The School Board and Self-Evaluation:  
Do School Boards in the Commonwealth of Virginia Evaluate their own Performance?

by

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(ABSTRACT)  

School boards are the governing bodies for school divisions. Their successful operation is essential to the success of the school division. "Best practice", as indicated in the literature, calls for school boards to recognize the need to examine or assess their own performance and to set the criteria or goals by which they will evaluate their performance and to create a composite of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the criteria they set for themselves. Boards should design or select evaluation instruments which reflect local performance criteria and instruments that are open ended so that other items may be included as board members desire. The development of objectives for the improvement of the boards' performance should be based on an evaluation of themselves discussed and agreed to in a regularly scheduled annual meeting with a facilitator and site for the event predetermined. Finally, the process should be focused on the board as a body; not on the individual board members.  

This study solicited information describing the practices of school boards in Virginia relative to evaluation of themselves as boards and compared those practices with literature-based "best practice."
Defining "best practice" was accomplished by reviewing educational literature on the practice of board evaluation. The literature was screened for components recommended as required in effective school board self-evaluation. Components recommended as effective practice were determined to be "best practice."

The questionnaire was designed in two sections. The first grouping of questions on the survey was to identify the divisions where school boards practiced self-evaluation. Subsequent queries, in section two, gathered information that would allow description of the practices used by school boards who practiced self-evaluation. Section two, also, posed questions regarding the boards' use of procedures that were determined to be components of "best practice."

A survey questionnaire was mailed to the superintendents of all 132 school divisions in Virginia inquiring about their board's practices of evaluating their own performance. Responses were received from 128 of the 132 divisions, a 97% rate of return. Only forty-one (32%) of the responding school divisions reported having school boards that evaluate themselves.

Are school boards in the Commonwealth evaluating their own performance?

The major findings of this study indicate that most school boards in Virginia, more than two out of three, do not practice school board evaluation. School boards in Virginia that allege participation in the practice of school board evaluation do not use many of the components of self-evaluation recommended as "best practice."
School board evaluation is used less often in those divisions of medium size than in other divisions and less often in those divisions associated with counties as their governing units than in other divisions associated with other types of governing units.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background

The school board in each governing unit of the Commonwealth is the duly constituted body created by the code of Virginia to meet the state's obligation to educate the public. The Commonwealth of Virginia has delegated considerable authority to these boards to operate the schools in counties, cities and some towns. Procedures for selection of board members are in accordance with state statutes. In the past, school board members in Virginia have been selected by electoral boards or the governing bodies of their jurisdiction. Recently the legislature granted the option to elect school boards if the voters of the county, city or town, through referendum, decide to do so. School boards are the governing bodies empowered by the Code of Virginia to operate the schools without the direct input of the governing body. Those same governments, through their boards of supervisors and city/town councils, are required to finance a major portion the operation of their school divisions.

The Code of Virginia §§22.1-71 through §22.1-87 describes the "General Powers and Duties of School Boards." Those powers and duties include the right to sue and be sued, to contract and to be contracted with, purchase, take, hold, lease and convey school property, hold meetings, elect officers from among its members, make by-laws and regulations, and to operate the
schools in accordance with the Code of Virginia and regulations of the Department of Education.

School boards are responsible to the state, the governing body (city, county, town) and the local population for the operation of the schools. "School boards should recognize that the school system can be no better than the board. In order for schools to improve, school boards must overcome their limits and maximize their strengths" (Boone, 1991, p. 5). School boards establish the foundation upon which a school system is operated. "After all, how you run your board meetings is perceived by many people as a reflection of how you run the schools; . . . ." (Hayden, 1984, p. 29). A well-functioning board facilitates an effectively functioning school division. Thus, there is an inherent obligation for the school board to function well.

As with any corporate body, school boards have a set of functions that are prescribed. Eleven (11) major areas of performance are attributed to the responsibility of school boards according to the New York State School Boards Association (NYSBA):

I. Board Superintendent Relations
II. Board Meetings
III. Board/Community Relations
IV. Board Relations
V. Personnel Relations
VI. Board Instructional Program Relations
VII. Financial Management

VIII. Board Inservice

IX. Policy Development

X. Goal Setting and Planning

XI. Media Relations (Overly & Root, 1990, p. 4)

Given that the board has responsibilities across these areas it would seem reasonable on their part to assess their performance in relation to each of them. Of the routine functions evaluation is of particular importance. Evaluation by the school board of the superintendent, of programs, and of themselves as a corporate body is an essential role of school boards.

School boards are required to set policy, in compliance with state statutes, that will determine the nature of the school division. Establishing a viable set of policies requires that a board be able to discuss the issues and agree or disagree regarding them in open and forthright discussion. For a school board to be a well-functioning board there must first be good communication among the members of the board. There must be clear communication with and between the board, the superintendent, and the superintendent's administration such that clarity of purpose can be achieved in operation of the schools. The role of the school board cannot be over-emphasized in this context, the very essence of a school division is determined in the deliberations of that body.
The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) in a joint publication stated:

The board believes that periodic, formal and informal evaluations of its operational procedures will improve the board's performance, exemplify the kind of constructive evaluations the board encourages for all school personnel and programs, and promote a spirit of team work throughout the district. Formal evaluations also provide the board with suggestions useful to the board in establishing objectives it will strive to accomplish.

At least once each year, board members will evaluate their own performance . . . and that of the board as a whole . . . according to standards (AASA, 1980, p. 5).

Statement of the Problem

If school board effectiveness is a critical element in an effective school system, examination of how school boards review their performance seems an important issue. Relevant research questions include: (a) Do school boards assess their own performance? (b) If so, how do they assess their performance? (c) If they do assess themselves, does their assessment use components recommended by "best practice"? (d) Is there a difference in the use of self-assessment among school boards based upon size (large, medium, and small divisions) or type of governing unit (county, city, town)?

"It is common to hear a board member say, "I get evaluated at the polls" ("Board Self-Evaluation", 1990, p. 73). Such a view may or may not be valid given the vagaries of politics which often reflect favorably or unfavorably on a candidate for reasons wholly unrelated to performance. "The public can
provide informal evaluation of the board, but it cannot provide the kind of evaluation a board really needs" ("Board Self-Evaluation", 1990, p. 73).

School boards need to evaluate their functioning to determine whether they are performing their role as they expect while portraying an image to the public that supports a perception of effective schools. "Whether education succeeds or fails depends in large measure upon the effectiveness of the local school board. The board must stand ready to insure the success of its schools by willingly accepting one of its major responsibilities -- self-evaluation" (Simon, 1985, p. 64).

A review of the literature indicates that school board self-evaluation -- assessment of the board's performance in compliance with performance goals and objectives they have set for themselves -- is essential to the effective functioning of school boards. School board effectiveness is critical to the creation of effective schools, thus evaluating the effectiveness of school boards is an important undertaking.

Need for the Study

In 1989, Educational Research Services (ERS) collected data on school board self-evaluation from their members. They found that:

- 51.5% of school boards never evaluate themselves at all;
- 21% of school boards evaluate themselves infrequently, on no set schedule;
• 26.4% of school boards engage in regular self-evaluation, normally on an annual basis;
• school boards regularly evaluate their own performance in significantly fewer very small school districts than in either small school districts, medium sized school districts or large school districts;
• 66.9% of school boards in very small districts never evaluate their own performance, a higher percentage than for any other enrollment category (Boone, 1991, pp. 4, 5).

Clearly there is evidence that (a) school boards should practice self-evaluation and (b) if they do, they do so only infrequently. However, there is little to indicate whether the practices in use are effective.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine the participation of school boards in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the practice of board evaluation. A further purpose of the study was to compare the evaluation practiced by those boards that do engage in self-evaluation with “best practice”. A secondary purpose of this study was to examine variations which might exist in board use of self-evaluation related to school division enrollment size and type of governing unit.

**Significance of Study**

Bad planning, bad policy development and poor community relations are all problems for school systems. School boards that are malfunctioning
create problems for their schools, while boards that are functioning well contribute to the success of their schools.

Consider the purposes and functions of your board: to set policy; hire and provide direction to the superintendent; establish educational goals and the scope of the school programs; make decisions in such areas as building operations, budget, curriculum, and personnel; and monitor educational programs and their results (Hayden, 1984, p. 29).

Definition

Evaluation of the function of school boards through the process of self-evaluation is the subject of this study and the topic of definition here. According to Brent and Jerkowitz (in School Board Study Programs - Lesson 6), "The purpose . . . is to provide the board with information . . . to help it in evaluating its activity as a board" (1983, p. 28). "In its most rudimentary form, self-evaluation is asking yourself, 'How well are we doing?' 'How well are we doing compared to what we expected to do?'; a more demanding standard which requires a consistently greater commitment" (Simon, 1985, p. 62).

Dale Bolton (1980) defined evaluation: "Evaluation has to do with making judgements regarding events, behaviors or results of behaviors in light of predetermined and well understood objectives . . . Evaluation is a control mechanism that allows one to correct (behavior) and plan changes" (p. 3).

For the purpose of this study self-evaluation was defined as the formal or informal process of assessment administered by a school board with the
intention of determining the adequacy of its functions relative to goals they established for their own performance and function.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study examined the use of self-evaluation within the Commonwealth of Virginia based on the responses of local superintendents to a survey. The self-reporting nature of the study creates some concern regarding the objectivity of the data collected. Accuracy in self-reported data has sometimes been suspect. The instrument was designed to collect data objectively and anonymously; data that would not reflect on the source or the subject in a negative way.

Superintendents were chosen as the source of information for the collection of survey data in the study. The choice to use them was influenced by their availability. The list of superintendents in the state is published annually. Additionally, superintendents are as a group very knowledgeable about the operations of their school boards, often the superintendent is more familiar with the school board’s policies than is the board itself or the board chair.

Another influence on the potential outcomes of the study was the recent attention given to the subject by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA). The elevated status and heightened awareness of the issue plus the VSBA - NSBA recommendations to self-evaluate might have caused a tendency
to respond, based on an intent to do something rather than what was actually being done. Again it was hoped the design of the survey instrument -- which asked questions regarding the presence, nature, or occurrence of certain events and criteria -- would reduce the tendency to respond based on intent rather than report actual events or criteria. Finally, the survey requested that divisions with school boards that self-evaluated, by policy mandate, include a copy of that policy in the return envelope with their completed surveys.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the study. The need for the research was stated, and the significance of the topic, the purpose of the study with the identification of the research questions determined for the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to the topic of School Board Evaluation.

Chapter 3 includes a statement of the methodology to be used in accomplishment of the study; the population to be studied and the method of data collection are also described.

Chapter 4 presents the data, the methods for analysis of the data and a summary of the findings from the research.

Chapter 5 concludes the study. A summary of the research, conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for practice and recommendations for future study are all included in this final chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School board self-evaluation is a topic that has been dealt with extensively in the literature regarding school boards since the 1970's. Before then evaluation of school board performance apparently was not of much concern. Advocates have consistently contended that the practice of self-evaluation is absolutely essential to the effective and efficient functioning of a school board. Much of the literature on the issue springs from the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and its state affiliates. This literature is found in journals, professional publications, and educational research reports. Several of the state affiliates of NSBA have developed and distributed self-evaluation materials for use by their members.

National School Boards Association Materials

"School boards need to examine what they do and how they do it when performing board responsibilities to achieve and maintain a positive image". In "A School Board's Need for Self-Assessment" Overly and Root (1990) place considerable emphasis on the importance of the school board gaining and maintaining a positive image in the eyes of the public it serves. It is the perception of the authors that through the operations of the board the schools
are judged. They provide a board assessment form which covers 11 major functions, listed below:

I. Board Superintendent Relations
II. Board Meetings
III. Board/Community Relations
IV. Board Relations
V. Personnel Relations
VI. Board Instructional Program Relations
VII. Financial Management
VIII. Board Inservice
IX. Policy Development
X. Goal Setting and Planning
XI. Media Relations (Overly & Root, 1990, p. 4)

The Educational Policy Service (EPS) and NSBA collaborated on the development of the "Board Evaluation Survey" (Davies, 1989, pp. 1-4). Another treatment of the self-evaluation idea, it consists of four parts (personal variables, organizational variables, outside variables, other personal evaluation based on overall response to questions) and a summary final report. It is a subjective evaluation.

"Are you looking for a sure way for your board to do its job better and to serve as a model to employees at the same time?" were questions raised by Curcio & Manning in their 1985 article. "Consider self-evaluation of your
board," they responded. "The merits far outweigh the effort expended is the apparent conviction of many school boards . . ." (Curcio & Manning, 1985, p. 2). Their article highlights the various aspects of a school board positioning itself for the process of evaluating its own effectiveness. The authors also list benefits that can result from the implementation of a self-evaluation program.

When a board evaluates itself:

- The role of the board is reaffirmed in the eyes of the board and its patrons and employees.
- The evaluation instrument provides a comprehensive ‘job description’ for new board members and aids in their orientation.
- The board serves as the model for staff evaluation.
- The self-evaluation has a positive effect on the way in which board members carry out their responsibilities; it helps to improve performance collectively.
- The self-evaluation helps the board to identify specifically areas of strength and areas of concern; it can suggest solutions to concerns.
- The self-evaluation provides accountability to school system patrons.
- The superintendent is assisted in helping the board reach its projected goals.
- The increased efficiency of the board directly benefits students.
- The process encourages board harmony and good working relations (Curcio & Manning, 1985, p. 2).

These benefits support the contention that there is merit in school boards using an evaluation process. The evaluation program recommended by Curcio and Manning has nine sub-headings for consideration, including:

- Board/Superintendent Relations
- Board Meetings
- Board/Community Relations
- Personal Relations
- Staff Relations
- Board and Instructional Program
- Board and Finance
- Board Inservice
- Board Leadership (Curcio & Manning, 1985, p. 2).

In an article in *Becoming A Better Board Member* (NSBA, 1992, p. 73), NSBA takes the position that "An evaluation should be constructive. Evaluation should be based on goals the board sets for itself, not on goals it sets for the entire school system." The emphasis on the role of the school board in its own evaluation is important to an understanding of this function. The guidelines suggest a distinct need for the board to differentiate between itself and the school system it serves. Such separation allows the board to look candidly at its performance without its judgment being clouded by issues not directly related. "The critical factor in board self-evaluation is not the instrument or process a board uses, but the need to identify the specific criteria that spell success for a board" (NSBA, 1992, p. 73). This article concludes with a 30 item evaluation form which examines issues facing school boards. The instrument assesses 'How it is.' versus 'How it should be' in the school board's operations.

The Joint AASA-NSBA Committee has also developed a "Sample Self-Evaluation Instrument". This one looks at performance in the following areas:

(a) instructional program/students, (b) board operations/relations with the superintendent, (c) fiscal management, (d) non-instructional services, (e) personnel, (f) employer-employee relations, and (g) school community
relations. Further, there is a tool to assess current conditions. Thirty-five items, of which 15 are general and 20 are devoted to conduct of meetings, provide the board with the opportunity to assess its current operating style (AASA, 1990, pp. 7-15).

In "Goal Setting and Self-Evaluation" (AASA, 1990) twelve characteristics of a board evaluation and goal setting are outlined. The basic features of a board evaluations/goal setting program, according to AASA are:

1. Any evaluation should be constructive.
2. Board members should develop standards against which they will evaluate themselves.
3. A board should recognize the difference between school district goals and goals that the board sets for its own performance.
4. A form for the evaluation/goal setting program should be designed and it should contain places to indicate not only strengths and weaknesses, but also to write in suggestions about how to improve.
5. The board should not limit itself to those items that appear on the evaluation form.
6. Formal evaluation should take place once a year and as a scheduled time and place.
7. A composite picture of board strengths and weaknesses is most accurate.
8. When results have been discussed and tabulated, the board should list the objectives it will attempt to accomplish before its next evaluation session.
9. The board should devise a process for establishing goals.
10. The board should be evaluated as a whole, not as individuals.
11. The board should provide itself with appropriate inservice education to ensure it meets its own objectives.
12. The board should adhere to mandates of open meeting 'sunshine laws' to ensure that self-evaluation of a board conducted in executive session does not violate any law or policy (AASA, 1990, pp. 1-4).
This AASA/NSBA material goes on to include a multi-page sample self-evaluation instrument, "Assessment of Board Operations", that measures board accomplishments. The 11 areas of function included in the instrument are: (a) instructional program, (b) students, (c) board's basic commitments, (d) board operations, (e) relations with superintendent, (f) fiscal management, (g) non-instructional services, (h) facilities, (i) personnel, (j) employer/employee relations, and (k) school community relations. This article specifies the Roles and Responsibilities-Action Words; The School Board and the Superintendent; What the School Board May Expect From the Superintendent; and What the Superintendent May Expect From the Board (AASA, 1994).

In a 1982 article by Glenn Heck (American School Board Journal), a self-evaluation checklist using eleven criteria is offered. The criteria are: (a) goal setting, (b) policy, (c) finance, (d) relationship with superintendent, (e) community relations, (f) board meetings, (g) staff and personal relations, (h) instructional programs, (i) leadership, (j) energy conservation, and (k) personal development. These aspects of board operation are measured as adequate or needs improvement.

"Self-evaluation is good for the soul -- to say nothing of what it can do for your board's performance" says Jerry Herman in a 1987 article. He asserts that there are eight areas of competence to be measured in determining the level of execution for your board. The areas are (a) leader, (b) evaluator, (c)
team member, (d) model of good behavior, (e) monitor, (f) communicator, (g) efficiency expert, and (h) informed decision maker and they are the realms of achievement that boards must assess in their self-evaluation. The goal of the process is to learn "What Ought to Be" (Herman, 1987, p. 38).

Materials from State Affiliates of NSBA

Dawson (1987) in his article entitled, "Leadership Team Self-Assessment: A Springboard for Discussion!", presented a 10 point questionnaire designed to stimulate interaction among school board members. Significance is attached to the need to substantiate opinions through specific examples and then to discuss them with their peers. The questions focus on the operations of the board. For example, "Does the board disagree on its role and use of time" (Dawson, 1987, p. 12).

The Michigan School Board Journal (MSBJ) has developed an evaluation tool for the assessment of school boards by their own membership. This instrument measures board functions across six areas: (a) routine functions, (b) school board improvement, (c) community relations, (d) improving instruction, (e) educational policy development, and (f) educational planning (MSBJ, 1980).

A sample self-evaluation produced by the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) examines seven areas: (a) board meetings, (b) board community relations, (c) board-administrator relations, (d) board-staff relations,
(e) instructional program, (f) personal qualities, and (g) an open-ended section designed to stimulate discussion of other concerns. "A Strategy For Implementing The School Management Team", (OSBA, 1982) proposes that each item, listed above, be measured as adequate or inadequate.

"School Board Self-Assessment -- Keys to School Boardsmanship" (Wolfe, 1982) was written as a joint effort among five state school board associations, NSBA and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). It establishes a paradigm for board growth and development. Intended as an education manual for school board members, this publication includes leader training and preparation for school board self-assessment in over nine areas. Of particular interest to this study is the section on school board self-assessment. There is an assessment instrument with comprehensive directions as to its use by school boards that are trained to apply it to themselves.

"Fulfilling The Boards Governance Responsibility" (Board Member Code of Ethics - New Jersey School Boards Association, 1987, p. 4) says the process of evaluation for the superintendent consists of a three-part approach which includes: 1) Progress towards district goals and objectives; 2) Demonstration of executive skills; and 3) Board self-evaluation [underscoring added] (New Jersey School Boards Association, 1987, p. 13). Of special note is the inclusion of board self-evaluation in the evaluation of the school district's chief school administrator. Effective school board functioning is critical to the
superintendent's evaluation and the success of the school district and that importance is recognized in "Evaluating the Chief School Administrator" as published by the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) (1987). "I will recognize that my responsibility is not to run the schools but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run," (Board Member Code of Ethics - NJSBA, 1987, p. 4).

"In its most rudimentary form, self-evaluation is asking yourself, "How well are we doing?" (Simon, 1985, p. 62). As the author of this NJSBA sponsored document entitled "Handbook of Effective School Board Leadership" asserts: "Whether education succeeds or fails depends in large measure upon the effectiveness of the local school board. The board must stand ready to insure the success of its schools by willingly accepting one of its major responsibilities -- self-evaluation" (p. 64). The manner of the self-evaluation supported in this piece consists of five steps:

1. Review meeting agendas and minutes.
2. Develop questionnaire.
3. Complete questionnaire and compile results.
4. Determine strengths and weaknesses.
5. Develop goals and objectives to improve areas of weakness. Include timeliness and person(s) responsible (Simon, 1985, p. 67).

Boone (1989) in a study for Educational Research Service (ERS), says "Evaluation has to do with making judgements regarding a set of events, behaviors or results of behaviors in light of predetermined and well understood
objectives . . . Evaluation is a control mechanism that allows one to correct (behavior) and plan changes” (Boone, 1991, p. 3). Though self-evaluation is seen as an essential part of the tools to be used by school boards in their quest toward effective leadership, it is often underutilized.

In "School Board Self-Evaluation: Charting A Path to the Future", the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) proposes a self-evaluation procedure that measures performance in seven areas: (a) board procedures, (b) board member training, (c) conflict resolution, (d) working relations with the superintendent, (e) conduct of board meetings, (f) long-range planning and goal setting, (g) relationships with the community (Boone, 1991, p. 8). Nemir outlines five steps for school board self-evaluation:

- Decide on the goals of self-evaluation
- Decide what aspects of the boards' operation to evaluate
- Select and adopt an evaluation instrument
- Set a calendar for completing the process
- Hold a meeting of the board to discuss the appraisal findings (Boone, 1991, p. 9).

"The result of the self-evaluation cycle should be a set of performance goals for improvement in the board's operation" (Boone, 1991, p. 10).

**Materials from ERS and Other Sources**

"School Board Evaluation: A Comprehensive Self-Help Guide" (McGee, 1990) is a resource book for a school board “that recognizes the value of evaluating their own performance and setting a course for improvement”
(McGee, 1990, Foreword). To the query "Why evaluate?" it is suggested that board evaluation:

- Holds boards accountable in the same manner boards hold their employees accountable.
- Allows individual members to reflect on their own and their colleagues' behavior and performance.
- Fosters open communication among board members and the superintendent.
- Improves decision making by enhancing understanding of philosophies and goals.
- Resolves differences of opinion and challenges false perceptions.
- Provides insight into why and how decisions are reached.
- Allows new board members the opportunity to understand the process of boardmanship and to get to know their colleagues.
- Assists in identifying personal strengths and weaknesses as well as those of the board as a whole.
- Provides a starting point for effective and productive goal setting and long-range planning activities (McGee, 1990, p. 8).

This guide provides a sample of some 20 models of self-evaluation instruments to be used as points of departure by school boards as they develop their own instrument tailored for their goals and purposes.

Robinson and Bickers examined the issues related to evaluation of school board performance in their 1990 survey of the literature on the subject. Topics included: (a) the frequency of evaluation, (b) reasons for evaluation, (c) characteristics of effective boards, (d) effective boardmanship as part of evaluation, (e) plus other topics on school board evaluation. In addition, the authors discuss at some length who should evaluate the school board. Several potential evaluators (superintendent, teachers, principals, etc.) are discussed as to their promise as effective and credible assessors. This report
provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on the evaluation of school board performance (ERS, 1990).

The National Academy for School Executives (NASE), the development arm of the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) promotes the idea of school board self-evaluation. Professors from Southern Illinois University and Iowa State University discuss the value of the process of evaluation to school boards and who is best able to perform what is seen as a valuable exercise. NASE concludes, in its package of four tapes ("Evaluating the Performance of School Administrators and Board Members," AASA/NASE, 1994), that those in the best position to execute the process are board members themselves. The public is excluded as possible evaluators based on their lack of information on the board and its functions. One study found that only 8% of a community sample knew all of the board members' names and only 18% knew one significant thing that the board had done in the last year (AASA/NASE, 1994, tape #4). The superintendent, and the administration in general, was also deemed as unsuitable because of the expectation that they could not be wholly unbiased. Teachers were another group explored but eliminated based on their potential for animosity toward the school board for prior decisions inconsistent with the desires of the teachers. The idea of an outside consultant, to administer the evaluation, was examined also but dismissed because of the inherent need to depend on secondhand information to accomplish the goal. By process of elimination, Stuck and Natusiil conclude
only the school board is in position to evaluate the school board. Only the board itself has access to all of the data required to make such an evaluation possible and accurate or meaningful (AASA/NASE, 1994).

The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) has developed a program to train its members in self-evaluation. There is a formal program, a series of lessons on boardsmanship, "... to provide the board with information and skills to help it in evaluating its activity as a board" (Brent & Jerkowitz, 1983, p. 28). School board Effectiveness of Performance in (a) policy making, (b) evaluation, (c) the board, (d) the agenda, (e) board meeting, (f) committees of the board, and (g) other, are the areas of rating included in their suggested evaluation form. In separate sections of "Evaluating the Board's Performance" goes on to examine, instruct, and promote Assessing Board Effectiveness and Setting Goals for the Board (Brent & Jerkowitz, 1983).

Sally V. Allen, in "How Board and Head Measure Their Performance", says that "Too often systematic evaluation ... is not undertaken for one the following four reasons:"

- Lack of time. Everyone is already too busy; we seem to trust one another; no one wants to add one more task.
- Reluctance of people largely inexperienced in education to try to apply the performance criteria used in business and industry to the school of which they are trustees. They may view education as a 'personal growth' field, very different from a product-oriented business with a bottom-line.
- Fear of offending social and professional colleagues on the board or the often charismatic 'institution' that heads the school.
• Satisfaction with current operations or perhaps even reluctance to
tackle such a task if the board is large and cumbersome (Allen,
1982, p. 69).

In "Board comedy is no laughing matter," Patrick Hayden (1984)
stipulates "Board business . . . becomes a good show only when it's botched"
(Hayden, 1984, p. 29). Seven areas of board meeting performance are
examined in this article. The author stresses the need for efficiency and
effectiveness in the conduct of school board meetings. It is alleged that the
lack of constructive operational practices by boards leads to meetings that
become the best show in town, comedies of ineffective and inefficient
communication -- filled with bickering and confusion (Hayden, 1984).

Danzberger, Kirst, and Usdan (1992) discuss the use of self-assessment
and its frequency of use "... the findings from the Institute for Educational
Leadership (IEL) 1986 study, found less than one-third of the boards in the
nine metropolitan-area sample had ever conducted any performance self-
assessment" (p. 60). The authors go on to state that "[s]elf-assessment and
consistent attention to training and development needs are absolutely minimal
requirements for improving governance" (p. 96).

"Best Practice", As Indicated in the Literature

"Best practice", as indicated in the literature (See Appendix B), was
determined by compiling the recommendations of two major organizations,
NSBA and ERS; and state affiliates of NSBA, related to the topic. A summary suggests school boards must first recognize the need to examine/assess their performance. They (boards) should then set the criteria or goals by which they will evaluate their performance, using a formal process. Board evaluation should be set by policy on a regular annual schedule. They should predetermine the date and location of their evaluation. School board evaluation should be established by a policy that requires prior selection and use of a facilitator. Boards should design or select an evaluation instrument that reflects their performance criteria or goals, an open-ended instrument such that other items may be included as board members see a need. The process should yield a summary describing the strengths and weaknesses of the board in relation to the criteria or goals established. The process should result in the development of revised goals or revised criteria for the improvement of the board’s performance based upon its self-evaluation. Finally, the process should be focused on the board as a body and not on the individual board members.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the participation of school boards, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the practice of board evaluation. A further purpose of the study was to compare the evaluation practiced by those boards that do engage in evaluation of themselves with "best practice". Survey research methodology was used in this study. The research questions examined were; (a) Do school boards assess their own performance? (b) If so, how do they assess their performance? (c) If they do assess themselves, is their assessment consistent with components recommended as "best practice"? (d) Is there a difference in the patterns of utilization of self-assessment among school boards based on size (large, medium, and small divisions), or type of governing unit (county, city, town)? School superintendents served as the source of data for this study. Their responses were solicited through a mailed survey.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire (Appendix A) used in this study was developed based upon a review of the literature. The review produced a listing of components and/or characteristics associated with effective school board evaluation.
procedures. Items for the survey were developed to match those elements identified as critical to “best practice” (Appendix B). Literature from two major sources; NSBA and ERS; and the state affiliates of NSBA; was reviewed for elements considered to be components of “best practice”. Specifically, the instrument was devised to collect data from the respondents in relation to the components identified. The purposes intended in the design of the questionnaire were (a) to learn the extent to which the school boards of the Commonwealth evaluate their own performance and (b) to learn which “best practice” evaluation components are a part of their processes. Information regarding division size and type of governing unit was gathered from the “1993-94 Superintendent’s Annual Report for Virginia”.

The questionnaire was a one-piece fold-out, on legal-sized paper, that contained the name of the superintendent in the school division address on one face with the letter inviting participation and the three-page questionnaire on the other three faces (Appendix A). The format of the questionnaire was a booklet; the coversheet a letter (Appendix C) describing the purpose of the study and soliciting participation of the superintendents. The other three faces of the document contained the questions. The document was produced on quality off-white legal-sized paper with two-sided printing using a high quality reproduction process as recommended by Dillman (1978). Each survey was coded to allow for follow-up with non-respondents. The participants were
assured that the data would be reported only in the aggregate to protect the identity of individual division respondents and their school divisions.

The entire questionnaire was reviewed in May 1995, for (a) clarity of purpose, (b) ease of understanding of the questions, (c) format, and (d) likelihood of response. The instrument was previewed in all aspects prior to its use by a group of superintendents (Appendix H). Ten persons at Virginia Tech (including professors and graduate students) were also asked, in May 1995, to review the instrument to assure that the information gathered would be responsive to the purpose of the study. Each of the reviewers was given a complete survey and they were asked to respond as though it had been sent to them. Each reviewer was asked to note any questions that were ambiguous, difficult to understand, or poorly worded. The responses were collected and alterations made. The amended survey was then retested with three of the same reviewers and four new persons. In addition, several of the graduate students and superintendents who originally reviewed the instrument were asked if the completed study would provide sufficient data to allow the researcher to compare practice in Virginia with “best practice”, as reported in literature.

Simplicity in format and design were primary concerns, as well as easy completion of the questionnaire and ease in compiling the response data. Clear language was also of great concern as it was seen to be connected to
increased probability of accuracy in completion of the form and interpretation of the data.

Data Collection

Every school superintendent in the Commonwealth was mailed the instrument, accompanied by a cover letter from the Executive Director of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), Vincent C. Cibbarelli, which encouraged their participation (Appendix I). The mailing included a pre-addressed stamped return envelope along with the instrument. The initial mailings occurred on July 15, 1995. One week later, on July 22, 1995, a postcard reminder (Appendix D) was sent to everyone, since no responses had been received at that time, as the first follow-up contact. Three weeks after the initial mailing, on August 7, 1995, a second follow-up contact was made with non-respondents, a letter (Appendix E), a replacement questionnaire, and another pre-addressed stamped return envelope were also sent. Seven weeks after the initial mailing, on September 5, 1995, the third follow-up contact letter (Appendix F) was sent to those that had still not responded. Included was another questionnaire and another pre-addressed stamped return envelope. Responses received from the mailing by November 1, 1995, were included in the analyses. Every effort was made to collect the questionnaires from 100% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth. Returns were received from 125 of 132 divisions or 94.6% of the school divisions in Virginia. No check for non-
respondent bias has been undertaken with such a small group (N=seven or 5.4%) of non-respondents. The non-responding divisions were fairly evenly spread over the categories of the study, i.e., six of the 94 county divisions and one of the 36 city divisions did not return their questionnaire, both towns responded; by size, three of the 47 small divisions (less than 2,500 students), two of the 35 medium divisions (2,500 to 5,000 students), and two of the 50 large divisions did not respond. An additional mailing from the committee chair, to solicit responses from the seven non-responding division superintendents was made on November 5, 1995. Three of the superintendents contacted did respond and three additional completed questionnaires were received. The three responses were from the one city division that had not responded and two were from among the non-responding county school divisions. The total number of responses rose to 128 (97%) out of the possible 132. All (100%) of the city and town divisions responded and 90 (95.7%) of the 94 county divisions. By size, 45 (95.7%) of the 47 small divisions, 34 (97.1%) of the 35 medium divisions, and 49 (98%) of the 50 large divisions were included in the data analysis.

**Analysis**

As surveys were returned they were checked for completeness and legibility. No returns were deemed to be illegible or otherwise unusable. Information from the surveys was collected and entered into the computer in a
spreadsheet for analysis. Frequencies and percentages were computed and tables constructed to present the data collected. Responses were examined in terms of distribution among the respondents by size, governing body type, and use of the elements of “best practice” among the boards reporting use of self-evaluation. Responses to the initial three (basic) questions were counted and compared with the number of respondents, responses to the balance of the questions were counted and compared to the number of divisions reporting use of school board self-evaluation. Participation in self-evaluation was examined in relation to its use among school divisions with small enrollments (less than 2,500 students), medium enrollments (2,501 to 5,000 students) or large enrollments (more than 5,001 students). Similar examinations were made regarding the governing entity associated with the school division: city, county, town. Tables reflecting responses from the questionnaires were constructed arraying the divisions in alphabetical order within categories by governing body (city, county, and town) and by size (small, medium or large).

Tables were developed to help with the organization and interpretation of the data collected. On each of the tables there is a data summary for each question with a total for the number of responses and a percentage of the respondents who gave that particular answer to the question. These tables were used to help organize the data and to examine the responses to the research questions.

30
Summary

This study was undertaken to examine school board self-evaluation practices in the Commonwealth and to compare those practices with "best practice" as described in educational literature. In addition, variations in the participation in self-evaluation practices among school divisions according to size and governing unit was examined.

Through the use of a questionnaire sent to every superintendent in the Commonwealth information was gathered regarding the use of self-evaluation as a practice by their school boards. The questionnaire, in section one, asked three basic questions to determine whether divisions did practice self-evaluation.

In those school divisions reporting that their school boards do engage in self-evaluation, additional data were collected to examine the practices used. The process of self-evaluation as represented in the literature as "best practice" requires, among other things, regularly scheduled annual evaluations, comparing board performance against criteria for its performance as set by the board, using a preselected facilitator, at a preselected site, at a predetermined time of year. Chapter Four presents the data collected as a part of this study and reports the findings related to the research questions posed in Chapter One.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to learn the level of participation by school boards, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the practice of board evaluation. This chapter reports on the data gathered by the questionnaire. Each superintendent in the one hundred thirty-two school divisions in Virginia was asked to respond to the survey questionnaire (Appendix A). From the data gathered by the survey the research questions were answered: (a) Do school boards assess their own performance? (b) If so, how do they assess their performance? (c) If they do assess themselves, does the assessment use components recommended by “best practice”? (d) Is there a difference in the pattern of school boards using self-assessment based on school division size (large, medium, small); or by type of governing unit (county, city, town).

The mailed survey questionnaire presented questions with yes or no answers, multiple choice options, and an ‘If other, please explain’ (fill-in the blank) option when one of the multiple choice answers was not selected.

Data were collected in two categories. The first question was to learn whether a division was participating in the process of self-assessment. The balance of the questions were targeted on those divisions identified as self-evaluators from the opening question. They constitute the group of
respondents that define the nature of school board self-evaluation practiced in Virginia.

This chapter concludes with an attempt to characterize the use of school board self-evaluation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A characterization drawn directly from the data collected in this study.

Survey questionnaires were mailed to the one hundred thirty-two school division superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. These mailings asked the superintendents to respond on behalf of their school boards about the board's practices regarding self-evaluation. Of the 132 division superintendents surveyed 128 or 96.97% of the population responded to the survey. Five of the school divisions (12.20%) with school boards that are self-evaluators responded to the survey request to return copies of their policies with their questionnaires. Thirty divisions (23.44% of the responding 128 school divisions) requested copies of a summary of the survey results. Table 1 contains the response rate to the questionnaires.

Table 1

Responses to the Survey Instrument

| Number of Divisions to Which Surveys Were Mailed | 132 |
| Number of Surveys Returned | 128 |
| Percent of Surveys Returned | 96.97% |
In Tables 2 and Table 3, a profile of the school divisions responding to the questionnaire is reported. Table 2 illustrates the composition of the group according to participation in self-evaluation among divisions of different sizes. Of the 132 divisions, there are 47 small divisions with 2,500 or fewer students; there are 35 medium divisions with between 2,501 and 5,000 students; and 50 large divisions having 5,001 or more students. Of the 47 small divisions, 45 or 95.74% responded to the survey. Among the 35 medium size school divisions, 34 or 97.14% responded to the survey. Of the 50 large divisions 49 or 98% returned the questionnaire. Small divisions, with 95.74%, had the lowest rate of return while large divisions, with 98%, had the highest rate of return.

Table 2

**Responses to School Board Self-Evaluation Survey by Division Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants / Responses</th>
<th>A. Small Divisions</th>
<th>B. Medium Divisions</th>
<th>C. Large Divisions</th>
<th>State Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Divisions</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Responses</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>95.74%</td>
<td>97.14%</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
<td>96.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School divisions were also sorted by type of governing unit (1993-1994 Superintendent's Annual Report for Virginia, Va. Department Of Education, 1994). The responses to the survey, sorted by governmental unit, are reported in Table 3. County school divisions, of which there are 94 in the state,
produced 90 responses (95.74%). Virginia has 36 city school divisions; all 36 (100.00%) responded to the survey. Two towns in Virginia have school divisions; both (100.00%) responded to the survey.

Table 3

Responses to School Board Self-Evaluation Survey by Governing Body Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants / Responses</th>
<th>A. County Divisions</th>
<th>B. City Divisions</th>
<th>C. Town Divisions</th>
<th>State Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Divisions</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Responses</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>95.74%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>96.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do School Boards Assess Their Own Performance?

Is there a difference in the use of self-evaluation among school boards based upon size or type of governing unit?

Of the 128 superintendents in Virginia that responded to the survey, 41 (32.03%) reported that their school boards practiced self-evaluation. (See Table 4)
Table 4

Virginia Superintendents Reporting their School Boards Engage in Self-Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Number Reporting Use of Self-Evaluation</th>
<th>Percent Reporting Use of Self-Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Totals</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses by School Division Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses by Type of Governing Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These 41 self-evaluating school divisions, when sorted by the size of their student populations include:

- sixteen small divisions, divisions with average daily memberships less than or equal to 2,500 students, or 35.6% of the 45 small divisions that responded to the survey;
eight medium-size divisions, divisions with average daily memberships between 2,501 and 5,000 students, or 23.5% of the 34 medium-size divisions that responded to the survey; and

seventeen large divisions, divisions with average daily memberships over 5,000 students or 34.5% of the 49 large divisions that responded to the survey.

The 41 self-evaluating school divisions, when sorted by type of governing unit include:

- twenty-six of the 90 school divisions associated with counties, or 28.9%;
- fourteen of the 36 school divisions associated with cities, or 38.9%; and
- one of the two school divisions associated with towns, or 50.0% of that group.

Participation in the practice of self-evaluation appears evenly utilized in large and small school divisions. In medium divisions use of self-assessment is somewhat lower. County school divisions use the practice somewhat less frequently than do city school divisions.

Having established the fact that only about one school division in three is engaged in self-evaluation, the second major research question is “To what extent do these school divisions employ ‘best practice’ as a part of their self-evaluation process?”
When School Boards Engage in Self-Evaluation,

Do They Use Components Recommended by "Best Practice"?

The 41 school divisions reporting their school boards use self-evaluation to accomplish that self-evaluation using some process. Determining the extent to which those evaluation processes include components recommended by "best practice" was a major goal of this study.

"Best practice" suggests school boards must first recognize the need to examine/assess their performance. They (boards) should then set the criteria or goals by which they will evaluate their performance, using a formal process. Board evaluation should be set by policy on a regular annual schedule. They should predetermine the date and location of their evaluation. School board evaluation should be established by a policy that requires prior selection and use of a facilitator. Boards should design or select an evaluation instrument that reflects their performance criteria or goals, an open-ended instrument such that other items may be included as board members see a need. The process should yield a summary describing the strengths and weaknesses of the board in relation to the criteria or goals established. The process should result in the development of revised goals or revised criteria for the improvement of the board’s performance based upon its self-evaluation. Finally, the process should be focused on the board as a body and not on the individual board members.
Forty-one school boards in Virginia are currently engaged in some form of school board self-evaluation or self-assessment. The next section of this study examines the practices used by those 41 boards in carrying out that assessment.

*Boards should set the goals and/or criteria by which they will evaluate their performance in a formal process.*

"Best practice" suggests that school boards should establish goals for their performance and criteria by which they will measure themselves.

Of the 41 self-evaluating respondents, 35 school divisions (85.37%) asserted that their school boards had set goals for their performance. Five superintendents (12.20%) of school divisions in which self-evaluation occurs claim their boards do not set goals for their own performance. One person did not respond to this question. (See Table 5)

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>85.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Best practice" suggests that school board evaluation should be formal as opposed to ad hoc.

Superintendents of 12 (29.27%) of the 41 school divisions described their board's self-evaluation processes as formal. Sixteen or 39.02% of the school divisions reported having boards that self-evaluate informally. Thirteen or 31.71% of the school divisions, among those that completed and returned the survey, did not answer this question. (See Table 6)

Table 6
Use of formal or informal processes by self-evaluating school boards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Board evaluation should be scheduled on a regular annual schedule.

"Best practice", as cited in educational literature, suggests an annually scheduled self-evaluation.

Of the 41 school divisions reported as self-assessing, 25 or 60.98% reported using an annual assessment. Three respondents, (7.32%) stated that their school boards assessed their performance every other year. Two or
4.88% of the school divisions described as self-evaluators reported using schedules that differed from the options offered on the questionnaire. One superintendent reported his school board participated in the practice of self-assessment "sometimes," on an unplanned basis. Another superintendent reported that at the school board's annual retreat, self-evaluation was regularly on its schedule. However, the board only conducted the evaluation if there was time, i.e., other issues took precedence over the self-evaluation and often it was not done. (See Table 7)

Table 7

How often do school boards conduct self-evaluations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biennially</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triennially</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Board policy (and/or procedure) should describe the process of self-evaluation used by the school board.

"Best practice" indicates that policy or procedure should establish the process of self-evaluation used by the school board.

Fifteen of the 41 divisions (36.59%) with boards that self-evaluate have policy or procedure setting the process for their self-evaluation. However, only five school divisions (12.20% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards) returned a copy of their policy with the completed questionnaire. The number of superintendents responding that their boards had no policy or procedures outlining the process for self-evaluation was 23, 56.10% of the self-evaluating boards. Three respondents (7.32%) did not answer this question.

(See Table 8)

Table 8

Does policy or procedure prescribe a process of evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Board policy (and/or procedure) should prescribe who will conduct the board's evaluation.

"Best practice" asserts that the school board itself should conduct the process of self-evaluation.

Twelve school divisions (29.27%) indicated that their school boards conducted their self-assessment -- in retreat. Nineteen or 46.34% of the responding school divisions reported that their school boards conducted the self-evaluation -- in executive session. Six (14.63%) of the school boards conducted their self-assessment -- in regular sessions. Two school divisions or 4.88% reported that their school board used an outside consultant to conduct their evaluation. Three of the school divisions (7.32%) reported that their board evaluations were done involving persons other than those listed in the questionnaire. One division indicated the use of teachers and principals; another indicated an uncertainty about participants because this was their first year, and the third division stated that the participants change to reflect the desires of the board. All of the self-evaluating school divisions responded to this question with one division marking two areas. (See Table 9)

"Best practice" calls for the board members themselves to provide the main input into the evaluation. No other entity has sufficient access to the board and its operations to make final judgements about board efficiency and effectiveness.
Thirty-four school divisions or 82.93% of the divisions with self-evaluating boards included the input of the board in their evaluations of their school board. Twenty or 48.78% of the school divisions with self-evaluating school boards involved input from their superintendents in their school boards' evaluation process. Six of the school divisions, 14.63% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards, included input from their communities in evaluation of their school boards. One school division or 2.44% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards involved an external reviewer in their board's evaluation process. Four school divisions, 9.76% of the divisions with self-evaluating boards, involved others (returned self-improvement forms that had been distributed widely throughout the community, among the staff, to the teachers, and the board clerk and an assistant superintendent) in their board evaluation process. Respondents were able to give multiple responses on this issue. Thus, the number of responses exceeded the number of school boards that self-evaluate. Four school divisions or 9.76% of the population did not answer the query. (See Table 9)
Table 9

By whom is the evaluation conducted and who is involved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Board Conducts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* in Retreat</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* in Executive Session</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* in Regular Session</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Board (Total)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>90.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Consultant Conducts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others Conduct</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>42*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Board is Involved</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>82.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Superintendent is Involved</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community is Involved</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Reviewers are Involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others are Involved</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>69*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Totals exceed 41 because of multiple responses.

Board evaluation should be based on goals/criteria established by the board.

"Best practice" indicates that the school board evaluation should be based on goals/criteria set by the school board to assess the school board's performance. Thirty-one, (75.61%) of the 41 school divisions with self-
evaluating school boards, set the criteria for school board evaluation with the participation of school board members. No school divisions permitted the board chair alone to set the criteria for its performance evaluation. Eight school divisions (9.51%) allowed the superintendent to set or participate in setting the criteria by which the school board would assess its performance. Four divisions, or 9.76% of the divisions with self-evaluating boards, allowed others to set or participate in setting criteria for the evaluation of the school board’s performance. Others cited included the VSBA, the VSBA policy service; staff, government officials, and the chairs of board advisory committees. One respondent indicated achievement of the previously established board goals was the sole criterion. The number of answers to this question exceeded 41, since more than one response could be checked. Four or 9.76% of the respondents did not make any reply to the questions about setting criteria. (See Table 10)
Table 10

Who sets the criteria for school board evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Members</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>75.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.76%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Totals exceed 41 because of multiple responses.

The date and location of school board evaluation should be predetermined.

"Best practice" indicates that the self-evaluation of school boards should be a regularly scheduled event.

Dates for the self-assessment of school boards are predetermined by policy or procedure in 13 (31.71%) of the 41 self-assessing districts. Twenty-three or 56.10% of the self-evaluating school divisions lacked such a policy or procedure, or did not include this information in policy or procedure if one existed. Five divisions (12.20%) did not indicate whether or not they had a policy or procedure setting the date for the evaluation.

Twelve school divisions, 29.27% of the self-evaluating school boards, were able to share the date set or being set for their next scheduled evaluation.
Of these self-assessing boards, six school divisions designated June, one division specified a range from February through April, while summer, March, April, September and October were the responses of the other five who listed a date. (See Table 11)

Table 11

If scheduled annually is the date/time of year for evaluation prescribed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Best practice" indicates that school boards should preselect the place at which the school board evaluation will be conducted.

Seven or 17.07% of the 41 self-evaluating divisions had policy that determined where the school board would conduct its self-evaluation. Thirty-two or 78.05% of the reports from the 41 self-assessing school divisions stated that they had no policies that indicated where their boards' self-evaluations were to be conducted or how that decision would be made. Two of the 41 superintendents did not answer this question. (See Table 12)
Table 12

**Does policy or procedure indicate where to hold the evaluation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>78.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Boards should design or select an evaluation instrument that reflects their performance criteria or goals:** an open-ended instrument such that other items may be included as board members see a need.

“Best practice” suggests that the school board should use an instrument in their self-evaluation.

Twenty school divisions or 48.78% of the self-evaluators reported that they used an instrument in their evaluation process. Eighteen respondents, 43.90% of the divisions with school boards that self-evaluate, asserted that their boards did not use an instrument in evaluating their own performance. Three school divisions, 7.32% of the self-evaluators, did not reply to this query. (See Table 13)
Table 13

Does your school board use an instrument for its evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Best practice" suggests that the school board should select or design an instrument that addresses the board’s specific needs and goals or select a generic instrument and tailor it to the degree necessary to make it functional for the board’s use.

Seven divisions, or one in three of the 20 divisions that reported using an instrument, use an instrument that is tied to their goals. Twelve school divisions, which reported using an instrument, used a generic evaluation instrument. One school division, which reported using an instrument, used an instrument recommended by VSBA. All divisions reporting that they used an instrument in school board evaluation responded to this question. The remaining 21 school divisions, (51.22% of the school divisions with self-evaluating school boards) did not answer this question. (See Table 14)
Table 14

What is the focus of the Instrument?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tied to goals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Best practice", according to the literature, suggests that the instrument used by school boards should make provision for responses or comments from board evaluators that are not specifically addressed by the instrument or the process.

There were two more responses to this query than the 20 divisions that reported using an evaluation instrument; 22 or 53.66% of the divisions, claimed that they used an instrument that allows for the addition of issues although only 20 indicated earlier that they used any instrument. Four school divisions, 9.76% reported that their instrument was not open to inclusion of issues omitted in its design. Fifteen (36.59%) of the school divisions with school boards reported as self-evaluating did not answer this question. (See Table 15)
Table 15

Is the evaluation instrument open ended?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School boards should preselect or predetermine the process for selection of a facilitator for school board evaluation.

"Best practice", as reported in educational literature, indicates that preselecting the facilitator to help the school board with the process of board evaluation is recommended.

Eight of the school boards, or 19.51% of the self-evaluating school boards, had a policy or procedure that predetermined the facilitator for the school board self-evaluation process. Thirty-two (73.71%) similar school divisions did not have a policy or a procedure that directed the selection of a facilitator for board evaluation. Three of the school divisions with self-evaluating school boards or 7.32% of such divisions that did not respond and share whether a policy or procedure controlled their selection of a facilitator. (See Table 16)
Table 16

Does policy or procedure decide who will facilitate the evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>73.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who facilitated the school board’s most recent evaluation?

“Best practice” recommends the use a facilitator to assist the board with the process of self-evaluation.

Twelve school divisions or 29.27% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards had selected their superintendent to facilitate the board through the evaluation process. Twenty-five school divisions, or 60.98% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards, use the board chair as facilitator. Six school divisions, or 14.63% of the self-evaluators use other facilitators; the Institute of Educational Leadership (ICEL), VSBA staff, an assistant superintendent, and university professors. Several school boards reported using joint facilitators; the superintendent and the board chair, the board chair and an external consultant, etc. Participants could make multiple responses to this question. Thus, the total number of responses exceeds the 41 school
boards that constitute the self-evaluators in Virginia. Four school divisions (9.76%) did not answer. (See Table 17)

Table 17

Who facilitated the school board’s most recent evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Totals exceed 41 or 100% because of multiple responses.

The process should yield a summary describing the strengths and weaknesses of the school board in relation to the criteria/goals it established.

“Best practice” proposes that the development of a list of board strengths and weaknesses should result from the evaluation process.

Nineteen school divisions, 46.34% of the divisions with self-evaluating school boards, showed that their evaluation process resulted in a list of school board strengths and weaknesses. Fifteen or 36.59% of the school divisions stated that their school boards do not develop a list of strengths and weaknesses as a result of their evaluation processes. There were seven of the
self-evaluating school divisions, 17.07%, that did not answer these questions.

(See Table 18)

Table 18

Does the process produce a listing of strengths and weaknesses?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 41 school divisions that were reported as self-evaluators, fifteen or 36.59% of those divisions stated they had processes that resulted in lists of strengths. Five school divisions or 12.20% of the divisions with self-evaluating boards stated that they have processes that are focused on their weaknesses. Nineteen or 46.34% of the school divisions, with self-evaluating school boards, reported that their process was focused on another outcome; nine of these divisions were focused on both strengths and weaknesses, focused on success in accomplishment goals, focused on assessment of roles and responsibilities, focused on improvement, focused on varied issues - it is confidential to the board, focused on results, and focused on a checklist. No answers to this query were received from two (4.88%) school divisions. (See Table 19)
Table 19

What is the focus of the process: strengths, weaknesses or other?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The self-evaluation process should result in an annual revision of goals/criteria for school board performance.

"Best practice" calls for revision of the goals that school boards set for their own performance, based on the results of their prior self-evaluations.

Regular revision of performance goals for school boards was reported as a result of self-evaluation in 24 of the 41 divisions (58.54%) whose school boards reported they were self-evaluators. On the other hand, one or 2.44% of the school divisions, did not report that they revise performance goals because of the process. Sixteen or 39.02% of the divisions did not respond to this issue. (See Table 20)
Table 20

Does the school board produce revised goals as a result of self-evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>58.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Best practice" calls for regular annual revision of the goals that school boards set for their own performance, based on the results of the prior self-evaluation.

Of the 41 school divisions that reported having school boards that evaluate their own performance, 28 boards or 68.29% of revised those performance goals annually. Four of the school boards or 9.76% of those boards that evaluate their performance reported that their school boards revised performance goals every other year. Three or 7.32% of these divisions reported that their school boards revised goals at other intervals. Six or 14.63% of the self-assessing school divisions did not provide this information.

(See Table 21)

57
Table 21

How often are the board's goals/criteria for its performance revised as a result of self-evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>68.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Other Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of the Analysis

The school boards of the Commonwealth evaluate their own performance in 32% of the divisions. School divisions in cities are a bit more likely, (38.9%) to participate in self-evaluation than are those in counties, (28.9%) in Virginia. School boards in small school divisions (divisions with 2,500 or fewer students), with 35.6% participation in school board self-evaluation and large school divisions (divisions with more than 5,000 students) have 34.7% participation and are both more likely to participate in self-evaluation than are medium sized school divisions (divisions with from 2,501 through 5,000 students), whose participation rate in school board self-evaluation is 23.5%.
None of the 41 self-evaluating school boards reported using all of the "best practices". Twenty-two of the 41 divisions, some of the components of "best practice". Each "best practice" component was used by seven or more of the self-evaluating school divisions.

The message may be in the opposing side of the statistics, that is, the rate at which school divisions in Virginia do not participate in the recommended process of self-evaluation. According to this study, almost 68% (more than two out of every three) of the responding school divisions have school boards that do not practice evaluation of their own performance and those that do, are uneven in their use of "best practices" at best.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

"Best practice" states that school boards, as a body, should evaluate their own performance. The premise: well-functioning school boards positively affect the probability of having well-functioning schools. "School boards should recognize that the school system can be no better than the board. In order for schools to improve, school boards must overcome their limits and maximize their strengths" (Boone, 1991, p. 5). School boards, as the policy-making bodies for school divisions, set the direction and the tone for all of the functions of the school district. This study was conducted to learn the level of participation by school boards in the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the practice of board evaluation. As an outgrowth of the study, the rate of participation in board evaluation among school boards with different size school systems and the rate of participation among boards associated with differing types of governing units was gathered. Another purpose of the study was to compare the components of the evaluation practiced by those school boards in Virginia that evaluate themselves with the components of recommended as "best practice".
Summary: The Research Questions

The research questions studied were, Do school boards in Virginia evaluate their own performance and if they do, do they use the components suggested by “best practice”? Further, do school divisions with differing student populations or with different types of governing bodies participate in the practice of evaluating their own performance at different rates.

Summary: The Method

All superintendents in Virginia were asked to complete and return a mailed questionnaire that collected the data for this study. Superintendents were selected as the most accessible person with knowledge about school board practices. They were thus chosen as the target population for the surveys. The surveys, mailed questionnaires, presented queries with yes or no answers, multiple choice selections, and requests ‘If other, please explain’ (to fill-in the blank) when one or more of the multiple choice answers was not selected. The data collected addressed the research questions.

The mailing used the “Total Design Method” (TDM), developed by Dillman (1978). In this approach the timing of the mailings, the presentation of the survey and cover letter, the quality of the paper used for the survey plus the letter, and the mailing envelope were all considerations to be controlled by the process.
The mail questionnaire, more than any other type of questionnaire, requires careful construction, for it alone comes under the respondent's complete control. It must truly be its own advocate. The absence of the interviewer, the traditional crutch for poorly constructed questionnaires, means there is no way to gloss over construction deficiencies or to respond to respondents queries, . . . (Dillman, 1978, p. 119).

Summary: The Findings

The survey was responded to by 128 (96.97%) of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth. That level of response was sufficient to assert that the results were representative of school divisions and their school boards across Virginia. The survey found only 41 (32%) of the divisions, not quite one in three, have school boards that evaluate their performance. To the contrary this study of the practices of school boards in Virginia, relative to their use of board evaluation, found that almost 68%, more than two out three, of the responding school divisions did not evaluate their own performance.

All of the self-evaluating school boards have met the first criteria, i.e., recognize the need to examine/assess their performance. Only 12 (9.38%) of the divisions with self-evaluating boards do so in a formal process as recommended. Less than one-third of these school boards, 31.71% have predetermined times and dates for their evaluation. Sixty plus percent of divisions with school boards that evaluate themselves establish their evaluation goals annually. More than three quarters of these school boards have their evaluation criteria set by the board members themselves. Additionally, almost
83% of the boards are participants in their own evaluation. More than 70% of the boards that evaluate themselves base their evaluation on goals they have set for their own performance (Appendix G).

Conclusions

The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), a professional organization for school boards and the most significant organization for school boards in Virginia, is the only agency in the state authorized to train school board members. It is also an affiliate of the National School Boards Association (NSBA). School board evaluation is a practice promoted in the literature of both NSBA and VSBA as “best practice”.

Fully two-thirds of the divisions of Virginia do not participate in evaluation of their performance as a board. Evaluation of the school board is critical to the board’s well-functioning and to the school division it serves. Adoption of the practice of board evaluation, as recommended by “best practice”, by all school boards in Virginia seems an appropriate high priority goal for the professional association of school boards of the Commonwealth. The ultimate success of adoption of this “best practice” should be an improvement in the functioning of school boards. Such an improvement in the functioning of boards would, in turn, support improvement in the functioning of school divisions which would in turn support improvement of the education for
the children of Virginia. The premise, as stated at the onset of this chapter, was that a well-functioning school board would positively effect the schools. Schools can only be as effective as the school board that directs them.

In Virginia the school boards do not participate in this important recommendation from “best practice”. According to the responses to this study, over two-thirds of Virginia’s school divisions do not practice any form of self-assessment despite recommendations to do so by their professional associations, VSBA and NSBA.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Two immediate needs for further examination resulted from this survey, both of which would add dimensions to the data collected. They are as listed below.

First, a study that compares the performance of students in divisions that participate in board evaluation with those that do not would make a very interesting addendum to the allegations of the literature. The connection between the function of the school board and student test scores is problematic on a causal basis but perhaps there could be a correlation study of the two measures that could relate the two factors while controlling for other factors statistically.
Second, an exploration of the high level of non-participation in board evaluation by school boards across Virginia should yield some very interesting and useful information for the staff developers that work with these and other school boards. Of particular interest would be school boards’ actual level of exposure to information regarding the value of the practice of board evaluation. An informed choice not to participate differs from non-participation attributable to ignorance. To what do the school boards attribute their non-participation? Do the claims alleged by the proponents of “best practice” not appeal or are they not believed? Does the amount of time required to implement the practice stand as the greatest barrier to its use?

The rest of the story should be of great interest to VSBA and NSBA, as they undertake their roles as the professional developers for the school boards of the Commonwealth and, for NSBA, the school boards of the nation. Such knowledge could support their efforts to educate the members of school boards across the state. If they understood what was acting as a barrier to adoption of this “best practice” then such barriers could be minimized on this and future endeavors.

Remarks

The assertion in the literature is that a well-functioning school board supports a well-functioning school division and that the opposite is also true,
i.e., a poorly performing school board is a burden for the school division it serves. The high rate of non-participation in school board evaluation is indicative of a need for greater education of the school boards of Virginia about this recommended practice. The Virginia School Boards Association, an affiliate of the NSBA and a source of materials supporting board evaluation, may want to upgrade their efforts to educate the boards regarding this important recommendation of "best practice".

These are the same school boards that expect and often demand that all other programs and individuals in the school system be evaluated regularly against performance goals established for them. Educators are assessed regularly to determine their success in meeting educational criteria. Educators have learned to rely on this assessment to measure the effectiveness of their practices. Many school boards on the other hand, quite obviously, do not apply this standard of assessment to themselves and their performance. Thus many boards are without any idea as to the effectiveness of their practices.


New York: Teachers College Press.


Houston, TX: Southwest Texas State University. Paper presented at the
31st Annual Conference of the Texas Association of School Boards and Texas Association of School Administrators. [ERIC # ED337873]


Herman, J. J. (1987). Answer these questions (candidly), and develop a snapshot of your board skills. *The American School Board Journal.* [ERIC # EJ356740]


[ERIC # ED238364]


[ERIC # ED289234]

Appendix - A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Looking at last school year, please answer these questions about the operations of your school board.

1. Has the school board developed goals for its performance? YES ___ NO ___

2. Are the goals regularly revised?
   YES ___ NO ___
   How often?  (a) ANNUALLY ______  (b) EVERY OTHER YEAR ________________
   (c) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN ________________________________

3. Does your school board evaluate its own performance? YES ___ NO ___
   IF NO, PLEASE STOP HERE AND RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE.
   If yes, would you describe the process as:
   FORMAL _____
   INFORMAL _____
   How often?  (a) ANNUALLY ______  (b) EVERY OTHER YEAR ________
   (c) EVERY THIRD YEAR _____  (d) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN: ________________________________

4. Does policy or procedure indicate where to hold the evaluation? YES ___ NO ___
   If yes, where? ________________________________

5. Does school policy or procedure prescribe a process? YES ___ NO ___

6. If scheduled annually is the date/time of year for evaluation prescribed?
   YES ___ NO ___  If yes, when is the next evaluation scheduled? ___________
QUESTIONNAIRE (continued):

Looking at last school year, please answer these questions about the operations of your school board.

7. By whom is the evaluation conducted?
   (a) BOARD IN RETREAT ___________________________
   (b) BOARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION _________
   (c) BOARD IN REGULAR SESSION ________
   (d) EXTERNAL CONSULTANT _________________
   (e) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN ____________________________
       ____________________________ ____________________________

8. Who sets the criteria for the school board evaluation?
   (a) BOARD MEMBERS ___  (b) BOARD CHAIR ___  (c) SUPERINTENDENT ___
   (d) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN: ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________

9. Is goal setting a part of the process?  YES ___  NO ___

10. Does your school board use an instrument for its evaluation? YES ___  NO ___

11. Is the instrument for evaluation: (a) TIED TO GOALS? ____  (b) GENERIC? ___
    (c) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN? ______________________________
        ______________________________ ______________________________

12. Is the evaluation instrument open ended?  YES ___  NO ___

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QUESTIONNAIRE (continued):

Looking at last school year, please answer these questions about the operations of your school board.

13. Who is involved in the evaluation of the school board?
   (a) BOARD _____ (b) SUPERINTENDENT _____ (c) COMMUNITY _____
   (d) EXTERNAL REVIEWERS __________ (e) IF OTHER, PLEASE LIST ______
       __________________________________________________________________

14. Who facilitated the school board's most recent evaluation?
   (a) SUPERINTENDENT ______ (b) BOARD CHAIRPERSON __________
   (c) IF OTHER, PLEASE GIVE PROFESSIONAL TITLE OR AFFILIATION ______
       __________________________________________________________________

15. Does policy or procedure decide who will facilitate the evaluation? YES ___ NO ___

16. Is the result a list of strengths and weaknesses for the board? YES ___ NO ___

17. How would you describe the process?
   (a) FOCUSED ON STRENGTHS _____ (b) FOCUSED ON WEAKNESSES __
   (c) IF OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN ________________________________
       __________________________________________________________________

* If there is a school board policy or written procedure regarding board evaluation, please return it with this questionnaire.

School Division: CODE # __________________________
If you would like a summary of the results of the study please check here. ______
July 15, 1995

John A. Martin
2814 Tall Oaks Drive
Blacksburg, Va. 24060-8109

Philip L. Worrell, Superintendent
Greensville-Emporia School Division
P.O. Box 1156
Emporia, Va. 23847

Dear Philip:

Since the publication of "Nation at Risk" there has been a constant review of the nations schools as to whether they are, in fact, doing the job of educating our children. As school systems have dealt with the need to assess the many dimensions of their operation one aspect is often not examined. The function of the school board is often unexamined. In fact, there is little information about the extent to which the school boards of Virginia participate in the practice of the evaluating their own performance. Under the direction of Wayne Worner, Dean of the College of Education at V.P.I. and S.U., and Ken Underwood, one of my committee members, an instrument has been developed to survey these practices.

The school divisions of the Commonwealth are being asked, through their superintendents, to respond to this survey. Through information gained from superintendents a determination of the extent to which school divisions evaluate themselves will be made. The survey focuses on data dealing with your school board's evaluation its own performance.

Complete confidentiality for each participant is guaranteed. No individual results will be reported. Surveys are coded for follow-up purposes only.

The results of this study will be made available to the Virginia School Boards Association and V.A.S.S. You may receive a summary of survey results by checking the appropriate box on the survey. Results will be returned when the process is complete and the study concluded.

Should you have any questions regarding the study, I'd be most happy to answer them. You may call me at (540) 951-0815.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely Yours,

J. A. Martin
### Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source/Question</th>
<th>National School Boards Association</th>
<th>Educational Research Service</th>
<th>State Affiliates of the NSBA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recognize the need for self-evaluation</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive Process?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brd designed/selected their evaluation instrument?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board sets new goals after evaluation?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process includes development of objectives for board improvement?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board evaluation not limited to items on instrument?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation based on goals board set for board by board?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board self-evaluation a prescheduled annual event?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process ends in a composite of the boards strengths and weaknesses?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board evaluated as a whole?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preselected facilitator?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preselected place?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

July 15, 1995

John A. Martin
2814 Tall Oaks Drive
Blacksburg, Va. 24060-8109

Dear:

Since the publication of "Nation at Risk" there has been a constant review of the nations schools as to whether they are, in fact, doing the job of educating our children. As school systems have dealt with the need to assess the many dimensions of their operation one aspect is often not examined. The function of the school board is often unexamined. In fact, there is little information about the extent to which the school boards of Virginia participate in the practice of the evaluating their own performance. Under the direction of Wayne Worner, Dean of the College of Education at V.P.I. and S.U., and Ken Underwood, one of my committee members, an instrument has been developed to survey these practices.

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Complete confidentiality for each participant is guaranteed. No individual results will be reported. Surveys are coded for follow-up purposes only.

The results of this study will be made available to the Virginia School Boards Association and V.A.S.S. You may receive a summary of survey results by checking the appropriate box on the survey. Results will be returned when the process is complete and the study concluded.

Should you have any questions regarding the study, I'd be most happy to answer them. You may call me at (703) 951-0815.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely Yours,

J. A. Martin
Appendix D

July 22, 1995

Dear ;

Last week a very important questionnaire on the issue of school board evaluation was mailed to you. As the superintendent of the division you are the most knowledgeable person in your division regarding the board's participation in this very important activity.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my sincerest thanks. If you have not, please do so today. Because the scope of this study is limited to the commonwealth, each response is critical. It is extremely important that your response be included so the results accurately reflect conditions in Virginia.

If you did not receive the questionnaire, if it got misplaced, please call me right now, collect at home (540) 951-0815 or work at (540) 382-5131 and I will get a copy to you immediately. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,
Appendix E

August 7, 1995

John A. Martin
2814 Tall Oaks Drive
Blacksburg, Va. 24060-8109

Dear:

About three weeks ago, I wrote seeking response to a questionnaire targeting your school board’s practices of evaluating their own performance. Your completed questionnaire has not been received.

The questionnaire supports significant research regarding the practices of school divisions in the Commonwealth. The study will be important as school boards formulate their policies and activities for the future.

I am writing again because of the importance your participation to the results of this study. As a superintendent of schools in Virginia, you are part of the very select group of individuals that can supply the data needed to complete this study, without your responses the information base will be incomplete. As mentioned in the first letter, your completed questionnaire is essential to building a representative base.

In the event that the initial survey questionnaire was misplaced, I have enclosed another questionnaire and another pre-addressed and stamped return envelope for your convenience. Remember, to receive a survey summary, just check the appropriate space at the end of the questionnaire.

‘Thank You!’ in advance, for your assistance in this pivotal research.

Cordially,

J. A. Martin,

P.S. There have been several inquiries regarding summaries of the study and when they will be available. I anticipate that summaries can be mailed in about eight weeks.
Appendix F

September 5, 1995

John A. Martin
2814 Tall Oaks Drive
Blacksburg, Va. 24060-8109

Dear :

I am writing about the study of school boards practices regarding evaluation of their own performance. Your completed response to the questionnaire has not been received.

Thus far, over 85% of the questionnaires have been completed and returned. This number of responses is very encouraging. But, for the study to be successful in describing the practices of school boards in Virginia, your responses are required. Experience suggests that those that have not yet completed and returned their questionnaire often have responses that are quite different from those who have. Thus, your completed questionnaire is very important to the study.

A study of school boards of the Commonwealth to learn of their use of evaluation of their own performance has not been previously done. The information gathered will be of particular interest to V.A.S.S., V.S.B.A. and the chairs of many school boards, in school divisions across the state, as they contemplate how to improve their school divisions. Again, the outcomes of the study will be less accurate without your completed and returned form.

It is for this reason that I am sending this last mailing to you. In case previous correspondence did not arrive, be assured that a duplicate packet of materials has been enclosed. May I urge you to complete it and return it as quickly as possible. A self-addressed and stamped envelope is enclosed to facilitate return of your completed questionnaire.

I will be happy to send a summary of results at the end of the study. Please, check the box on your completed questionnaire if you would like to receive a summary.

Your contribution to the success of this study will be appreciated greatly. I look forward to receiving your questionnaire.

Sincerely,

J. A. Martin

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## Appendix G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS /TITLES</th>
<th>Totals All Respondents</th>
<th>Totals as % Respondents</th>
<th>Non-Respondents</th>
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<td>62</td>
<td>48.44%</td>
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<td>2. Goals Revised</td>
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<td>3. Self-Evaluation</td>
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<td>6. Set Dates</td>
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<td>8. Sets Evaluation Criteria</td>
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<td>Superintendent</td>
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<td>9. With Goal Setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Reviewers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Facilitator Used</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0 or 26.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0 or 60.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Set Facilitator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 or 19.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7 or 73.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS /TITLES</td>
<td>Totals for All Respondents</td>
<td>Percent Evaluating Boards</td>
<td>Non-Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Strengths/Weaknesses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Process Focused On . . .</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weakness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Returned</td>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask to Send Results</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Respondents: 7 or 17.07%
Non-Respondents: 2 or 4.88%
Non-Respondents: 36 or 87.8%
Non-Respondents: 30 or 23.4%
Appendix H

Herman G. Bartlett, Ed.D., Superintendent
Montgomery County School Division
200 Junkin Street
Christiansburg, Va. 24073

Harold W. Dodge, Ed. D., Superintendent
Cumberland County School Division
P. O. Box 170
Cumberland, Va. 23040

Robert C. McCracken, Ed. D., Superintendent
Giles County School Division
Route 1, Box 52
Pleasantburg, Va. 24134

James L. Ruffa, Ed. D., Superintendent
Colonial Heights School Division
512 Boulevard
Colonial Heights, Va. 23834
Steven R. Staples, ED. D., Superintendent
York County School Division
302 Dare Road
Yorktown, Va. 23692

James S. Vaught, Superintendent
Wythe County School Division
1570 West Reservoir Street
Wytheville, Va. 24382
Vita

JOHN A. MARTIN
Assistant Superintendent
Montgomery County Schools
w- (540) 382-5131 h- (540) 951-0815

EDUCATION:

Harris Teachers’ Col A.B. Ed. Aug. 1968

AREAS OF CERTIFICATION:

Virginia Superintendent, Ass’t. Sup’t. for Instr.,Elem. Prin., Elementary
Supervisor, Middle Educ. 4-8, NK - 4.

EXPERIENCE:

Montgomery County Schools (6 years +)
Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, July, 1991 - Present
Assistant Superintendent for Personnel Services, July, 1990 - June, 1991

School District of University City (18 years +)
Assistant to Superintendent for Personnel, June, 1988 - June, 1990
Executive Director for Personnel, January, 1985 - June, 1988
Principal-Flynn Park Elem. Sch (K-5), July, 1980 - June, 1985
Assistant Principal, Brittany Woods Middle School, September, 1977 -
June, 1980
Math Department Chairperson
Mathematics Teacher - Grade 9
Substitute Teacher - K-12

St. Louis Public Schools (5 years)
Ashland Elementary School, Mathematics/Core Curriculum Teacher--
Grade 7, Social Studies/Core Curriculum Teacher--Grade 7
EDUCATION RELATED ACTIVITIES:

  Member - Dues Committee - 1994
* Conf. on Ed. Brd of Dir. 9/82-89 Pres., Brd of Dir.'87-89 (1st educ. ever)
  Chair., Brd Dev. Comm '83-85 Struct for Effec. Schl Ldrship
  Comm.'82-85
* Maryville College - St. Louis Mem. - Tchr Ed. Prog. Rev. Comm. - '87 - 90

Married to Mary Martin, high school counselor. I have two daughters
Angela Martin-Greer graduate Florida A.M.U. & Kimberly N. Martin graduate
Howard U.

John A. Martin