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# Long-Serving Rural Superintendents of Western Pennsylvania: A Descriptive Case Study of the Factors That May Influence Their Longevity

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LONG-SERVING RURAL SUPERINTENDENTS OF  
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE FACTORS  
THAT MAY INFLUENCE THEIR LONGEVITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Shawn Lewis Kovac

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

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Title: Long-Serving Rural Superintendents of Western Pennsylvania: A Descriptive Case Study of the Factors That May Influence Their Longevity

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The state of Pennsylvania comprises 500 school districts. Each district is required to have a superintendent of schools. Now, more than ever, the work portfolio of U.S. school superintendents is increasingly diverse. In an occupation enjoying very little security, having fewer benefits than similar jobs in the private sector, and facing increased criticism in addition to greater complexities (J. Byrd, C. Drews, & J. Johnson, “Factors Impacting Superintendent Turnover: Lessons From the Field,” 2006), it is no wonder that qualified superintendent candidates are becoming fewer in number. Many times, these positions go unfilled or are filled with acting superintendents due to the lack of qualified candidates willing to apply for open positions. Those superintendent positions that are filled face a dreary national statistic of remaining on the job for less than 5 years (P. Senge, *A Fifth Discipline Resource: Schools That Learn*, 2000). However, there are those rare superintendents that manage to keep their position for 15 years or more. This research identifies the common variables, such as leadership attributes, actions during critical career moments, personal and professional growth patterns, and superintendent/board relations patterns that may contribute to their longevity.