing the number of ISDs in an effort to provide more efficient units. Schlack (1972) rationalized that the need for larger ISDs can be summed in terms of equity, economy, and efficiency. Phelps, Addonizio, and Nicol (1980) dealt with structure through the scope (i.e., range and number) of services offered to students. They concluded that consolidating smaller ISDs into units not exceeding 28,000-30,000 membership or 2,800 square miles would provide improved services. Kloster (1978) conducted a study on the Michigan ISD structure and functions. Some contradiction surfaces in that although he recommended a reduction of the number of ISDs from 58 to 22, he offered the following statement:

As stated above, most attempts to resolve the ISD dilemma have been related to increasing the average size and reducing the number of ISDs in the network. This approach, although possibly presenting a reasonable solution, has not

been universally accepted because of the lack of documentation. Merely stating a solution to a problem does not necessarily convince the affected parties as to the sincerity of the presenter or with regard to the benefits which are to accrue. The attempts at reorganizing ISDs have all, to date, met with sui bono issues. (p. 9)

He also noted that, "only very recently has there been any discussion of the functions of the ISD. This is a positive sign of productive dialogue but must be substantially enlarged and clarified" (p. 9). The implication is clear that looking at the structure of an organization is important, but the function of that same organization must also be examined.

Kloster (1978) focused on the functions of the ISD in Michigan in part in terms of the regulatory versus service dichotomy. Dorsey and Ameen (1980) conducted a study with the central focus of providing a "set of functions appropriate to intermediate school districts" (p. 4). Egloff (1982) studied the personnel functions of the ISD as perceived by constituent administrators to determine what personnel services the ISD should offer to local districts. In each case, attention was given to the functions of the ISD organization, as a whole or in part, and not strictly to the ISD structure.

Although the role expectations of certain ISD administrators, the structure, and the function of the ISD have been studied and discussed, however minimally, there seems to be an important issue that needs attention. The concept of determining perceptions of effectiveness of the ISD in Michigan through a client system approach is not addressed in the literature.

Ameen (1979), in a review of the literature on Michigan ISDs, noted that, "though the findings of the study were used as a basis for discussing ISD reorganization, the concept of asking the local district client what his or her needs are is a new approach" (p. 10). Dorsey and Ameen (1980), in a study addressing the organization and function of the ISD in Michigan, reviewed other studies on regional education service centers (RESCs) in the country. One observation made was, "however, the issue of the effectiveness of RESCs is not addressed and the perceptions of principals and teachers, who would seem to be relevant audiences, are not examined" (p. 11).

The opinions of various local administrators have occasionally been sought on such issues as structure and function of the ISDs in Michigan. However, the concept of studying ISDs in Michigan in terms of effectiveness of the services offered is one that has not been approached. There are indications that such a concept needs to be explored, and using a client system is one method of accomplishing such a task.

The Problem

The focus of this study was to determine the relationship between Michigan local superintendents' expectations of services offered by ISDs and the perceptions Michigan local superintendents have of the ISDs' actual performance in the service areas. For the purpose of this study, an intermediate school district is an agency that operates as a regional unit which provides coordination and supplementary services to local districts, as well as providing a

link between the local districts and the state department of education.

Purpose of the Study

In a study of the state of Michigan and its educational system, Hodgkinson (1987) addressed the role of education in preparing for the future work force. He noted that diversification with a focus on the service economy is needed and that, "the Michigan educational system will have to follow that lead" (p. 9). The ISD in Michigan can and should play an integral role in the future of Michigan's economy by continuing to provide needed educational services for students. This study, by focusing on effectiveness of services offered, will provide decision makers at the ISD with data with which to strengthen their decisions, improve the services offered, and assist in establishing the concept that a client system for the purpose of evaluating program services is essential in order to improve communications and meet the needs of a changing and diverse environment.

The findings of this study could also provide decision makers at the state level with valuable information with which to make financial and policy decisions. Changes may be needed in the distribution of state funds for education based on the input from the grass roots, which in terms of the ISDs are the local districts.

Questions to Be Examined

What this study attempted to do was determine the relationship between expectations of services that local superintendents have of ISDs and their perceptions of the actual performance of ISDs in those program service areas. Specifically, the following questions were examined:

1. Is there a variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs in the various service areas and their perceptions of actual performance in these areas?
2. What characteristics might account for variance between expectations and perceived performance?

Limits of the Study

One concern of the researcher dealt with the degree of involvement in and knowledge of the ISD that the local superintendent actually possessed. The inability to accurately measure how involved and how knowledgeable the local superintendent is of the ISD limits the investigation.

Another limitation of the study was the reliability of the use of a survey in that it is useful only within the constraints of time. Changes in the political climate, in economics, and in legislation may occur. Such changes could alter the findings of the study.

Summary

The introduction provided background information on the problem and why the problem was studied. Justification for such a study was given by citing research that focused on many aspects of ISDs in Michigan, but not in the area of effectiveness as determined by a client system. The questions that this study attempted to answer involved the variance between expectations and perceptions of actual performance in selected service areas that Michigan local superintendents have of their respective ISDs.

Chapter II contains a review of the related literature, while the research design is detailed in Chapter III. An analysis of the research results is provided in Chapter IV. A summary with conclusions based on the analysis of the results appears in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In Chapter I, background information was provided that indicated a need to review the effectiveness of ISDs in terms of services offered. Also indicated was the emerging concept of using a client system as a method of assessing such effectiveness. Chapter II provides an extensive review of the related literature to illustrate how the concept of assessing effectiveness through a client system evolved.

The format for this chapter is to review the ISD concept from a general point of view. This is followed with an outline that more specifically illustrates how the literature supports the direction the research took. To accomplish this, a national perspective of regional educational service agencies is provided. Included are common terms used throughout many parts of the United States that are synonymous to the regionalized educational system. A brief history of ISDs in Michigan follows. The notion of reorganization of regional educational agencies is examined. The next section focuses on the service areas that were chosen for the study of effectiveness through the client system. This is followed by support for the use of local superintendents as the clients in studying the relationship between their expectations and their perceptions of actual

performance of various services offered by Michigan ISDs. A concluding section briefly outlines the research questions that have evolved as a result of the review of the related literature.

Regional Educational Service Agencies:
A National Perspective

Definitions

While reviewing the literature on regionalizing education, there are many terms used in different states and regions that refer to this same concept. In addition, various levels of education are referred to which need to be defined.

1. State education agency (SEA): the state agency which has the prime responsibility by law for elementary and secondary education. The agency is usually called the state department of education.

2. Local education agency (LEA): the school administrative unit at the local level which is supported and maintained by public funds and local leadership. This agency is usually a school district comprised of kindergarten, elementary school, middle or junior high school, and high school.

3. Education service agency (ESA): a public agency which is organized and designed to serve several LEAs within a specific region, as well as to serve the SEA.

4. Regional education service center (RESC): the title of the ESA in some states.

5. Regional educational service agency (RESA): the title of the ESA in some states.

6. Intermediate unit (IU): the title of the ESA in some states.

7. Intermediate school district (ISD): the title of the ESA in some states.

Background

Strayer (cited in Rhodes, 1963) noted that "if the intermediate unit of school administration did not already exist, someone would have to invent it" (p. 3). Although the RESA concept, as it is now formally accepted, was in a developmental stage during the time when this statement was made, the regional approach was certainly not new.

Davis (1976) noted the first regional administrative unit was established in Delaware in 1829. The units were called intermediate school districts (ISDs) and were organized as a county unit with a county superintendent. The primary purpose was to provide administrative leadership that was badly lacking in the rural districts. The office of the county superintendent became a very influential one. This concept became so popular that emergent states west of the Mississippi included provisions for this concept in their state constitutions.

After 1920, two factors developed that reduced the need for ISDs: (a) the expansion of services that were generated in the city schools, which created less dependence on the ISD concept in its then present form, and (b) the emergence of good roads and the widespread

use of school buses. Direct contact with state level services became easier, and smaller rural districts were encouraged to consolidate and thus be able to provide the administrative and program services enjoyed by larger city schools.

The need for a county superintendent as the instructional leader for the local districts was rapidly diminishing, and it became clear that the traditional role of the ISD was no longer adequate for modern times. With the leadership vested more in the local districts, and with the pooling of resources among several smaller districts, there was no longer a pressing need for ISDs to provide essential educational services. However, it became clear that the traditional role of leadership that the ISD provided gave way to another role. The new role was not so much what programs and services to offer, but how to offer them. Providing services for handicapped students, expensive audiovisual aids for teachers, in-service education, special programs for talented students, vocational and technical equipment and instruction, and consultant help in curriculum development were but a few areas that surfaced as educators assessed the remaining needs for local school districts. As the educational service needs changed, so changed the function of the ISD.

Schlack (1972) rationalized that the significance of regional service units is based on three precepts: (a) equity of programs through accessibility by students regardless of the size and wealth of the local districts from which the students come; (b) economy through specialized personnel and materials, thus reducing

unnecessary duplication; and (c) efficiency through providing programs and services that require a large student population. Such conceptual rationalization for regional service units has withstood the test of time and remains as the basis for which they presently exist.

Given the acceptance of equity, economy, and efficiency as the bases for the regional approach, various types of approaches began to emerge. Stephens (1979e) contended that educational service agencies appeared to be developing in three basic patterns: (a) special district ESAs that are the second echelon in a three-echelon state system of schools, (b) the regionalized SEA pattern which is a direct arm of the state system, and (c) a cooperative pattern, where two or more LEAs cooperate to provide special programs. In comparison, the special district ESA appeared to have a larger number of strengths and fewer weaknesses than the other two patterns.

As the regional service unit concept began to grow in strength, one misconception that emerged was the view that such an approach was for the rural schools only. Fitzwater (1968) disagreed and noted that:

The view that an intermediate structure can be useful only where districts are small has been most sharply challenged by development of expanded intermediate district programs in suburban counties in metropolitan areas. In a number of states these large intermediate units, with their mushrooming suburban communities served by good-sized local districts, have been pace-setters in demonstrating what can be accomplished. (p. 36)

Stephens (1980) alluded to a lack of emphasis of the role of the ESA in the metropolitan areas. The growing complexity of urban society

and the increasing sophistication of the legal definition of equal educational opportunity are two reasons cited for more ESA cooperation in the metropolitan areas. A former urban superintendent, Estes (1981), lent support to the above views. He stated that:

The complexity of problems emerging in today's urban societies makes it necessary that leadership be provided to bring all public agencies and institutions together in a coordinated effort to meet the challenges. Urban education can no longer afford the luxury of permitting its schools to exist outside the coordinative efforts of the RESA.
(p. 355)

Just as the needs changes in the early 1900s dictated a new role for the ISDs, so it appears that the societal changes dictate a need for the urban LEAs to take an active part in the regional service approach.

The RESA concept continued to gain national strength and the future continues to look good. Stephens (1968) cited six reasons for the bright future of the RESA concept: (a) providing equal educational opportunities while protecting local control, (b) improving the state school structure, (c) providing greater efficiency and economy, (d) remaining consistent with the trend of the area approach, (e) being supported by legislation and interest in many states, and (f) gaining the support of many professional organizations. Stephens (1971) indicated that a reassessment of the capabilities of the traditional school government and the expanding federal commitment to education also lend support to a solid future for RESAs. Stephens (1972, 1973) pointed to economic and social developments, the increasing role of technology, and the accompanying high degree of specialization of staff and facilities requirements as

further evidence of ensured RESA success.

Mack and Stephens (1979) supported the continuation of the regional concept with a plea for federal assistance. Policy adoption for ESAs to receive federal funds, accelerating the efforts of the National Center for Education Statistics in gathering data on ESAs, including ESAs in federal school improvement efforts, federal incentives for cooperative arrangements, and using the ESAs as a mechanism for greater coordination between units of school and general government are actions suggested to strengthen the national base of the ESA system. Impetus for supporting the regional approach continues to mount with still another call for support at the national level. Firestone (1981) stated the belief that "it is apparent that RESAs are serving a useful function in tying together the national educational system and helping local districts cope with external forces" (p. 14).

There is evidence that the momentum alluded to above will continue. Kirst (1982), while outlining criteria for school reform in the 1980s, included the need for education at a low cost. Offering more economical educational services is one of the goals of the regional system. Firestone, Wilson, and Rossman (1982), in a study to determine where educational administrators seek outside assistance, discovered that RESAs are among the primary agencies that administrators utilize when assistance is sought. Perhaps the most important development in the continued success of the regional approach to education was offered by Turner (1980). He commented that the American Association of Educational Service Agencies was formed

in 1977, with the primary purposes being to represent ESAs in policy making and to serve as the nucleus of a communications and legislative network. The formation of such a professional organization can provide the kind of communications and marketing that is helpful for continued growth of the ESA idea.

The ESA concept at the national level has a long and progressive past. The momentum of the ESA system appears to be built on the changing needs of educational systems. The fact that the society is ever-changing may be the ultimate reason for believing that the continued existence of the ESA idea is assured.

The Michigan Intermediate School District System: An Historical View

Although the idea of ISDs in Michigan is relatively recent, the regional approach in Michigan has a long history. The evolution of ISDs in Michigan parallels that of the regional approach at the national level.

The lack of communication and transportation within the Michigan school system structure created a need for improved organization. According to Ameen (1979), a law was passed in 1837 requiring the addition of school inspectors in each township. The duties included reviewing teaching candidates and enforcing state rules and regulations. This form of regulation of schools continued until 1867, at which time the Michigan Legislature acted on a plan of adopting the concept of the county superintendent.

The regulatory powers shifted back and forth from the township to the county until the early 1930s. Kloster (1978) and Ameen (1979) noted that in the early 1930s the responsibility shifted to the office of the elected county commissioner of schools. Because this office was highly political, it received substantial criticism. In 1947, the state law was amended to provide for a county board of education, which in turn was empowered with the responsibility of appointing a county superintendent. Kloster (1978) noted that "this change tended to create, for the first time, a governance structure substantially separated from the structure of other local government units" (p. 6).

The Michigan State Legislature passed Public Act 190 (1962), effective March 28, 1963, which phased out the county board of education system and replaced it with the ISD concept. The act outlined mandatory and permissive responsibilities. Every local school district was required to belong to an ISD, but the ISD geographical configuration was left to the discretion of the former county districts. The original boundaries were that of the county lines and, as such, 83 ISDs were created in 1963. With the allowance made that the geographical areas to be served by ISDs did not necessarily have to be coterminous with county boundaries, the idea of regional services emerged in a more strictly defined pattern. The number of ISDs has been reduced through mergers from 83 in 1963 to the present number of 57.

Dorsey and Ameen (1980) addressed additional legislation which have had significant impact on the role of the ISD. In 1963, an

amendment to Act 190 (cited in Dorsey & Ameen, 1980) was enacted which empowered the ISDs to levy taxes to support area vocational/technical programs. In 1963, legislation was approved authorizing ISD boards of education to provide grants to its local districts or community colleges to construct area vocational/technical centers. Also, the Mandatory Special Education Act (Public Act 198, cited in Dorsey & Ameen, 1980) of 1971 added functions to the ISD that included monitoring special education programs in the constituent districts.

Legislation that was passed effective July 1, 1970, that is not unrelated to ISDs is Michigan Public Act 55. This act provided for a network of regions to be organized for the purpose of creating educational media services. Although each of the 22 regional educational media centers (REMCs) in Michigan may encompass more than one ISD, the spirit and intent of the ISD system is enhanced through the regional approach to providing additional services for students.

At the national level it was noted that pleas for federal assistance for the regional approach to education and the creation of a national organization for RESCs contribute to the RESCs' bright future. In Michigan, the future of ISDs is enhanced with a series of legislative acts which specifically address their function and structure. Such a bright future adds significance to the long history of the regional approach to education in Michigan.

Reorganization Examined

Reorganization of school districts, at the local and regional levels, has played a role in attempts to improve educational services to students. This is true from the national perspective as well as in Michigan. A question arises, however, as to whether reorganization has accomplished the goals for which proponents of this strategy were striving. The literature indicates an overemphasis has been placed on reorganization.

There is little doubt that in the early to mid-20th century a need existed to consolidate many rural schools. As noted earlier there were severe communication and transportation problems that prompted the initiation of consolidated administrative offices to enhance quality control. There also existed a need to provide equity in educational programs. Stephens (1977) indicated the national trend of consolidation in reporting that the number of public local school districts was reduced from 127,649 in 1932 to 16,383 in 1975. The consolidation efforts were to provide the kind of equity and efficiency of educational programs that were sought.

With the emergence of ESAs becoming more prominent as a method of improving educational services, the idea of reorganization at the regional level became popular. Britton (1969), in a report on school finance and educational opportunities in Michigan, indicated that it was critically urgent that the number of local districts and ISDs be cut in half. He was firm in his belief that legislation be enacted to implement this recommendation. Not only did he prescribe a

smaller number of ISDs, but also placed a minimum enrollment of 25,000 students as a high priority. Stephens (1972) supported the optimal enrollment concept, although the range of numbers in the recommended enrollment differs from the figures of other proponents. He noted that "a majority of specialists in the field and recent study proposals concerning optimal pupil enrollment size recommend a base of 50,000 to 100,000 students in grades K-12 inclusive" (p. 40). Phelps et al. (1980), in a study of ISD reorganization in Michigan, suggested the optimal enrollment range for providing an appropriate scope of programs and services to be between 28,000 to 30,000 students.

There are opposing views to the concept of reorganization, however. The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (1967) cautioned that the tendency should not be to create larger districts, and that the criterion of size may have already been overemphasized. Shea and Thompkins (1976) were even more emphatic on consolidation when they stated:

Given the enthusiasm with which consolidation was advocated, one would expect the empirical evidence supporting this policy to be overwhelming. It is not. The evidence on consolidation is incomplete. Most of the research not only fails to document the alleged benefits of consolidation, but also fails to acknowledge potential liabilities or problems. The conclusions are, at best, inconclusive, and, at worst, simply incorrect. (p. 3)

While conducting a study that examines the function and structure of the ISD in Michigan, Dorsey and Ameen (1980) noted that "there are no data to support the notion that a minimum enrollment of 25,000 students in an ISD will result in effective programming" (p. 19).

Egloff (1982) supported research efforts in the area of Michigan ISDs that deal with their functions, and less on the numbers and size of districts. Aycock (1981) noted that "changes in behavior are not caused simply by reorganization" (p. 42).

In reviewing the literature, it appears that reorganization may be a controversial issue. Perhaps the success of reorganization depends upon the purpose of such a strategy. If the ultimate goal is purely a matter of cost efficiency and program equity, then there may be some merit to planned and controlled reorganization. However, if its purpose is to improve educational services to students in terms of effectiveness and a meaningful change in student behavior within the learning process, reorganization is not widely supported as the strategy to be used. Other strategies need to be sought in order to determine and improve the effectiveness of ISDs in their quest to improve services to students.

Services Common to Intermediate School Districts

In studying the relationship between expectations and perceptions of performance in service areas of Michigan ISDs, it is imperative that a common set of services to be offered be developed. There is a conceptual level of the role of the ISD to be considered as well as the more narrowly defined services to be provided. This section will briefly review these thoughts.

Although the mandate of the legislation for creating the ISD in Michigan is clear, how each ISD perceives its role may vary. Davis (1976) used the Kent ISD in Michigan as an illustration of role

definition. The Kent ISD proposed three role areas: (a) to provide the constituent districts with the services they request, (b) to be initiators of new programs, and (c) to comply with legislation and to make changes as the changes in legislation occur. In a special report, the Task Force Appointed by the State Board of Education (1977) supported the broad roles outlined by the Kent ISD. Two additions to those proposed by the Kent ISD, however, were offered: (a) the idea of an ISD being large enough to financially support a broad range of services, and (b) the concept of governance of local schools remaining with local boards without interference from ISD boards of education.

Moving from the broad roles of the ISD to the more specific services provided, there is support for a common set of services. Rhodes (1963) recognized many supplemental service functions of intermediate units that are still presently regarded as essential. He suggested that intermediate units offer services such as supervision of instruction, consultant help for teachers, operation of library and instructional materials centers, provision of psychological and guidance services, health services, and special classes for the handicapped pupils. Stephens (1972), in a study of a profile of exemplary ESAs, examined features that characterized which services and programs would be provided. He noted that "most typically, major emphasis involves program areas in which there is a high degree of specialization of staff or facility requirements, technology is a requisite and there is a high cost factor or low pupil incidence associated with the program" (p. 37). As such, the range of programs

he found to exist in exemplary units matched many of those offered by Rhodes (1963) with the addition of research and development services.

Stephens (1979a), while studying status and trends of ESA networks across the nation, asked each ESA to rank the program areas offered from a prepared list of 26. Ranked at the top by the majority of the ESAs were special education, media and library services, general ESA administration, staff development, curriculum services, and a tie between data processing services and vocational education. There is a striking resemblance to the service and program areas outlined above and those suggested in research by Kloster (1978) and Dorsey and Ameen (1980).

The similarity of thinking between what services and programs were believed to be important for ESAs in moving from 1963 to 1980 continued in Michigan as recently as 1985. In a report which highlights exemplary programs offered throughout many of the Michigan ISDs, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA, 1985) outlined six areas of responsibilities for ISDs: (a) administrative services, which includes processing and monitoring some of the reports and programs that are required by state and federal law; (b) special education, which provides local districts with specialized personnel and classrooms to fulfill state and federal requirements; (c) a regional media center that will have the financial and human resource bases to provide extensive media equipment, materials, and services; (d) data processing, which can assist in handling payroll, bus scheduling, and student services programs; (e) professional development, which will offer workshops, seminars,

guest speakers, and content specialists that may not otherwise be affordable at the local level; and (f) career and vocational education which provides experiences that will assist students in preparing for the real world of work.

The six service areas outlined by the MAISA (1985) were the basis for studying the relationship between expectations of service areas and perceptions of performance in those service areas in the Michigan ISD system. History and research demonstrates that these six areas are widely accepted in terms of the focus of ESAs. Although there are, no doubt, some variations to the substance of some of these services, they do give a clear idea of the areas in which ISDs can enrich the educational lives of students.

Determining Effective Programming: The Client System

Thus far, the success of regional programs has been addressed in terms of equity, efficiency, and economy. Reviewing the structure and function of the ESA appears to have dominated research on regional units. Reorganization is viewed by some experts as a strategy that will result in better equity, efficiency, and economy. However, the concept of effectiveness, or quality, of programs has not been widely addressed, if at all. The purpose of this research was to study effectiveness in Michigan ISDs by studying the relationship of expectations in service areas and the perception of performance in those same areas. The use of a client system, more specifically the local district superintendents, will be used. The literature review in this section addresses the client system in general, then focuses

directly on the superintendent as the optimal client in determining ISD program effectiveness.

The Concept

The term client refers to the individual or organization being served. As such there is implied a relationship between one for which a service exists and one which has the obligation of providing the service. Synonymous to this relationship is the idea of collaboration. Pine and Keane (1986) defined collaboration as "a joint endeavor of autonomous units to achieve outcomes desired by all but beyond the grasp of any one unit acting alone" (p. 27).

Successful collaboration is dependent on the existence of certain key factors. Coleman (1976) examined the activity of policy research. In doing so, he concluded that feedback from within the organization is essential for effective policy to be developed. In addition, the feedback should be from those within the organization who are knowledgeable of the goals and interests of all the interested parties. In a study of interorganizational collaboration, Yin and Gevaltrcy (1981) cited the services being user-oriented as a key factor to successful cooperative efforts. Communication is another important component to successful collaboration. Barbieri (1982) noted that "the best route to increase collaboration is greater communication among collaborators" (p. 33).

Focusing more on the ESA network in terms of the concept of a client relationship, there is strong support for a client system in working to strengthen the ESA-LEA relationship. Emerson (1970)

suggested that it is the constituent who evaluates the work that is accomplished, and the RESAs should operate within the constituent's context and under its direction. Cole and Cable (1977) stated that "conceptually . . . , the regional education service center is so organized as to allow for an evolving role as local demand and social change dictates" (p. 207). Providing programs at the regional level, according to a report by the Task Force Appointed by the State Board of Education (1977), should be dependent upon the needs of the local districts. Communication between the participants as a key to effective relationships is supported in a report by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (1967). Firestone (1984) suggested that the RESAs demonstrate responsiveness to LEA concerns in order to develop the trust and communication that is needed for effectiveness in programming.

Kimbrough (1979) conducted a study on the characteristics that existed in two regional educational organizations. One of the RESAs succeeded and the other failed. The characteristics that surfaced in the successful and not the unsuccessful RESA were: (a) a cooperative arrangement between the RESA and the local districts, (b) participating superintendents were prevalent, (c) school superintendents served on the advisory board, (d) attainable goals were established through effective communication, and (e) there was immediate administrative response to requests from the client system. Firestone, Rossman, and Wilson (1983b), in a study of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey ESA networks, cited trust and useful services as two conditions that are critical for effective service from the RESA. Included in the

factors that lead to such trust and useful services is the responsiveness to local district needs. Stephens (1979c) suggested that research be conducted on the effectiveness of existing types of ESAs where SEA and LEA review or approval of the programs and services exists.

Research and expert opinion support the concept of the client system, whether it be of a general collaborative nature or explicit to the ESA network. Such support lends further to the surprise that very little, if any, research has been conducted on the effectiveness of the ESA services by use of the client system. The idea of the local district being the client served is well-established in the literature. The remaining question is what official in the local district should be the representative in the evaluation of services provided by the ESAs.

The Superintendent As Client

When selecting a key person to represent an organization in a client situation, it is imperative that the person selected have an understanding of the organization and its goals. Ameen (1979) supported the client system in researching the ESA system. While developing a process for identifying priorities for the Marquette-Alger ISD, she used teachers as part of the client system. She concluded that teachers lack a global perspective toward education, thus implying they would not be the educators who should be representative of the total district. Equally important is the person occupying a position of credibility and authority. The superintendent of schools

possesses these credentials.

Shanks (1966), in a study of the role of the superintendent, concluded that among other responsibilities the superintendent is the educational leader of the school system. He noted in his research that "as educational leader of the school system, the superintendent should assume responsibility for the direction, administration, and continuing improvement of the instructional program" (p. 55).

DeBevoise (1986) found that while studying the successful collaboration between schools and universities, support by the superintendent is very important. He observed that by the superintendents placing a high value on collaboration with universities, it became easier for individuals to get support from district-level staff for such projects. Pine and Keane (1986) found that successful collaboration depends upon unequivocal support from the chief executive officers of each institution.

Another way of analyzing the importance of the superintendent's involvement in programming and other major cooperative-oriented decisions is to review some research that addresses the lack of such involvement. While studying the role of the ISD superintendents in Michigan, Boss (1963) surveyed ISD superintendents, board of education members, and selected knowledgeable individuals. One of his conclusions was that the ISD superintendents and knowledgeable experts believed that local superintendents should have been consulted on this issue. Similarly, Blomquist (1975) recommended that further research is needed on the expectations that local superintendents have of ISD superintendents. The lack of local superintendent

involvement played a major role in the abolishment of the ESA system in Kentucky. Stephens (1979b) found that one of the principal reasons for the failure of the Kentucky ESA system was the omission of the local superintendents in the planning stages of the ESA concept. Such testimony to the absence of the local superintendent in key situations adds to the credibility of the need for their involvement in future similar endeavors.

There is evidence that local superintendents should and do have some input into the functioning of the ESA system in some states, even though it does not appear to involve determining program effectiveness. Firestone (1981), while studying the IUs in Pennsylvania, noted that Pennsylvania mandates an IU council consisting of all local superintendents. They are required to meet at least five times each year and many IUs, in fact, meet more often. Aycock (1981) conducted a study on the desirability of certain components of the ESAs of Mississippi. In that study, she concluded that "the majority of respondents desired that ESAs be governed by a board composed of superintendents of the school districts in each ESA" (p. 97). Firestone, Rossman, and Wilson (1983b), in a different approach to supporting the involvement of local superintendents, used the SEA involvement as an example. They noted that in many situations the SEA proposes changes based on what they want as opposed to what the LEAs need. This not only omits the input of LEA superintendents, but also adds subtle pressure for ESAs to comply with state regulations, which in turn may divert the ESA from providing for LEA needs.

Perhaps the one piece of evidence that illustrates that local superintendents can and are being accessed to determine effectiveness of ESA services is the study conducted by Stephens (1979c). In the study, superintendents were surveyed to determine the differences between their actual and desired participation in services offered by ESAs in Texas. They were further asked to identify reasons for the differences, if any. In 14 of the 20 ESA regions in Texas, the ESA leadership rated either first or second, of a possible six, in terms of influencing LEA participation in the services offered. The type of programs offered was the leading influence with 20 of the 20 respondents ranking it either first or second. Of interest in the study was the effort to determine the use of services through the superintendent as the client system. Of equal interest was the finding that ESA leadership plays a major role in influencing such use of services.

The research demonstrates that the local superintendent should play a leading role in terms of input and services offered at the ESA level. Either through active participation, or through evidence of the impact of the absence of participation, the superintendent surfaces as the key communicator for the local district. As such, he or she should be the professional who is accessed when the service needs of the LEA are assessed.

Summary and Research Questions

Chapter II began with a national perspective of the ESA. The future of the ESA at the national level looks bright since providing

services to meet the ever changing demands of our society is a primary component of the ESA system. The history of the ISD system in Michigan was then examined. Again, the future of the regional concept is sound, with the strength of legislation behind it. A brief review of reorganization at the local and ESA levels was undertaken. The point was made that even though reorganization as a strategy for improving the equity and economy of services may have been acceptable in the past, such a strategy lacks support for similar reasons in the present. The services common to ESAs were then examined jointly at the national and Michigan levels. The six service areas that have a history of commonality, and that also will be used for this study are: (a) administrative services, (b) special education, (c) regional media centers, (d) data processing, (e) professional development, and (f) career and vocational education.

The final section of Chapter II included a review of the use of a client system to determine effectiveness of services offered by ESAs. The research is conclusive in that a client system should be used to develop the kind of communications and trust that is essential to a cooperative educational effort. The research also demonstrates that the superintendent is in the most advantageous position for the local districts, thus the students, to be the spokesperson for the district. And even though it has not been a practice, the local superintendents should be the district representative to determine service needs of the district, thus program needs at the ESA level.

Using the information gathered from the review of the related literature in Chapter II, and building on the broad-based research questions posed in Chapter I, the following research hypotheses have been developed for ISDs in Michigan:

Hypothesis 1: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of special education.

Hypothesis 2: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of career and vocational education.

Hypothesis 3: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of regional media centers.

Hypothesis 4: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of data processing.

Hypothesis 5: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of professional development.

Hypothesis 6: There is variance between what local superintendents expect of ISDs and the local superintendents' perceptions of

actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of administrative services.

To lay the groundwork for further study and to begin explaining why there is variance between expectations and perceptions of performance in program service areas, the following research question has been addressed:

Research question: What characteristics might account for the variance between expectations and perceived performance?

Chapter III includes the research design and methodology used in the actual research of the above questions.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A survey research design was selected which satisfies the criteria of being economical and of having a wide scope. The survey research design also deals effectively with the research questions, a research design criterion supported by Kerlinger (1973).

This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct the study. Instrumentation, population and sample techniques, data collection, and data analysis are the topics addressed.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher. The primary purpose of the survey was to find whether there is variance between local superintendents' expectations of services provided by ISDs and their perceptions of performance of the ISDs in the service areas outlined. Also, the researcher attempted to identify characteristics which contribute to such variance, if any. In effect, the researcher was developing a client system to determine effectiveness of services offered. Consequently, the survey instrument for the study had to be developed in such a way that these objectives could be met.

In reviewing the literature on the regional approach to education both at the national and state of Michigan levels, the investigator did not find an instrument that measured effectiveness through a client system. What was discovered, however, was an instrument similar in design to one for which the researcher was looking. The instrument required at least two answers for each question. Stephens (1979c) designed a survey instrument that questioned local superintendents in Texas on their actual and desired use of services provided by RESCs. The respondents were to indicate on a scale from 1 to 6 their actual and desired use of services. Where the "actual" used indicated was less than "desired," further responses were requested to indicate why there was a variance. An open-ended opportunity was provided to allow for subjective responses. Such is the design of the instrument developed by this researcher with the exception of focusing on effectiveness of services rather than usage.

Responses were requested using the 4-point Likert response scale in addition to the open-ended opportunity. Such a scale was used to avoid allowing for the tendency of respondents to choose the middle response. Respondents are more likely to be indecisive when given a chance. The 4-point scale provided a clearer direction than a 5-point scale.

The independent variables were the six program service areas. The dependent variables were expectations and perceptions of performance.

Once the instrument was developed, a pilot study was conducted. The study included 12 local superintendents representing several ISD

regions. After receiving feedback from the superintendents' responses on the pilot study, modifications to the instrument were made.

The changes to the survey instrument were significant. The purpose of the study was to measure variance between expectations and perceptions of performance in six services areas regardless of which ISD was providing the service. Many of the respondents in the pilot study indicated that another ISD other than the one to which they were assigned provided the service and, therefore, did not respond to the question. The instructions were changed, as well as each Question "A," to reflect the use of any ISD for this service whether it be their own, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs. Also included in the changes was to add a question in each service area that addressed whether or not a local school district used the service even if it is offered by an ISD. The instrument was then determined ready for use in the research project (Appendix A).

Population and Sample

The population to be investigated was identified as local superintendents of K-12 public schools in the state of Michigan. The members of the population were identified by using the Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide (Michigan Education Directory, 1987).

A nonreplacement random sampling technique was used for this study. Such a technique assures that each member within the defined population has an equal opportunity to be selected. Borg and Gall

(1973) and Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (1979) supported random sampling as a method of concurrently reducing the researcher's time and expense and being able to reach valid conclusions. The superintendents were given identification numbers for the purpose of random selection. With the use of a table of random numbers, the superintendents that were to be a part of the study were drawn.

The number of superintendents to be surveyed was derived from a table of sample sizes developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Using a confidence level of 95%, the sample size of 226 out of 525 local superintendents was used.

Data Collection

A mail questionnaire was used to collect the data. Materials were sent with a cover letter co-signed by the doctoral committee chairperson (Appendix B). Each survey instrument was numbered to correspond to the numbers assigned for the purpose of random sampling. The numbering of the instruments was for follow-up purposes. To maintain confidentiality, only the researcher recorded the numbers from the returned questionnaires. Once the numbers were recorded they were separated from the questionnaires and destroyed.

The second mailing consisted of a postcard which was mailed to nonrespondents 9 days after the first mailing (Appendix C). The tone of the wording was that of the researcher being assured that the participant understood the value of the research but had perhaps overlooked the questionnaire. A third and final mailing was made 12 days after the postcard was sent (Appendix D). This mailing was

again soft in tone, but the fact that it was sent by certified mail added an insistent nature to the request. A copy of the survey instrument was included in the third mailing.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the six hypotheses were transferred to optional scanning sheets for input in the Western Michigan University computer. A mean score for expectations and perceptions of actual performance in each of the six service areas was independently determined by dividing the total score for each by the number of respondents in each service area. If a respondent did not provide an answer on both the expectation and perception of performance scales, the score was omitted for that particular service area. The open-ended responses to the research question were recorded manually and reported in rank order.

Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar (1981) reported that scaled responses that measure the intensity of feelings have interval scales, and the weights of the scales have been validated through research. With that information, a t test for the difference in means was used to measure the significance of the responses and test the six hypotheses. A two-tailed test was used because the variance could be in either direction. The level of significance was set at .05.

The responses to the research question that addressed the characteristics that contribute to the variance between expectations and perceptions of performance were grouped in rank order. Common responses were arbitrarily grouped and reported out as possible

reasons for such variance and as significant direction for further study.

Summary

In this chapter, the design of the study was examined. Instrumentation, population and sample, data collection, and data analysis were described. The survey was administered, and the findings are analyzed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the sample, a description of the characteristics of the sample, data pertaining to the research questions, and results of the hypothesis testing. Subjective responses made by the superintendents will also be addressed. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first describes the sample, while the second presents the data analysis for each of the six service areas. These data were examined to determine the relationship between superintendents' expectations and their perceptions of actual performance of Michigan Intermediate School Districts.

Analysis of the Sample

On August 21, 1987, questionnaires were sent by first-class mail to 226 randomly sampled public school superintendents of the 525 K-12 superintendents listed in the 1987 Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide (Michigan Education Directory, 1987). After the first mailing, 146 surveys were returned. A follow-up postcard was sent to 80 superintendents 10 days later urging them to complete and mail the survey if they had not already done so. The second mailing resulted in the return of another 24 surveys. A third mailing was sent 8 days later with another cover letter. Included in the third mailing was

another survey instrument. This mailing resulted in receiving another 26 surveys. The three-step mailing process resulted in 196 surveys being returned, of which 194 completed all or a portion of the survey. The 194 questionnaires that were returned represented 37% of the 525 K-12 superintendents in Michigan and 85.8% of the 226 K-12 superintendents contacted.

Borg and Gall (1983) addressed the concept of analyzing the results when all the questionnaires were not returned. They pointed out that when more than 20% of the subjects fail to respond, serious questions arise as to whether or not the results would have changed had all the subjects responded. If a smaller percentage failed to respond, this question is not critical. Since the return rate in this project was 85.8%, the researcher is confident that the opinions of a segment of the population that might be singular in thought has not been omitted.

Description of Respondents

A section of Chapter II was devoted to the concept of intermediate school district reorganization. As mentioned, there are conflicting reports on the effects that size of the ESA has on the quality of services offered. Although the sampling technique used for this study did not include stratifying ISDs according to size, an analysis of the sample distribution was conducted. Some relevant information was revealed that could add to the significance of the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the hypotheses.

The researcher created five size categories and assigned ISDs and local districts to the appropriate category according to the public school membership of the ISD (see Table 1). Although the categories are somewhat arbitrary, they do reflect the thinking of some proponents that size has an effect on services. The minimum size of 25,000 students for an ISD was supported by Britton (1969), while the range of 28,000 to 30,000 was proposed by Phelps et al. (1980).

Table 1

The Number of Intermediate and Local School Districts Sampled and Responding According to Size of ISD Membership

Membership	Local school district information					
	No. of ISDs	No. by groups	No. sample	% sample	No. resp.	% resp.
0-10,000	25	154	65	42.2	56	86.2
10,001-20,000	14	104	54	51.9	47	87.0
20,001-30,000	6	62	23	37.1	19	82.6
30,001-40,000	4	46	22	47.8	16	72.7
40,001+	8	159	62	39.0	56	90.3
Total	57	525	226	43.0	194	85.8

Note. Membership = public school student membership. No. of ISDs by group were classified using public school enrollment data from State of Michigan Intermediate School District Statistical Data (pp. 7-9) by Allegan County Intermediate School District, 1987, Allegan, MI: Department of Finances and Administrative Services.

The information in the sample distribution analysis demonstrates equity in the sample according to the range of sizes. The sample size of K-12 school district superintendents was 43%. The range of the sample size of the local districts within the five categories was from 37.1% to 51.9%. The percentage of responses in the various size categories ranged from 72.7% to 90.3%. What has been illustrated is that even though a scientific stratified sampling technique was not used, local school districts from a variety of sizes of ISDs were represented in the study.

Analysis of the Data

There were six service areas that participants were asked to respond to in the questionnaire. The six service areas were special education, career and vocational education, regional media centers, data processing, professional development, and administrative services. In each service area, there were four questions. Questions A and B dealt with whether the service was available to the local district from the ISD and, if so, whether or not the service area was used. Question C was to be addressed only if the respondent used the service area. In that question, an independent rating was to be given on the respondent's expectation of his ISD in that service area and the respondent's perception of the ISD's actual performance. A Likert scale of 1 to 4 was used with 1 being the highest rating. If the expectation was higher than the perception of performance, the superintendent was then asked to give a primary reason as to why the difference existed.

Responses by Service Area

Table 2 illustrates the number and percentage of respondents' answers to the first question in each service area. Of the 194 surveys returned, a range from 2 to 5 superintendents did not respond to the service area availability question. The service area with the highest rate of availability was special education with a 96.9% rating, while data processing was the least available service with a 76.3% rating. Of interest in these responses is that administrative and media center services were not at the 100% availability rating. Monitoring reports, an administrative service, is mandatory, and every local district has been assigned to a regional media center by law. Considering these two facts, it is surprising that both areas did not receive a 100% availability rating. This observation will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter V.

Those respondents who indicated that a service area was available to them were then asked if the service was used. Table 3 contains response data for this question. Again, special education has the highest rating with a usage rate of 100% of the respondents and data processing was the lowest with an 82.4% rating. All the services areas received a very high usage rate, however. As in the availability rating, it is puzzling that administrative services did not receive a 100% usage rating, since there are state reports that must be submitted through the ISD by law. This also will be addressed in Chapter V.

Table 2

The Number and Percentage of Respondents That Do and
Do Not Have the Service Available to Them

Service area	<u>n</u>	No response		Yes		No	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Special education	194	2	1.0	188	96.9	4	2.1
Career and vocational education	194	2	1.0	160	82.5	32	16.5
Regional media center	194	3	1.5	187	96.4	4	2.1
Data processing	194	5	2.6	148	76.3	41	21.1
Professional development	194	3	1.5	185	95.4	6	3.1
Administrative services	194	3	1.5	186	95.9	5	2.6

The relationship between expectations and perceptions of performance was sought if the superintendents responded that a service area was used. The result could be either that expectations were higher or lower than perceptions of performance, or they could be equal. Table 4 shows this relationship by numbers of responses. Special education had the highest number of responses indicating expectations being greater than perceptions of performance, while administrative services had the lowest. Administrative services had the highest number of responses showing expectations equaling performance, and data processing received the lowest. The range of

responses among the six service areas showing expectations being lower than perceptions of performance was 1 to 9.

Table 3
The Number and Percentage of Respondents
Who Make Use of the Services Available

Service area	User		Nonuser		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Special education	188	100.0	0	0.0	188	100.0
Career and vocational education	155	96.9	5	3.1	160	100.0
Regional media center	186	99.5	1	0.5	187	100.0
Data processing	122	82.4	26	17.6	148	100.0
Professional development	180	97.3	5	2.7	185	100.0
Administrative service	183	98.4	3	1.6	186	100.0

Data Analysis Procedures

A t test was used for each hypothesis to test the difference between the means. This was done in order to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between the group mean of expectations and the group mean of perceptions of performance in each of the six service areas. Each hypothesis has been restated to reflect the operational concept of testing the difference between the means of expectations and perceptions of performance. The hypotheses

were tested using a probability of .05 for committing a Type I error.

Table 4
The Relationship of Expectations and Perceptions
of Performance in Each Service Area
by Number of Respondents

Service area	Exp > PoP	Exp = PoP	Exp < PoP	Total
Special education	71	113	3	187
Career and vocational education	36	113	6	155
Regional media center	45	134	7	186
Data processing	48	73	1	122
Professional development	57	116	7	180
Administrative services	28	145	9	182

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

Special Education

Hypothesis 1: The mean group score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of special education.

As Table 5 indicates, there was a mean difference of -0.465 between the mean of expectations and the mean of perceptions of performance in the area of special education. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a

p value less than .05. This shows that local superintendents have higher expectations of ISDs in the area of special education than the level of performance being exhibited by the ISDs.

Table 5

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of Performance in the Program Service Area of Special Education

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M</u> exp	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> PoP	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> diff.	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
187	186	1.422	0.585	1.888	0.812	-0.465	-9.02	.0001*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

Career and Vocational Education

Hypothesis 2: The mean group score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of career and vocational education.

Table 6 demonstrates that the mean of the difference between means of expectations and perceptions of performance in career and vocational education was -0.290. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a p value less than .05. This shows that the local superintendents have a higher expectation of ISDs in the area of career and vocational education than the level of performance being exhibited by the ISDs.

Table 6

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between
the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of
Performance in the Program Service Area
of Career and Vocational Education

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M exp</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M PoP</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M diff.</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
155	154	1.555	0.646	1.845	0.846	-0.290	-4.96	.0001*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

Regional Media Center

Hypothesis 3: The mean group score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the service area of regional media centers.

Table 7 illustrates the data on regional media centers. The mean of the difference between the means of expectations and perceptions of performance of regional media centers is -0.290. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a p value less than .05. This shows that the local superintendents have a higher expectation of ISDs in the area of regional media centers than the level of performance exhibited by the ISDs.

Table 7

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between
the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of
Performance in the Program Service Area
of Regional Media Center

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M</u> exp	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> PoP	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> diff.	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
186	185	1.554	0.606	1.844	0.787	-0.290	-5.80	.0001*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

Data Processing

Hypothesis 4: The group mean score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of data processing.

Data illustrated in Table 8 shows the mean of the difference in means of expectations and perceptions of performance in data processing is -0.574. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a p value of less than .05. This shows that the local superintendents have a higher expectation of ISDs in the area of data processing than the level of performance being exhibited by the ISDs.

Professional Development

Hypothesis 5: The mean group score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local

superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of professional development.

Table 8

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of Performance in the Program Service Area of Data Processing

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M</u> exp	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> PoP	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> diff.	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
122	121	1.402	0.598	1.975	0.867	-0.574	-7.44	.0001*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

Table 9 shows the mean of the difference between the means of expectations and perceptions of performance in the area of professional development is -0.417. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a p value less than .05. This shows that the local superintendents have higher expectations of ISDs in the area of professional development than the level of performance being exhibited by the ISDs.

Administrative Services

Hypothesis 6: The mean group score of what local superintendents expect of ISDs will vary from the mean group score of the local superintendents' perceptions of actual performance of ISDs in the program service area of administrative services.

Table 9

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between
the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of
Performance in the Program Service Area
of Professional Development

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M</u> exp	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> PoP	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> diff.	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
180	179	1.544	0.646	1.961	0.887	-0.417	-6.83	.0001*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

In Table 10, the mean of the difference in the means between expectations and perceptions of performance in the area of administrative services is -0.176. The null hypothesis is rejected since the t test of difference between the means produced a p value less than .05. This shows that the local superintendents have a higher expectation of ISDs in the area of administrative service than the level of performance being exhibited by the ISDs.

Table 10

The t Test to Determine Significant Difference Between
the Mean Expectations and the Mean Perceptions of
Performance in the Program Service Area
of Administrative Services

<u>N</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>M</u> exp	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> PoP	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> diff.	<u>T</u>	<u>p</u>
182	181	1.670	0.666	1.846	0.827	-0.176	-3.70	.0003*

Note. Exp = expectations. PoP = perceptions of performance.

*p = .05.

Subjective Responses

In Question D on the questionnaire of each of the six service areas, a subjective response was requested if the respondent rated expectations higher than perceptions of performance. Respondents were asked, "If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?" The response was to indicate the primary reason for the difference in ratings. This section addresses those responses.

There is no statistical significance to the responses since the question was not designed as such. The purpose was to give some indication of why superintendents believed that their expectations were higher than their perceptions of performance so that future research could be aided if in fact a significant difference did occur.

Leadership

Leadership at the ISD level was cited predominantly in the service areas of special education, data processing, and professional development as a primary reason for rating expectations higher than perceptions of performance. The term was used in reference to the priority, or lack of, that was placed on the service areas indicated by the leadership. Lack of a progressive attitude in the area of professional development was also attributed to the leadership of the ISD in a number of cases. Such comments as, "The ISD depends on

locals to provide leadership as opposed to their providing leadership," "The ISD has not provided leadership in this area so the local schools have had to do their own," and "Lack of leadership and foresight" were common when citing leadership as a concern.

Staffing

In the areas of special education and data processing, staffing was a key concern. A part of the concern was the lack of staffing needed to provide for district needs. Another concern was the quality of the available staff. There were some strong comments about the quality of staff particularly in the area of data processing. "Not all areas are staffed with either enough or properly certified people" and "lack of qualified staff" were indicative of the comments made about the staffing issue.

Funding

A concern expressed in the areas of special education, regional media centers, and professional development was funding. Many respondents expressed concern about not having the funds to adequately provide for the programs in mention. "Lack of funding" was a simple statement made often when referring to the level of funding. Some responses were directed to the leadership of the ISD not providing the initiative to secure the funds for these particular areas.

Coordination and Communication

Coordination of programs and communicating with the local districts about various programs were mentioned in tandem in the areas of career and vocational education, data processing, and administrative services. The coordination concept was primarily directed at ISDs that use local schools for center-based programs. The communications of program offerings was a major concern in the area of career and vocational education. Communications was mentioned for administrative services in respect to some ISD administrators using hard-line tactics in monitoring reports rather than communicating with the local districts as to the appropriate requirements for such reports.

One comment of, "Poor communications and shared decision making" was indicative of a segment of respondents who addressed communications as a concern as well as involving local superintendents in planning. Another comment that added some substance to the communications issue was, "Lack of communications . . . too much time spent by ISD personnel in the central office . . . should be in the field more."

Providing for Local Needs

Superintendents listed the lack of providing for local district needs in the areas of special education, professional development, and vocational education. Not only was a message sent about a lack of program offerings in this area, but the idea of a need for local

district input into decision making was also surfaced. The comment of "Not developed in cooperation with local districts" addresses the issue of local needs and local input. More specifically, the statement of, "I'm not sure the ISD is hearing what we are saying" is indicative of the feelings of those respondents who believed that providing for local needs is a big issue to be addressed by ISDs.

Technology

The lack of technology was mentioned consistently in the area of data processing. A statement that represents those respondents who believe the lack of technology is a major obstacle for the ISD is, "Unable to provide students with high technology which is current." The need to update software, coordinate the use of hardware, and provide direction for the future in our high technology society were all part of the concerns listed in this area.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the primary areas of the sample and characteristics of the sample and the analysis of the data. The sample was analyzed in terms of the return rate and the characteristic of size of the ISD to which each local district belongs. Data were presented on how superintendents responded to various questions. A statistical analysis of the data was then presented followed by a breakdown of the contents of the subjective responses.

Chapter V will provide a summary of the first four chapters as well as draw conclusions from the data.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter V consists of a review of the research and discussion of the findings. A brief review of the first three chapters will be presented followed by conclusions drawn by the researcher from the findings of the hypotheses testing. The final section will address recommendations for future research in related areas.

Review

In Chapter I, a foundation was laid of the ESA concept being a strategy for providing increased and improved educational services to students. Michigan adopted this strategy in 1962 and uses the term intermediate school district (ISD) to describe this regionalized approach. Studies of the ISD system have focused on the structure and function of the ISD. Research has not been directed toward determining any level of effectiveness of the programs and services offered, particularly by using representatives of local school districts as clients to determine levels of effectiveness.

While directing this study at the effectiveness concept, two goals were sought: (a) to provide decision makers at the ISD level with data with which to strengthen their decisions, improve services offered where necessary, and establish a client system for the

purpose of input and evaluation, and (b) to provide information for decision makers at the state level that would strengthen decisions in the areas of funding and policy development. With these purposes in mind, the researcher focused on the questions of whether or not there is variance between expectations and perceptions of performance that local superintendents have of ISDs and on what might be some primary reasons for such variance.

The review of literature in Chapter II revealed a strong background of the ESA concept both nationally and in Michigan. In fact, the first regional administrative unit was established in Delaware in 1829. Michigan experienced the county school system in the state's formative years as well and strengthened the commitment by legislative action in 1963.

The concept of reorganization was reviewed in the literature and the conclusion is that it is at best controversial as to its effectiveness. A determining factor for the success of reorganization may be the purpose for such a strategy. If equity and efficiency are being sought, perhaps there is merit to reorganization. However, if improvement in effectiveness in programs and services and meaningful change in student behavior through the learning process is sought, there is no defense presented that reorganization is the answer.

The service areas that ISDs should provide also has a long history. There is considerable similarity between the areas of programs and services supported in the early 20th century to those that were supported by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators in 1985. Special education, career and

vocational education, data processing, regional media centers, professional development, and administrative services are the areas that the Michigan ISDs address.

The idea of the local superintendents as clients was then addressed, and studies were cited that show that superintendents are in the best position to determine the broad areas of need for their respective districts. With the background developed as described, research hypotheses were stated. The central theme of the hypotheses was to determine if variance occurred between expectations that local superintendents have of ISDs and perceptions of actual performance. The hypotheses were written to address each of the six service areas described.

The research design and methodology selected for the study was survey research. A randomly selected group of local superintendents were asked to complete a questionnaire that dealt with the research hypotheses. An 85.8% return rate was achieved. A t test to determine statistically significant variance between the mean expectations and mean perceptions of performance was used. A follow-up question to determine the reason for expressed variance by the superintendents was posed. Although not statistically significant, the responses were reported. The findings of the research were reported in Chapter IV and will be addressed in terms of conclusions and recommendations in subsequent sections.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Hypothesis Testing

With the probability values all being below the .05 level of significance selected for all the hypotheses, it is obvious that the null hypotheses can be rejected. There is a significant variance between the expectations and perceptions of performance that local superintendents have of all six service areas at the ISD level. However, it should be understood that even though the sample used included equal representation of the various sizes of ISDs in Michigan, the sampling technique used was not stratified. Therefore, to draw definite conclusions about a certain size of an ISD being more or less effective was not possible. The results do show that further study needs to be conducted to determine the characteristics that are present that might cause such variance.

The service area of administrative services showed the least significant variance. This result occurred because this area had the least number of respondents rating expectations higher than perceptions of performance. The area with the highest T value for difference between the means (-9.02) was special education. This indicates that if further studies were to focus on only one service area for investigation for improvement, special education should be that area.

An examination of the results for availability and usage of service areas revealed some interesting data. The range of availability was from 76.3% in data processing to 96.9% in special education. Because Michigan is a high technology state, it is strongly

recommended that steps be taken to increase the availability of data processing services to school districts. A 100% rating would be an admirable goal. The areas of regional media center (96.4%), administrative services (95.9%), and special education (96.9%) did not receive a 100% availability rating. It is reasonable to expect that they should have. Those services are available to all local superintendents in Michigan. Perhaps the general nature of the descriptions of each of the service areas in the questionnaire caused some confusion, even though the questionnaire was field tested. Or, perhaps local superintendents are not fully aware of the programs and services available to them.

The percentage of local districts that use the services available is very high. The range is from 82.4% in data processing to 100% in special education. The ISDs in Michigan should be pleased with these ratings as they demonstrate a definite need for the services and programs that are offered. These usage ratings should not be taken lightly by leaders at both the ISD and local levels when making future decisions in the areas of programming and funding. As in the ratings for availability, there is some surprise that a 100% usage rating was not received in administrative services. There are various reports that are filtered through the ISD by mandate, and the fact that administrative services received a 98.4% usage rating indicates some minor confusion by local superintendents as to the function of the ISD.

Although the null hypotheses were rejected, and a variance between expectations and perceptions of performance exists with the

mean expectations being significantly higher, the ISDs in Michigan should be pleased with the results. The means for the perceptions of performance ranged from the highest rating of 1.844 in regional media centers to 1.975 in data processing. With the scale being from 1 to 4 with 1 being the highest, all the means were in the "above average performance" category. The ISD personnel can be pleased with this overall performance rating even though improvements need to be sought if the gap between expectations and perceptions of performance is to be narrowed.

The means of expectations ranged from 1.402 in data processing as the highest to 1.670 in administrative services as the lowest. This also is to be reviewed favorably by ISD leaders. Expectations are a driving force toward excellence in learning and should be reasonably high. The Effective Schools movement in the 1980s proposes as one of its tenets the expectation that all children can learn. Transferring this concept of expectations to the services provided by ISDs indicates a high need by the local districts of the services offered. Such expectations should be viewed as a request for improvement as well as evidence that the ISD as the middle echelon of a three-echelon state education system is a significant force in providing necessary learning situations for our students.

Subjective Responses

The subjective responses provide valuable information. This is particularly true when considering them in conjunction with the statistically significant variance that was reported.

Leadership and staffing were reported as two major reasons for a variance between expectations and perceptions of performance. This was true particularly in the areas of special education, data processing, and professional development. The central concern raised in leadership and staffing was that of quality. Many respondents indicated that effectiveness is linked to ISD leaders and staff being proactive in the service areas and that there is a need to place those service areas as high priority items for future planning and funding. In leadership and staffing, it is recommended that ISDs reexamine the roles of staff personnel and take action to assure that those roles are being filled.

An area of concern by many respondents was funding. With the high availability and usage rates reported in the various service areas, top-level decision makers should take into consideration the local superintendents' concern about lack of funding at the ISD level and provide some solutions to funding problems. ISD decision makers can also use this information when working with ISD boards of education in planning for the future.

Coordination and communication is perhaps the easiest concern to resolve. ISD personnel should provide more comprehensive efforts to communicate the programs available and to coordinate existing programs. Communication for the most part is inexpensive, and coordination often consists primarily of communications. Local superintendents have a responsibility in this area as well. They must work with the ISD personnel by letting them know where communications and coordination efforts need improving and by ensuring that information

is properly disseminated within their respective districts.

Providing for the needs of local districts was another primary concern raised by respondents. This indicates a need for ISDs to conduct meaningful needs assessments within their respective regions. Once needs are assessed, ISD personnel should communicate such needs with the local superintendents and work with them on arriving at solutions.

The final primary concern noted was that of a lack of technology in the area of data processing. To effectively deal with this issue, ISD and local leaders should be proactive in being knowledgeable of the needs in this area and for providing the funds and equipment necessary for meeting this demand.

After reviewing the results of the hypotheses testing and the subjective responses, some broad recommendations can be made. The first is to convince the Michigan Association of Intermediate Superintendents to work with ISD and local boards of education and local superintendents to develop a set of vision statements for Michigan ISDs. There is little doubt as to the need for ISDs and the excellent services they can and in many cases do provide. However, it could prove to be beneficial if there was a common set of goals for which all ISDs strive. Such mutually accepted goals could provide a foundation for further communications and understanding between intermediate and local districts.

Another recommendation is to develop correlates of an effective ISD. This would not only provide a standard that all ISDs could attempt to emulate but would also set the tone for a minimum standard

for the leadership of each ISD.

Developing standard needs assessment and evaluation instruments to be used for local districts to provide input to ISD leaders would also be a worthy pursuit at the ISD level. This could assure some continuity in working with local districts as well as promoting the concept of using the local superintendents as clients in assessing needs and evaluating ISD effectiveness.

Implications for Further Study

The review of literature and the results of this research provide the basis for suggestions for future research in the area of ISDs. They are:

1. There is a general lack of scientific research in the area of ESAs. More research is needed generally to add to the body of knowledge and provide valuable data for future decision making. For example, the research is virtually void of studies on effectiveness of ESAs as a concept or effectiveness of various programs within ESAs.
2. This study could be replicated with the additions of stratified sampling according to size of ISDs and using the subjective responses as possible characteristics which might cause variance between expectations and perceptions of performance.
3. Correlates of an effective ISD should be developed through research similar to the method used to develop correlates of effective schools.

4. A standard assessment instrument should be developed at the ISD level to assess the needs of local districts.

5. A standard evaluation instrument should be developed that could be used by local school district personnel to evaluate ISD effectiveness.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

A Survey to Determine the Relationship Between Michigan Local Superintendents' Expectations and Perceptions of Performance of ISDs in Six Program Service Areas

A Survey to Determine the Relationship Between
Michigan Local Superintendents' Expectations and
Perceptions of Performance of ISDs
in Six Program Service Areas



This survey is done to better understand the perceptions that local superintendents have of the effectiveness of programs offered by Michigan Intermediate School Districts. Please answer all questions applicable to you. If you wish to comment on any question or qualify your answers, please feel free to use the space in the margins. Your comments will be read and taken into account.

Thank you for your help.

Return this questionnaire to:

Ted J. Culver
90581 54th Street
Decatur, MI 49045

Please complete the brief survey. It should take you no more than 10 minutes. Then, mail it today in the postage-paid self-addressed envelope provided. All answers are confidential. Your name is not required.

INSTRUCTIONS

You are being asked to respond to a minimum of 1 or a maximum of 4 questions in each of six broad program service areas. Please read the brief description of each of the service areas that are provided by your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs, and respond to the following questions:

The following rating scales will be used:

Expectations	Perception of ISD Performance
1 = High Expectations	1 = High Performance
2 = Above Average Expectations	2 = Above Average Performance
3 = Below Average Expectations	3 = Below Average Performance
4 = Low Expectations	4 = Low Performance

QUESTIONNAIRE

- I. **SPECIAL EDUCATION:** Provides local districts with specialized personnel and/or classrooms to assist in fulfilling state and federal requirements.

A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service?	YES	NO
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If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

B. Do you use this service?	YES	NO
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If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:

High	1	2	3	4	Low
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Perception of Performance:

High	1	2	3	4	Low
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- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

II. CAREER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: Provides experiences that will assist students in preparing for the real world of work.

- A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- B. Do you use this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:	High	1	2	3	4	Low
Perception of Performance:	High	1	2	3	4	Low

- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

III. REGIONAL MEDIA CENTER: Provides a variety of media equipment, materials, and services.

- A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- B. Do you use this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:	High	1	2	3	4	Low
Perception of Performance:	High	1	2	3	4	Low

- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

IV. **DATA PROCESSING:** Assists in any or all of such programs as payroll processing, bus scheduling, and student services.

- A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- B. Do you use this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:	High	1	2	3	4	Low
Perception of Performance:	High	1	2	3	4	Low

- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

V. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Offers or coordinates any or all of such programs or services as workshops, seminars, guest speakers, and content specialists that may not be otherwise affordable at the local level.

- A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- B. Do you use this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:	High	1	2	3	4	Low
Perception of Performance:	High	1	2	3	4	Low

- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES: Processes and monitors reports and programs required by state and federal law.

- A. Does your ISD, another ISD, or a consortium of ISDs provide this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question B; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- B. Do you use this service? YES NO

If "YES", please answer question C; if "NO", go to the next service area.

- C. How would you rate your expectations and your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this area? (Circle one each)

Expectations:

High 1 2 3 4 Low

Perception of Performance:

High 1 2 3 4 Low

- D. If your expectations are higher than your perceptions of the ISD's performance in this service area, what do you consider to be your primary reason for this difference?

Your contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. If you would like a summary of the results, please print your name and address on the back of the return envelope (NOT on this questionnaire). I will see that you get it.

Appendix B

Cover Letter



Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

August 21, 1987

Dear Superintendent:

*College of Education
Department of
Educational Leadership*

In recent years, the demand for expanded and improved educational services from our schools has increased dramatically. Two precipitating factors that account for much of the ferment are economic and social developments in our society, and changing concepts of the role and function of education. To assist in meeting the increasing demands, a third echelon of the Michigan State School System was added--the intermediate school district. Like all levels of programs and services, the intermediate school system should be reviewed in terms of effectiveness to continue the high standards expected in Michigan. Local superintendents have been chosen in this study to assist in completing such a review.

You are one of a small number of superintendents being asked to give their opinions on your ISD's effectiveness in six program service areas. Please consider the service whether you receive it directly from your own ISD, another ISD, or from a consortium of ISDs with programs such as vocational education, special education learning centers, data processing, media centers, or other such programs. Your name was drawn in a random sample of the entire state. In order that the results will truly represent the thinking of the superintendents in Michigan, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only and will be viewed only by the researcher. This is so your name can be checked off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned.

This study has the endorsement of Jim Shepard, President of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA). Mr. Shepard stated,

ISD's are interested in how our services are received by local districts. This study will help us to measure our effectiveness in six basic service areas as perceived by local district superintendents and could very well provide a basis for further study of our delivery system.

The results of this research will be made available to the MAISA organization and all interested superintendents. You may receive a summary of results by writing your name and address on the back of the return envelope.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Lawrence B. Schlack, Ph.D.

Ted J. Culver, Ed.S.
Project Director

[COPY]

Appendix C

Follow-up Postcard

Last week a questionnaire seeking your assistance in reviewing six program service areas provided through the intermediate school district system was mailed to you. Your name was drawn in a random sample of public school superintendents in Michigan.

If you have already completed and returned it to me, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small, but representative, sample of Michigan superintendents, it is extremely important that yours also be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of Michigan superintendents.

Sincerely,

Ted Culver, Project Director

[COPY]

Appendix D

Follow-up Letter (Third Mailing)



*College of Education
Department of
Educational Leadership*

About three weeks ago we wrote you seeking feedback regarding your opinions on six program service areas provided by Michigan Intermediate School Districts. As of today we have not received your completed questionnaire.

Our research unit has undertaken this study because of the belief in the importance of the intermediate school district system, and that continual assessment of such a system may improve Michigan public education.

We are writing to you again because of the significance each questionnaire has to the usefulness of this study. Your name was drawn through a scientific sampling process in which every public school superintendent has an equal chance of being selected. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of the opinions of all Michigan superintendents, it is essential that each person in the sample return his/her questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Cordially,

Lawrence Schlack, Ph.D.

Ted Culver, Ed.S.
Project Director

[COPY]

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