

**SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICES:
A NATIONAL STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS
AND OPINIONS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

by

Priscilla M. Hardiman

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APPROVED:

Joan L. Curcio, Chair

Jimmie C. Fortune

M. David Alexander

Harold J. McGrady

Paula A. Johnson

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Committee Chair: Dr. Joan L. Curcio
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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of national school board members concerning the present availability and impact of school-linked services in their school districts. Schools have been asked to act as brokers for a diverse array of social, health, and judicial services to help ameliorate some of the problems of students at risk of educational failure. In response, a growing number of school districts have established many types of school-linked programs which provide services to children and their families through collaborative partnerships among schools, health care providers, social service agencies, and judicial systems.

The research questions for this study were: (1) To what extent do school board members perceive that school-linked services are necessary and are available to students in their district, and developed in a collaborative manner? (2) Do school board members perceive changes in governance and in formulating policy to oversee the school district as a result of school-linked services? (3) To what extent do school board members perceive that school-linked services impact on school funding? (4) To what extent do school board members perceive that review procedures are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of school-linked services in their district? (5) What are school board members' opinions of the obstacles and critical issues related to school-linked services in their school district?

Descriptive research methodology was utilized in this study. A stratified, random sample of school board member subscribers to *The American School Board Journal* was identified, and subsequently surveyed through the use of a mailed questionnaire. Thirty percent of the population of 19,723 were surveyed. The response rate was 5.9 percent. A second mailing was sent to 3 percent of the subscriber population. This time a coded survey was utilized. This mailing resulted in a 19.7 percent response rate.

The data revealed that the development of school-linked services are supported and are needed in a majority of the school districts that responded. The range of services provided and the variety of approaches of school-linked services is broad and diverse. The majority of board members do not perceive changes in governance or policy formulation as a result of school-linked services in their district. School-linked services do not impact on school district funding; however, inadequate financing is the major obstacle to implementing services. School board members responded that procedures to review the

effectiveness of programs are in place and that the services offered are meeting the clients' needs. In addition to funding, another obstacle to successful implementation of services is that some school board members' believe that schools should not get involved in providing social services. Substance abuse services, health services and parenting classes ranked as the three areas where services are most critically needed.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. To my father, Gabriel Mazza, who called weekly and frequently asked when I would be finished. "Father, I am happy to say I am finally finished!" To my sister, Delores Farnstrom, whose words of encouragement and praise were always appreciated and perfectly timed. To my sons, Scott and Todd and their wives, Kay and Deirdre, for their unwavering love and the many ways in which they demonstrated encouragement and provided morale boosts when they were needed. To my precious granddaughter, Emily Smith Gilbert, who was born during this journey. She is an absolute delight and visits with her were a wonderful reason to take breaks from this project and just have fun. Lastly, to my husband, Bob. His loving approval, unfailing support, encouragement, and understanding have supported me throughout my professional career. Thanks for giving me the time, space, and freedom to pursue yet another adventure. Once again, he has managed to feel more proud than neglected by the inevitable demands of this journey. My grateful thanks and sincere appreciation for all of the contributions so generously given to me. It is because of these contributions that this journey has ultimately come to an end.

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