

NATIONAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS'
PERCEIVED RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEANINGS AND
THEIR ATTITUDES ON SELECTED EDUCATION ISSUES

by

Ghassan John Tarazi

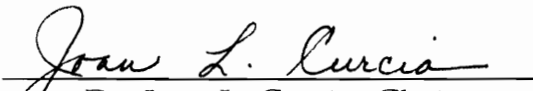
Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


in


Education Administration

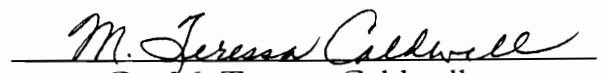
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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between school board members' religious and political leanings and their attitudes on selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. The research questions for this study were, (1) Do school board members perceive themselves as religiously conservative or liberal? (2) Do school board members perceive themselves as politically conservative or liberal? (3) What are school board members' attitudes on education issues dealing with separation of church and state and school choice? (4) Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on these education issues? (5) Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived political leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?

Members of the Christian Right have identified several education issues in which they are active. These issues include separation of church and state

and school choice. They are working in political arenas to define their positions and develop political and educational strategies to achieve those positions. Like other groups, members of the Christian Right are dissatisfied with the current condition of public education and the results of restructuring efforts of America's public schools.

Descriptive research methodology was utilized in this study. A stratified, random sample of school board member subscribers to *The American School Board Journal* was identified, and subsequently surveyed through the use of a mailed survey. Sixteen percent of the population of 36,619 were surveyed. A total of 6,135 surveys were mailed to subscribers of *The American School Board Journal*. The response rate for the questionnaires was 20.3% (1,247 of the 6,135 surveys were analyzed in this study).

The data clearly show that the school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as religiously conservative and politically conservative. As a group, school board members did not necessarily reflect educational positions espoused by members of the Christian Right. For example, in the area of separation of church and state, less than one-third of the respondents agreed that America needed a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. In the area of school choice, almost two-thirds of the respondents agreed that school choice plans will widen economic

and racial gaps between schools.

However, when examining the responses which reflect the positions of the Christian Right pertaining to the identified education issues, those who perceived themselves as religious conservatives, and to a greater extent, those who perceived themselves as political conservatives, clearly reflected those positions. The data show that there is a relationship between a school board member's perceived religious leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues, and there is a stronger relationship between a school board member's political leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. To my father and mother, Soud and Nadia Tarazi, who never let me lose sight of my destination and nurtured me along the way. To my mother-in-law, Hazel Parsons Ellis, whose insightful questions and the pertinent articles she faithfully sent to me always provided fuel for thought. I would like to believe she would have been pleased with the results of this effort. To my son, Jason, whose patience, long suffering and periodic editing were much appreciated. And especially to my wife, Kay, whose obvious pride and quiet confidence kept me on this long journey. Her editing skills and carefully phrased questions provided consistent and constructive support. I am thankful for all these contributions. It is because of them that this study is finished.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support, help, and encouragement of advisors, colleagues, and friends. Dr. Joan Curcio, my committee chair, was faithful and consistent in her support throughout this journey. Her masterful editing skills invariably made the document better. Her calm approach and wide array of problem solving strategies encouraged and motivated me. Her role was indeed significant. Dr. Jimmie Fortune made sense of the large amount of data. He always remembered every detail. His encouragements, his consistently wise advise, and his limitless statistical capacities gave me hope. Dr. David Alexander's ability to see into the future and uncover land mines enabled this journey to be completed with a minimum of chaos. His laser-sharp questions and prudent advise were essential ingredients for the completion of this study. Dr. Teresa Caldwell, whose early encouragement convinced me to begin this journey and her periodic reassurance maintained the course. Dr. Houston Conley faithfully read and provided helpful feedback to many versions of this study. He graciously continued his role on my committee, even after his retirement. To my committee members - thank you.

Dr. Walter Mallory devoted time, energy, and his exceptional skills to review the proposal, survey, and data. Dr. Fran Prolman gave of her time and

keen editing skills to review drafts of the study. Drs. Catherine Alifrangis and MaryEllen Farmer provided invaluable critiques of and suggestions for the survey. Their insightful comments improved the survey. I thank these colleagues and good friends.

And finally, to my dear friends at church, who provided insightful comments about the survey from their unique perspectives. To these contributors and their many contributions - thank you.

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Chapter 1

NATIONAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEIVED RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEANINGS AND THEIR ATTITUDES ON SELECTED EDUCATION ISSUES

Introduction

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked an overall conservative shift in political direction for the country. However, it was the publication of the National Commission on Excellence's *A Nation at Risk* (1983) that gave a rationale for the shift, especially in the area of public education. The report referred to low student achievement in American public schools as contributing to a rising tide of mediocrity. The commission equated this low level of student performance to an act of "unilateral disarmament in the battle for international economic control" (p. 12). From 1983 to the present, federal policy regarding education has been marked by a steady decline in fiscal support, by a gradual erosion of equity guarantees, by deregulation of programs, and an emphasis on achievement production (Clark and Astuto, 1989).

The conservative trend in the United States is not a monolithic movement, as seen in the political, social, and religious aspects of this move toward the right. The Christian Coalition, the 700 Club and its Christian Legal Defense Fund, Focus on the Family, and Christian Legal Society are a

few examples of groups who espouse conservative positions based on their religious convictions. Their expressed dissatisfaction with public education, their conclusion that educational reform efforts have failed (Brown, 1987; Buehrer, 1990; Dobson and Bauer, 1990; Robertson, 1990), and their increased level of involvement in political and educational arenas (Broden, 1995) during this period of conservatism combine to create an interesting and challenging situation for school board members.

Statement Of Need

Christian groups have become increasingly more active politically, especially in education issues (Simonds, 1989 and 1992). Christians are no longer reluctant to express political or educational desires based on their religious convictions. Eric Broden (1995), a conservative, stated his view that religion and politics do mix. He went on to say that,

Freedom of conscience on which freedom of religion is based is the foundation for all the other fundamental rights, such as freedom of the press, expression and assembly. Religion is not simply to be tolerated. Rather, it is to be accorded at least equal footing with - and the same respect as - the right of free speech, the right to assemble peacefully, and the right to petition the

government for redress of grievances. (p. 32)

Members of the Christian Right have identified a number of education issues in which they are active. These issues include prayer in schools, equal access to educational facilities, public funding of religious publications, school choice, and curricular challenges (Brown, 1987; Buehrer, 1990; Dobson and Bauer, 1990; Robertson, 1990; Simonds, 1989 and 1992). They are working in political arenas to define their positions on those issues. They are also developing political and educational strategies to achieve those positions. On the national level they are actively involved in efforts to pass a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. On the state level, they were instrumental in passing California's Proposition 187 (which prohibits providing educational and social services to illegal immigrants) and defeating Pennsylvania's plans to implement outcome-based education. Across the nation, members of the Christian Right are running for their local school boards. Robert L. Simonds, president of National Association of Christian Educators/Citizens for Excellence in Education (NACE/CEE), a large Christian group which focuses on education issues, published a kit entitled "How to Elect Christians to Public Office."

Members of the Christian Right believe public education is on a course of self-destruction. Simonds (1992) emphatically declared that his group

wants education reform. He delineates why education reform is essential. He states that without reform,

1) their children's faith in God will be subtly destroyed, 2) their children will learn New Age religious practices, falsely equated with Christianity, through hypnotism (called 'relaxation exercises'), the occult, necromancy, and Eastern religious practices, 3) their children will be subjected to the negative messages of current sex activities, and 4) their children will be denied a prosperous future because of the continuing decline in academic achievement. (p. 21)

For the Christian Right, winning this battle is absolutely essential in order to maintain everything they hold sacred. They believe the world order they have built in the United States is being undermined and destroyed. They need to fight these perceived "enemies" in order to regain and rebuild Christian society which is so dear to them (Brown; Buehrer; Dobson and Bauer; Robertson, 1989; Simonds).

Charles C. Haynes (1994) stated that the public schools of America have become the battlefields for the culture wars that deeply divide our nation. He goes on to say,

Bitter clashes over such issues as religious holidays, equal access,

religion in the curriculum, and religious practices have placed children and teachers in the crossfire of controversy and dissension. Extremes have surfaced on all sides, and any notion of a common vision for the common good is often lost in the din of charge and counter-charge. As alienation and frustration deepen, public education is weakened and our future as one nation of many peoples and faiths is called into question. (p. 2)

School board members are at the center of this conflict in which members of the Christian Right are active. The public is focusing closely on school boards, especially during this period of growing dissatisfaction with the perceived performance of schools. The widening gap between the public's expectations for student achievement along with their perceived understanding of schools' levels of performance, draws attention to school boards. Like other groups, members of the Christian Right are dissatisfied with the current condition of public education and the results of "restructuring" of America's public schools (Simonds, 1992; Robertson, 1990; Brown).

School board members must be able to make educational decisions which best meet the needs of all students in their care. At the same time, they must represent their communities' desires (Meyer, 1982). This has never been easily accomplished, but under the present national, political, and social

climates, it is even more difficult.

Researchers have concluded that the real decision makers in the government of education are those individuals who successfully resolve school issues and policies in accord with their own values, judgments, and perceptions. Real education decision makers are individuals who can balance the political process and educational decision making (Rosenthal, 1969; Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt, 1989). By identifying and defining these education issues, school board members can see where the "line in the sand" has been drawn by members of the Christian Right. By having school board members examine how their religious and political leanings affect their attitudes on educational issues, they may be able to find common ground upon which to discuss these issues, share ideas, understand differences, and set the direction for their own individual districts and collectively for America's public schools (Ledell, 1995).

One effort to find common ground between members of the Christian Right and groups who have opposing views on education issues can be found in the work of nearly 200 national leaders who represented America's leading faiths. Meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, these spokespersons were able to identify and agree upon the guiding principles and the shared obligations of citizenship that enable Americans to negotiate their differences with civility

and respect. This document, which is known as *The Williamsburg Charter* (1988), defines a vision of the First Amendment Religious Liberty Clauses which can be used in the United States today. The civic framework of the First Amendment, as described in the Charter, is an essential starting point for seeking common ground on the role of religion in public education.

Vanderbilt University's The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center has developed strategies for finding common ground between individuals with differing positions. In their publication *Finding Common Ground* (1994), the authors have defined a six-step process. The process is as follows. (1) Agree on the ground rules. The authors suggest that the starting point should be the "Summary of Principles" found in *The Williamsburg Charter*. The basis for these principles are the "three Rs" of religious liberty: rights, responsibilities, and respect. (2) Include all of the stakeholders. They warn that when religion-and-school policies, no matter how wise or clear, are developed without strong community participation, they risk doing more damage than good. When school boards or administrators reach out to critics of the schools, particularly religious conservatives, they must look beyond media stereotypes and identify a broad cross-section of the community. (3) Listen to all sides. Putting aside labels and stereotypes and taking seriously the position of the "other side" are the starting points for genuine dialogue. (4) Work for comprehensive policies.

Begin the search for common ground with the areas where agreement is most likely to be achieved. (5) Be pro-active. This takes seriously the importance of articulating the proper role for religion and religious perspectives in the public schools, therefore, the resulting policies and practices create a climate of trust in the community, and demonstrate the public school's active commitment to the guiding principles of America's democracy. (6) Follow-through with your plans. This includes staff development for administrators and teachers about policy statements and implementation procedures for those policies.

The authors of *Finding Common Ground* conclude that First Amendment religious liberty principles do work. They say, without asking anyone to compromise their deepest convictions, schools and communities can find areas of agreement on questions that have long divided Americans. They believe "A common vision for the common good" (p. 14) is still possible in public education.

Statement of the Problem

Through a review of literature generated by members of the Christian Right, including reviewing the last three years' issues of *Christianity Today*, *The American Spectator*, and *Conservative Review* magazines, reading *The fundamentalist phenomenon*, *Prepare for war*, *The New Age masquerade*, *Unmasking the New Age*,

The New Millennium, What are they teaching our children? and others, a number of education issues emerged.

The two education issues that appeared most frequently in that literature were (1) *School choice* (including charter schools, open enrollment plans, magnet schools, voucher plans, tuition tax credits and home schooling), and (2) *separation of church and state* (including prayer in school and equal access). Unquestionably, these schooling issues are uppermost among the concerns of the Christian Right related to American education and will most likely be the issues that arise as policy concerns for school board members across the country.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between school board members' religious and political leanings and their attitudes on selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. The research questions for this study were:

1. Do school board members perceive themselves as religiously conservative or liberal?
2. Do school board members perceive themselves as politically conservative or liberal?

3. What are school board members' attitudes on education issues dealing with separation of church and state and school choice?
4. Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?
5. Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived political leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?

The variables which were studied included school board members' (1) perceived religious leanings (conservative or liberal), (2) degree of religious activity (high, moderate, low, none), (3) extent of the impact of their religious beliefs on everyday decisions (great to none), (4) perceived political leanings, (conservative or liberal), (5) degree of political activity (high, moderate, low, none), (6) extent of the impact of their political beliefs on everyday decisions (great to none), (7) age, (8) gender, (9) education, (10) family income, (10) marital status, (12) children in public or private school, and (13) geographic region.

Limitations

Several limitations to this study need to be acknowledged: (1) the population was composed of school board members who subscribed to *The American School Board Journal*; (2) a follow-up survey was not possible

due to the requirement of absolute anonymity for the school board members by the National School Boards Association; (3) the responses to the questionnaire are assumed to be the true attitudes of the respondents based on personal observation, experience, or preference.

Definitions

1. *Christian Right* - It is difficult to define the many groups that are within the Christian conservative movement. Steven Bates (1993), in his book *Battleground*, first used the term *Fundamentalists* to describe American Protestants at the turn of the century. He described peaceful Christian people who were fervently dedicated to their beliefs. Unfortunately, the term fundamentalists is now associated with Islamic extremists who are involved in terrorist activities (Manatt, 1995). The term *Evangelicals* is sometimes used to describe Christian conservatives. However, many evangelicals consider themselves religious conservatives who are politically liberal. Some writers use the term *Religious Right*, while others prefer the term *New Christian Right*. In this study, the term *Christian Right* will be used to describe the various groups under discussion.

William Bennett (1994) attempts to provide an underlying philosophy for the Christian Right. He contends that, from the standpoint of politics and

religion, there are inherent dangers in politicizing religious faith. He also admits that there are some of the Christian Right who are guilty of overheated, offensive, and reckless statements. Bennett defines the foundational position of the Christian Right, saying that, "Christianity makes normative claims, stands against moral relativeness, is the antithesis of our age's worship of the self, and doesn't endorse unfettered freedom. Christianity is about right and wrong. And politics is, too" (p.47).

2. *Alternative schools* provide alternative experiences to students not provided by conventional schools and are available by choice to every family within a district at no extra cost (Young and Clinchy, 1992).

3. *Home schooling*, often interchangeably used with home education, means instruction provided by a parent or guardian of their children in their own home (House, 1988).

4. *Magnet schools* are defined or described as schools or programs within a school that have the following characteristics: (1) a special curriculum, theme, or method of instruction; (2) choice of school by parents or students; (3) access for students beyond regular attendance zones; and (4) a role in voluntary or mandated desegregation (Jessee, 1993).

5. *Vouchers* are defined as direct governmental financial grants to families for the purchase of schooling, usually outside the public sector. Vouchers could offer parents a rather unrestricted choice over their children's school through the use of a chit or a bill to be cashed in for education. Under most voucher plans or proposals, the voucher could be used to attend private or public schools (Young and Clinchy).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction, statement of need, statement of the problem, statement of purpose, definitions, limitations of the study, and the study's organization. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature pertaining to this study. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the data collected. Chapter 5 contains a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further studies.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature pertaining to selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. The education issues which appeared frequently in the literature of Christian Right groups are *school choice* (which includes magnet schools, district and state-wide open enrollment plans, charter schools, public and private school voucher plans, tuition tax credits, and home schooling), and *separation of church and state* (which includes prayer in public schools and equal access issues).

School Choice

Introduction

School choice is a complicated education issue which gets to the very core of American's ideals of freedom, self-direction, equity, and diversity. While school choice is proported by some as a solution to the problems of American education (Brown; Buehrer; Clark and Astuto; Cohen; Dobson and Bauer; and Simonds, 1992), it is critically questioned by others (Uchitelle, 1993; Henig, 1994; Lieberman, 1990; Pollard, 1989; Carnegie Foundation, 1992; and Jessee, 1993). What cannot be denied is the fact that school choice is being

offered on an increasingly widespread basis in America (Jessee; Yaseldyke, 1992). Advocates of choice are promoting this option from the nation's most respected political and academic pulpits. Many advocates are motivated by the conviction that public schools are not performing at expected levels. These advocates believe that school choice is a bold, creative step which is needed to shake up a lethargic public education system (Carnegie Foundation).

The issue of school choice has many contradictions and unanswered questions, and a review of the literature on the topic reveals a wide range of conflicting issues. These issues include school choice as a 1) reform movement, 2) diversionary tactic to use public funds for private education, 3) solution to integration, 4) guise for increased segregation and elitism, 5) basic parental right, or 6) detriment to the greater needs of society. School choice continues to be debated on many political battlefields. It has been debated in the White House, in many state capitols, and school board meeting rooms. It has become an integral part of the school restructuring movement (Hakim et al, 1994; Henig; Young and Clinchy; Lieberman; Pollard; Witte, 1989; and Carnegie Foundation).

School Choice Definitions

The word *choice*, in connection with schools, means the ability of parents

to select freely the school their children will attend. School choice is typically described rather than defined. One defining point, however, is that choice plans frequently have a feature of parental control or parental influence. Plans for school choice always involve the parents' influence or control over the selection of a school for their children. Witte (1989) has divided choice plans into two categories: those using parental *influence* and those using parental *control*. Witte defines influence as the parents' ability to affect a decision ultimately made by others, usually school authorities. He defines control as the parents' ability to have the final say on what school their children will attend. Outside public school policy, parental control takes the form of selecting where one lives or enrolls their student into a private school. Within public school policy, parents can influence the school their children may be able to attend with such options as magnet schools, district level, or statewide choice plans. Some advocates of school choice say parental control can be achieved through voucher plans and tuition tax credits.

Plans based on parental influence represent the majority of district choice plans, including magnet schools and controlled-choice schools. Magnet schools are schools (or units within schools) organized around a specialty such as the arts or a traditional approach to the basics. Parents and students can generally choose from one or more of these specialty schools in a district,

depending on enrollment criteria. Magnet schools have typically been associated with desegregation plans, but their numbers are now expanding because of the appeal of choosing schools, regardless of the desegregation issue.

Controlled-choice schools offer as much choice as possible among all schools in a district while maintaining racial balance in almost all the schools. In this model of choice, the school district remains the contracting and regulating authority. District-level approaches to choice have been augmented by statewide systems of choice. In these statewide systems, parents can seek enrollment for their children in any school in any district in their state. State funds then follow the student to the receiving school.

Choice models based on parental control are represented primarily by voucher plans, which were tried in the 1970s with support from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (Yaseldyke). Under current voucher plans, the partial or full cost of a student's education is provided in the form of a voucher that parents can use to purchase education in either public or private schools. Tuition tax credits, in which income tax deductions are made available for the tuition paid to private schools, can be considered a variation of this plan (Hakim et al).

School Choice Agendas

Choice has become controversial because there are at least three agendas supporting it. Proponents and opponents of each of these agendas, though using the same words, have different motives, issues, and goals in mind when they speak of choice (Witte; Uchitelle, 1993; and Hakim et al).

One agenda can be characterized as *reaction to the present* (Lieberman; Pollard; Uchitelle; Hakim, et al; Young and Clinchy; and Jessee). Proponents of this agenda are dissatisfied with education as it now exists, especially student achievement, the perceived unresponsiveness of the educational bureaucracy and professionals, failed improvement efforts, and unmet educational needs (Bates; Brown; Buehrer; Cohen; Dobson and Bauer; and Simonds, 1992).

A second, well-known agenda for choice is *choice as a means for desegregating schools* (Pollard, Lieberman, Jessee, Uchitelle, Hakim, et al, Young and Clinchy). This agenda results from people's dissatisfaction with diverse racial and ethnic populations. This choice agenda is controversial because some view it as a means for assisting people who are underserved by public education, while others view it as a way to maintain the desegregation status quo. Proponents of choice for desegregating schools argue that choice allows poorer families to make choices that richer families make when they move into

neighborhoods with exceptional schools, send their children to private schools, or exert extreme influence in their existing settings. But opponents of choice argue that, in many cases, actual implementation of choice has resulted in increased segregation (Carnegie Foundation; Uchitelle; Manatt; Powers and Lapsley).

A third, less known agenda for choice is *choice as a catalyst for change* (Henig; Lieberman; Pollard; Uchitelle; and Hakim, et al). This agenda is advocated in communities already doing well on measures such as student test scores and dropout rates. This agenda focuses on variety, options, self-direction, flexibility, and responsiveness as the primary benefits of choice. Its purpose is to provide for individual educational needs in a quicker, more responsive way (Clark and Astuto; Simonds, 1992).

Perceived Benefits of School Choice

School choice has been proposed as a solution to current problems in education. Some of these problems include the following perceived shortcomings of education.

Poor student achievement - Data on student achievement are inconclusive, yet proponents continue to claim that school choice will improve the achievement of students (Simonds, 1992; Clark and Astuto; Bates; Brown;

Dobson and Bauer). Some systems which have developed school choice plans, such as New York City's District 4 in East Harlem, has reported improvement in average daily attendance, reduction in the drop-out rate, and fewer incidences of disciplinary referrals. Standardized test results have not shown any positive signs (Raywid, 1989; Carnegie Foundation).

Lack of responsiveness to the concerns of parents and students - Many people feel frustrated when they are not allowed to make major decisions concerning the education of their children. In their view, public schooling has been captured by an unresponsive bureaucracy whose agenda is not congruent with students' needs. Proponents hope that schools of choice will be the means for less wealthy citizens to select schools, just as middle and upper class families do when they buy homes in neighborhoods with presumed excellent schools (Bates; Brown; Buehrer; Clark and Astuto; Cohen; Dobson and Bauer; and Simonds, 1992).

Shortcomings of overt desegregation strategies - Initially, magnet schools were created in order to meet desegregation requirements. These schools ensured equal access to all racial groups, basing enrollment upon program specifications and/or entrance criteria. These magnet schools expect that by shifting the focus toward program specificities and away from the usual entrance criteria (the student's neighborhood), the schools can bring together students who have

common interests regardless of race (Carnegie Foundation).

Difficulty of revitalizing public schools (Clark and Astuto; Dobson and Bauer; Simonds, 1992) -The political environment of the nation is restive, with special interest groups using the political process to further their specific issues, resulting in dramatic realignment of power (Hakim; Pollard; and Witte). For schools, much of the turbulence comes from demographic shifts in student populations. More children are poor and of color, and expectations for their performance are rising; yet public confidence in the schools is low. Some proponents of school choice believe educational leaders have responded to this turbulence with retrenchment, improvement plans, and, in relatively few cases, restructuring (Nathan, 1989).

Introduction of choice, advocates believe, will cause everyone in the system to examine the schools from top to bottom so that rational choices can be made. Once that examination is made, harmful practices, inadequate teaching and curriculum, and even inadequate physical plants can be exposed and remedied (Simonds, 1992; Cohen; and Clark and Astuto).

Preliminary Findings on School Choice

As a result of a national, year long research project on school choice, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reached nine key

conclusions regarding the problems and possibilities of school choice. First, Americans generally feel positive about the idea of school choice. The vast majority of parents appear quite satisfied with their current public school arrangements, and very few have elected to participate in statewide choice programs now in place. In the Carnegie Foundation's 1992 Survey of Parents with Children in Public School, 70 percent of the parents who were asked if there was another school to which they would like to send their child, said "no." In addition, a very small percentage of students participated in statewide choice plans. For example, in the state of Minnesota, which had the largest statewide choice program, only 1.8 percent, or 13,000 of its eligible students participated in the plan in 1992. The researchers concluded that the push for school choice does not appear to be a groundswell from parents.

Second, the Carnegie researchers found that many parents who do decide to send their children to another school appear to do so for nonacademic reasons. They felt that it would be difficult to conclude that choice itself will improve academic achievement through competition. The data in the area of student achievement are inconclusive.

The United States Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement's National Household Education Survey 1993 (NHES:93) indicated an almost even distribution of responses when they

asked, "What are parents' primary reasons for choosing a school?" Overall, parents who choose public schools for their children do so for three reasons: a better academic environment (26 percent), special academic courses (23 percent), and social convenience (23 percent). Parents with lower socio-economic status were more likely to select schools for convenience than families with higher socio-economic status (28 percent to 16 percent), while similar proportions of both populations chose schools for the two academic reasons stated above.

The same data indicated that parents who enrolled their children in private schools did so for two reasons: a better academic program (37 percent) and religious or moral reasons (30 percent). These were the top two reasons across all sample groups.

Third, the Carnegie Foundation researchers concluded that not all families have multiple school options available to them, and even when options are available, the choice process tends to work much better for those who are more advantaged economically and educationally. They concluded that choice works better for some parents than for others. Those with the education, sophistication, and especially the right location, may be more able to participate in such programs. When survey respondents were asked how far it was to the next closest public school only 25 percent said less than 2 miles, 26

percent said between 2 to 5 miles, while 24 percent and 25 percent said between 5 to 10 miles and 10 miles or more respectively.

NHES:93 data support this Carnegie finding. In 1993, 19 percent of children sampled in the study attended schools their families selected (11 percent in chosen public schools and 8 percent in private schools). Black students (23 %) were more likely than white students (19 %) to have their families exercise the option to choose a school other than the assigned public school. Moreover, as Table 1 shows, the nature of the choices differed; Black and Hispanic students were more likely to be in a chosen public school and less likely to be in a private school, while White students were more likely to be in a private school than in a chosen public school.

The same survey results showed that children living in urbanized areas were twice as likely as those not in urbanized areas to be in a school chosen by their families (25 percent to 12 percent). Students in urbanized areas were somewhat more likely to be in public schools than in private schools while students outside urbanized areas were about equally likely to be attending either type of chosen school (Table 1).

Table 1:

Students in grades 3-12 attending chosen or assigned school by family characteristics: 1993

	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION:		
		PUBLIC, ASSIGNED	PUBLIC, CHOSEN	PRIVATE
Total Students	50,004,955	81	11	8
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>				
White	41,039,023	82	8	10
Black	9,332,499	76	20	4
Hispanic	6,557,854	80	14	6
<u>Type of area</u>				
Inside urban area	35,080,073	75	14	11
Outside urban area	8,692,522	88	7	5
Rural	15,232,361	88	6	6
<u>Parent Education</u>				
< High School	5,549,763	85	13	2
H.S. graduate	19,196,779	84	11	5
Vo-Tech	18,536,028	81	11	8
College graduate	6,940,164	77	10	13
Graduate school	8,578,628	75	9	16
<u>Parent Income</u>				
< \$15,000	12,848,325	82	15	3
\$15-30,000	15,108,627	82	12	6
\$30-50,000	15,915,309	82	10	9
\$50,000 +	15,132,694	77	8	15

Note. The source of information is the United States Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Education Policy Issues: Statistical Perspectives - The Use of School Choice, May 1995.

Fourth, the Carnegie Foundation researchers found that evidence regarding the effectiveness of private school choice, limited as it is, suggests that such a policy does not improve student achievement or stimulate school renewal. The Milwaukee, Wisconsin experience, which is the longest operating comprehensive choice plan, provides discouraging evidence regarding student achievement. While most students and parents participating in the program said they were happy with their chosen school, 40 percent of students who switched to private schools did not return to their chosen private school the next year. In addition, standardized test scores of participating students have shown little or no improvement in reading and math and remain well below the national average. They concluded that the Milwaukee plan appears, thus far, to have done little or nothing to help one of our most troubled school systems.

The fifth Carnegie Foundation finding indicates that parents and students who do participate in school choice in both public and private sectors tend to feel good about their decisions and like the programs in which their children are enrolled. The researchers concluded that the very act of choosing, and being chosen, may itself engender satisfaction, since it gives the enterprise an air of selectivity. Regardless of the reasons, those participating in school choice generally feel good about their decisions.

The sixth finding indicates that the educational impact of school choice is ambiguous at best. In some districtwide programs, a correlation may exist between choice and the improvement of students' academic performances. In statewide programs, no such connection could be found. The conclusions reached include a mixed report card on the relationship between school choice and school improvement, and that a competitive model alone will not improve the performance of the nation's schools.

The seventh Carnegie Foundation finding states that, school choice, to be successful, requires significant administrative and financial support. It is an expensive path to educational reform. The increased costs of the choice programs that were examined required significant additional administrative and financial support. The added expenses included such things as costs for planning time, information gathering, outreach, training, and transportation. The researchers concluded that if choice is to work, added expenditures are required. For example, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, school transportation expenditures increased appreciatively after they implemented a districtwide choice plan. In 1981-82 their transportation costs were \$182,580; in 1984-85 those costs were \$298,931; and in 1989-90 the costs increased to \$476, 220.

Eighth, statewide choice programs tend to widen the gap between rich and poor districts. While school choice plans are built on the marketplace

model, they often overlooked that school districts vary greatly in their capacity to compete. In almost every state, local school resources differ dramatically from one district to another. This economic discrepancy widened the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged school districts. For example, in Utah, which has a statewide choice plan, the range of school district spending per student per year in 1990-91 was \$2,504 to \$10,252. In the same year, in Minnesota, the range was \$3,470 to \$10,200.

The ninth and last conclusion the Carnegie Foundation researchers made was that school choice works best when it is arrived at gradually, locally, and voluntarily, not by top-down mandates. When choice programs are imposed on all districts by state legislative mandate, they are least successful. This top-down strategy explains, at least in part, why most statewide choice programs have been singularly unsuccessful.

Separation of Church and State

Introduction

The issue of religion and the public schools has generated the greatest amount of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of judicial opinions than any other area of church-state relations (Sikorski, Vol. 2, 1993; Alexander and Alexander, 1990; Wood, 1984; Laubach, 1969). There are some who continue

to claim that the United States Supreme Court has exorcised religion from public schools and denied it any role in American public education. Although this view is widespread and genuinely held by millions of Americans, this perception of the Supreme Court's decisions is itself evidence of the misinterpretation and misinformation that surround the judicial interpretations on the subject of religion and public schools.

Brief History

Thomas Jefferson, more than any other American, is responsible for articulating and implementing the *wall of separation between church and state* (Alexander and Alexander, 1992). While in Philadelphia writing the *Declaration of Independence*, he found time to draft a proposed constitution for Virginia. His proposal stated, in part, that "All persons shall have full and free liberty of religious opinion: nor shall any be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious institution" (Alexander and Alexander, 1992, p. 133).

As a result of the debate which ensued in Virginia regarding the relationship between church and state, two of the most important documents in religious freedom were written: Jefferson's *Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom*, and James Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*. When Jefferson's bill was finally enacted in 1786 it stated,

that

no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.

(Alexander and Alexander, 1992, p. 133)

Madison's *Memorial* set a philosophic foundation for the separation of church and state that has been frequently referred to by the United States Supreme Court in support of its opinions. The important role of this work is that it conveys a philosophy of separation that, along with Jefferson's work, provided the logic and rationale for the *wall of separation* provisions of the First Amendment in 1791 (Alexander and Alexander, 1992).

Tension Between The Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses

The role played by public schools has been defined as crucial in keeping this nation a free and pluralistic society. Meanwhile, the public school is asked not only to teach the Constitution, but also to embody its principles and

precepts. As Justice Felix Frankfurter declared, "The public school is at once the symbol of our democracy and the most pervasive means of promoting our common destiny" (*McCullum*, p. 582).

The overriding principle in the Constitution in regard to separation of church and state is that government must remain neutral toward religion. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, in part, that "Congress shall make no law respecting an *establishment* of religion or prohibiting the *free exercise*" of religion. The Fourteenth Amendment makes this overriding principle applicable to the states.

The U.S. Supreme Court has determined that the *Establishment Clause* prohibits states and the federal government from passing laws that aid a religion or prefer one religion over another. In other words, government must maintain neutrality toward religion; it may not advance nor hinder any religion.

The Free Exercise Clause prohibits government from interfering with legitimate religious practices. Sometimes, however, an intrusion into the sphere of religious practice is justified by an important governmental interest. In such cases, the U.S. Supreme Court applies a *balancing* test in order to determine if governmental intrusion is lawful. The balancing test includes three standards. First, practices dictated by sincere religious beliefs must have been

impaired by some kind of governmental action. Second, if this is the case, the action will be justified only if it serves a compelling interest (i.e., one that is more critical than the exercise of the religious beliefs in question). Finally, the action in question must also represent the least burdensome means of achieving the government's objective.

Complete government neutrality toward religion is not so easily maintained. Tension exists between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. Sometimes what appears to be a reasonable accommodation of free exercise rights is actually an improper advancement of religion in violation of the Establishment Clause. Conversely, efforts to guard against state sponsorship of religion may result in unnecessary limitations on free exercise rights. The Supreme Court has not expressed a preference for the freedoms guaranteed by one clause over those guaranteed by the other.

Lamb's Chapel Decision

On June 7, 1993, the Supreme Court struck down a complete prohibition against after school use of public school facilities by religious groups for religious purposes. This decision illustrates the Court's intense split over church-state issues as well as its general consensus that the Free Speech Clause prohibits viewpoint discrimination by the government (Schimmel, 1993).

Lamb's Chapel, an evangelical church in Center Moriches, New York

applied to the local school board for permission to use school facilities to show a six-part film series. The film series presents the views of a psychologist and author on "the undermining influences of the media that could only be counterbalanced by returning to traditional Christian family values" (*Lamb's Chapel*, p. 381). Citing school board policy, the school district replied that the films "appear to be church-related" and therefore denied the church's request. In response, Lamb's Chapel sued in federal court challenging the denial as a violation of the Freedom of Speech, Assembly, Free Exercise, and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment and the Equal Protection of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Lamb's Chapel cited two Supreme Court decisions in support of their argument. In *Widmar v. Vincent*, the Court ruled that a state university prohibition against students using school facilities for religious purposes violated the First Amendment's free speech guarantees (*Widmar v. Vincent*, 1981). In *Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, a student religious group sued the school board for prohibiting them from using school facilities for prayer and Bible study. Since the board had allowed other noncurricular groups to use school facilities, the Court ruled that discrimination against a religious group violated the Equal Access Act, which prohibits public secondary schools from denying equal access to student groups

based on the content of their speech (*Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, 1990).

The district court ruled that both *Mergens* and *Widmar* were different from the *Lamb's Chapel* case. The court saw that in *Widmar* and *Mergens*, the people involved were "entitled" to be on the university and school premises. The district court also indicated that, unlike *Widmar* and *Mergens*, the plaintiffs in *Lamb's Chapel* are not students. In addition, the school board had not permitted its facilities to be used for religious purposes in the past. Therefore, it concluded: "Neither Congress nor the Supreme Court has seen fit to require a school district to open its doors to nonstudents who wish to use school facilities for the purpose of conducting religious activities" (*Lamb's Chapel*, p. 98).

In appeal, the circuit court concluded that the district schools were "limited forums not opened to religious uses by policy or practice and that there was no constitutional violation in the failure of the school district to afford access" to *Lamb's Chapel* (*Lamb's Chapel*, p. 388).

When *Lamb's Chapel* reached the Supreme Court, Justice White, before explaining the Court's decision, outlined the constitutional principles which are applicable to this case. A school district may totally prohibit after hours use of its property. In addition, access to a nonpublic forum, which is not open for

"indiscriminate public use," can be based on "subject matter and speaker identity so long as the distinctions drawn are reasonable in light of the purpose served by the forum and are viewpoint neutral" (*Lamb's Chapel*, p. 2147). He stated that the problem in this case is the district's rules (specifically, Rule 7, which prohibits the use of schools by any group for religious purposes) were not applied in a neutral way.

The fact that all religious uses are equally excluded, wrote Justice White, "does not answer the critical question whether it discriminates on the basis of viewpoint to permit school property to be used for the presentation of all views about family issues and child-rearing except those dealing with the subject matter from a religious standpoint" (Ibid.). He concluded that the "government violates the First Amendment when it denies access to a speaker solely to suppress the point of view he espouses on an otherwise includible subject" (Ibid.).

Finally, Justice White explained why permitting the church to show the films would not have violated the Establishment Clause under the *Lemon* test. He wrote that "there would have been no realistic danger that the community would think that the district was endorsing religion or any particular creed. It would not have been an Establishment of religion under the three-part test articulated in *Lemon*. The challenged governmental action has a secular

purpose, does not have the principle or primary effect of advancing nor inhibiting religion, and does not foster an excessive entanglement with religion" (Ibid.).

Lamb's Chapel is an unusual case for several reasons. First, it is a unanimous, unsurprising, and almost routine free speech decision that includes Justice Scalia's unusually sarcastic response about an issue of constitutional interpretation that is not central to the opinion of the Court. Second, it features a rare alliance among liberal and conservative organizations including those that favor and those that oppose separation of church and state. Thus, evangelist Pat Robertson's conservative American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which represented *Lamb's Chapel*, was joined by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the American Civil Liberties Union, both of which filed briefs supporting *Lamb's Chapel* free speech right to show the films. Third, while liberal and conservative groups supported the outcome of the case, they differed dramatically about the implications of the decision. A representative of the American Civil Liberties Union said it was not an endorsement for permitting religion in schools. In contrast, Christian Right groups asserted that the ruling allows bacculaureate services in public schools, permits students to give Christian testimonies in public schools, and requires government officials to allow the display of religious symbols on government

property (Schimmel).

Finally, the Court's holding is clear and limited in the *Lamb's Chapel* decision. It holds that the Free Speech Clause prohibits discrimination against religious perspectives in public school buildings when not being used for school purposes. It does not say that public schools can never restrict the free speech rights of religious groups. In addition, it does not weaken, clarify, or modify the Court's controversial *Lemon* test for determining when school policies or practices violate the Establishment Clause (Schimmel).

Implications of *Lamb's Chapel*

Even though the opinions in *Lamb's Chapel* included an interesting judicial debate about the Establishment Clause and a reaffirmation of free speech principles concerning viewpoint discrimination, it is narrow in its scope (Schimmel). Implications in this case include the fact that the First Amendment does not generally require public schools to allow outside groups to use their facilities. In addition, if public schools allow some community groups to use their facilities after school hours to present films, speakers, or forums on one or more subjects, they cannot prohibit religious groups from presenting their views on the same subjects. Such viewpoint discrimination against a religious perspective (or any other legitimate perspective) is a

violation of the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment. Finally, public schools may restrict or prohibit religious speech or religious activities on their property, if necessary, to avoid violating the Establishment Clause.

In summary, the two education issues which emerged from the writings of members of the Christian Right, school choice and separation of church and state, are complicated and intensely argued from both sides. The issues have many facets and are being debated currently. The implications of these debates on education are unfolding daily.

This chapter reviewed the literature pertaining to selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. The education issues were *school choice* (which included district and state-wide open enrollment plans, charter schools, public and private school voucher plans, and home schooling), and *separation of church and state* (which included prayer in school and equal access).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine if a relationship exists between school board members' religious and political leanings and their attitudes on selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active.

The four purposes of this chapter are to (1) describe the research methodology of this study, (2) explain the sampling technique, (3) describe the procedure used in designing the data gathering instrument and the administration of the survey, and (4) provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

Research Methodology

The researcher used descriptive research methodology for this study. As Mouly (1970) stated,

No category of educational research is more widely used than the type known variously as the survey, the normative survey, or descriptive research. This is a broad classification comprising a variety of specific techniques and procedures, all similar from the standpoint of purpose, namely, to establish the status of the

phenomenon under investigation. (p. 32)

Fowler (1993) stated that the purpose of the survey is to provide statistics that is quantitative or numerical descriptions of some aspects of the study population. The main way of collecting information is by asking people questions; their answers constitute the data to be analyzed.

While there is great variety in the purposes of survey research, Babbie (1973) identified three general objectives: (1) *description* is the ability to make descriptive assertions about the distribution of traits among a carefully selected sample of respondents and to infer a comparable description of the larger population, (2) *explanation* is the ability to make explanatory assertions about the population, and (3) *exploration* is the ability to search for additional possibilities.

Survey research deals with the incidence, distribution, and interrelations of psychological and sociological variables (Wirnsma, 1980). Psychological variables include opinions and attitudes, on the one hand, and behavior, on the other (Kirlinger, 1983). Sociological variables are attributes of individuals that spring from their membership in social groups: sex, income, political and religious affiliation, socio-economic status, education, age, living expenses, occupation, race, and so on (Kirlinger).

In this study, a nationwide stratified sample was surveyed by means of a

mailed questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire has many advantages, such as, (1) it permits wide coverage at a minimum expense both in money and effort, (2) it reaches persons who are difficult to contact, (3) it makes for greater validity in the results through promoting the selection of a larger and more representative sample, and (4) if anonymous, it may elicit more candid and objective replies (Mouly). Another advantage of the questionnaire is that each respondent receives the same set of questions phrased in exactly the same way. This process is analogous to taking a standardized test (Sax, 1989).

According to Fowler, "In addition to meeting the needs for data that are not available elsewhere, there are three potential properties of data from a properly done survey that may make them preferable to data from other sources" (p. 3). He goes on to enumerate those properties.

(1) Probability sampling enables one to have confidence that the sample is not a biased one and to estimate how precise the data are likely to be. Data from a properly chosen sample are a great improvement over data from a sample of those who attend meetings, speak loudest, volunteer to respond, or happen to be convenient to poll. (2) Standardized measurement that is consistent across all respondents ensures that one has comparable information about everyone involved in the survey. Without such

measurement, analyzing distributions or patterns of association is not meaningful. (3) A special-purpose survey may be the only way to ensure that all the data needed for a given analysis are available and can be related. Even if the is information about some set of events, it may not be paired with other characteristics needed to carry out a desired analysis. (p. 42)

For the above reasons, the researcher selected descriptive survey procedures to determine the attitudes of local school board members toward selected issues in which members of the Christian Right are active and to study the relationship between attitudes and selected demographic and personal variables stated in the research questions.

Sample

For this study, regions of the United States, as identified by *The American School Board Journal*, were utilized (Table 2). The researcher selected the technique of stratified random sampling to address the fact that there is a wide variance in the number of school board members from region to region.

Fowler stated that almost all samples of populations of geographic areas are stratified by some regional variables so that they will be distributed in the same way as the population as a whole. National samples typically are

stratified by region of the country and also by urban, suburban, and rural locations. Stratification only increases the precision of estimates of variables that are related to the stratification variables. In addition, Gay (1976) stated that stratified random sampling is the process of selecting a sample in such a way that identified subgroups in the population are represented in the sample in the same proportion that they exist in the population.

Sax offers three advantages of using stratified random sampling over simple random sampling. They are: (1) stratification includes whatever information is known concerning the characteristics of the population, (2) sampling errors occur only within strata, not between strata, and (3) stratified sampling allows selection of cases within each stratum in different ways and in different proportions.

TABLE 2:

Regions of the United States according to National School Boards Association membership as of December, 1995

NEW ENGLAND REGION (membership: 2,257)		
Connecticut	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
Maine	New Hampshire	Vermont
MIDDLE ATLANTIC REGION (membership: 5,597)		
New York	New Jersey	Pennsylvania
EAST NORTH CENTRAL REGION (membership: 8,350)		
Ohio	Illinois	Wisconsin
Indiana	Michigan	
WEST NORTH CENTRAL REGION (membership: 5,181)		
Minnesota	North Dakota	Nebraska
Iowa	South Dakota	Kansas
Missouri		
SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION (membership: 3,747)		
Delaware	Virginia	South Carolina
Maryland	West Virginia	Georgia
District of Columbia	North Carolina	Florida
EAST SOUTH CENTRAL REGION (membership: 1,619)		
Kentucky	Alabama	Mississippi
Tennessee		
WEST SOUTH CENTRAL REGION (membership: 3,559)		
Arkansas	Oklahoma	Texas
Louisiana		
MOUNTAIN REGION (membership: 2,856)		
Montana	Colorado	Utah
Idaho	New Mexico	Nevada
Wyoming	Arizona	
PACIFIC REGION (membership: 3,453)		
Alaska	Oregon	Hawaii
Washington	California	

The following stratified random sample (Table 3) was prepared from the list of subscribers of *The American School Board Journal*. Superintendents, professors of education, libraries, and other non-school board members were deleted from the list of subscribers so that only school board members would be surveyed.

TABLE 3:

Population and Sample by Region (American School Boards Association, May, 1995)

Region	School Board Member Subscribers	N Sample
New England	2,257	406
Middle Atlantic	5,597	839
East North Central	8,350	1,475
West North Central	5,181	876
South Atlantic	3,747	603
East South Central	1,619	263
West South Central	3,559	558
Mountain	2,856	573
Pacific	3,453	542
Total	36,619	6,135

The researcher chose a 16% random sample of the population.

Instrumentation

The survey form in this study was designed to accomplish two purposes. One purpose was to collect selected attitudinal, personal, and demographic information about school board members surveyed in this study. The survey form also collected data which were requested by *The American School Board Journal* but were not utilized in this study.

The survey instrument was divided into four parts. Part I (statements 1-29) gathered demographic information about the school board members who responded. Statements 12, 13, 14, and 15 were used to measure the respondents' political leanings, extent of political activity, and the perceived impact of their political beliefs on their school board decisions. Statements 16, 17, 18, and 19 were used to measure the respondents' religious leanings, extent of religious activity, and the perceived impact of their religious beliefs on their school board decisions.

Part II measured the respondents' attitudes about selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. Statement 4 (a through f) dealt with school choice issues. Statement 5 dealt with a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school. Statements 9 and 13 had to do with home schooling. Statement 11 involved religious groups' equal access to public school facilities. Statements 14 and 23 focused on prayer in

school issues. Statements 16a, 16b, and 16c were about tuition tax credits. Statement 18 involved charter school issues. Statements 19a, 19b, and 19c involved issues concerning voucher plans and statements 19d, 19e, 19f, 19g, and 19h identified religious schools which should or should not be included in voucher plans.

Part III requested information about what school board members considered as pressing concerns in their districts. Part IV asked what educational publications they receive and which of those publications do they regularly read. Additional comments were requested to be written on the final survey page.

Fowler stated that one goal of a good instrument is to increase question reliability by making the questions as precise as possible. By so doing, "the researcher would be able to make the assumption that differences in answers stem from differences among respondents rather than from differences in the stimuli to which the respondents were exposed" (p. 67). He goes on to state that by increasing question reliability by making the questions precise, a researcher also increases the validity of subjective questions.

Therefore, in order to validate this questionnaire, the researcher asked four past school board members to review the questionnaire to determine the following: (1) Were the directions clear? (2) Were the statements clear? (3)

Were the statements worded in such a way as to insure response? (4) Were the statements relevant to current situations and conditions so as to elicit an accurate and realistic response? (5) Were the statements asked in such a way that would not be embarrassing? (6) Were the statements too restrictive or narrow in scope?

Responses from these reviewers were gathered and analyzed. The questionnaire was also extensively examined by staff members of *The American School Board Journal* on several occasions for purposes of clarity and item analysis. These processes resulted in the questionnaire used in this study.

Collection of Data

A total of 6,135 local school board members within the United States were identified and requested to participate in this study. Questionnaires were mailed to each school board member selected for the sample. They were accompanied by a cover letter and postage-paid, self-addressed return envelopes. The researcher received the first set of questionnaires on February 2, 1996 and the final set on March 1, 1996.

No attempt was made to follow-up with selected school board members who did not respond. *The American School Board Journal* required anonymity for this, and all their studies. Anonymity was maintained.

Kirlinger maintains that responses to mailed questionnaires are generally poor. Returns of less than 40 percent or 50 percent are common. Sax concluded that the return of questionnaires depends upon its length, the reputation of the endorsing agency, and the relative importance of the survey to the respondents. For these reasons, the researcher chose a topic of current relevance, and used a cover letter under the signature of the editor of *The American School Board Journal*. Considerable attention was given to the length of the survey, and careful pruning of statements and questions that were not salient to the study occurred during the process. In this study a return rate of 20.3 percent was achieved.

Method of Analysis

The returned surveys were examined for correctness and completeness. Any and all surveys which had one or more parts incomplete were discarded. All data were coded and keyed into a data base in the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)*. Statements 1-11 and 20-29 in Part I and all questions in Part III and Part IV were analyzed according to frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. Contingency tables were built for all those data.

Chi-square were run on Part I statement 13 (political attitude), Part I statement 17 (religious beliefs) and Part II statements 4 (school choice plans),

5, 14 and 23 (prayer in school issues), 9 and 13 (home schooling issues), 11 (equal access), 16 (tuition tax credits), 18 (charter schools), 19 (voucher plans), and 21 (church-state separation versus individual freedom). Phi coefficients were run to determine the strength and significance of the relationship at $\alpha=.01$.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology of this study, the development of the instrument, the data collection procedures, the research questions, and the statistical methods of analysis of data.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between school board members' religious and political leanings and their attitudes on selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active. In this chapter, the study data which were collected through surveys are reported. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first section provides demographic information about the respondents; the second section presents the findings related to each research question; and the third section is a chapter summary.

Description of the Population and Sample

A description of the sample by geographic region is displayed in Table 4. A stratified random sample of 6,135 school board member subscribers to *The American School Board Journal* was identified. During the week of January 4, 1996, school board members who made up the sample were mailed a cover letter and survey (Appendix A). Over an eight week period ending March 1, 1996, 1,247 surveys (20.3%) were returned and consequently analyzed.

Of the total surveys analyzed, 6.7 percent were from the New England

Region, 18.1 percent from the Middle Atlantic Region, 26.2 percent from the East North Central Region, 12.1 percent from the West North Central Region, 12.5 percent from the South Atlantic Region, 4.7 percent from the East South Central Region, 6.7 percent from the West South Central Region, 5.8 percent Mountain Region, and 6.5 percent from the Pacific Region.

The distribution of returned surveys by community type is described in Table 5. The majority of the respondents indicated that their community can best be described as suburban (34.0%). 20.1 percent stated that their community type was small town, 32.3 percent rural, and 8.4 percent urban.

Table 6 provides data relating to distribution of responses by a district's student enrollment. The highest response was from school board members whose districts ranged from 1,000 to 4,999 students (49.7%). The smallest response rate came from board members whose districts are greater than 25,000 students (7.2%).

Table 4:Distribution of Surveys Returned by Region

Region	Total Number of Members	Number of Surveys Mailed	Number of Surveys Analyzed	Percent of Surveys Analyzed
New England	2,257	406	84	6.7
Middle Atlantic	5,597	839	233	18.7
East North Central	8,350	1,475	327	26.2
West North Central	5,181	876	151	12.1
South Atlantic	3,747	603	156	12.5
East South Central	1,619	263	58	4.7
West South Central	3,559	558	83	6.7
Mountain	2,856	573	72	5.8
Pacific	3,453	542	81	6.5
No Response			2	.2
Total	36,619	6,135	1,247	100.0

Table 5:Distribution of Surveys Returned by Community Type

Community Type	Frequency	Percent
Small Town	251	20.1
Rural	403	32.3
Suburban	424	34.0
Urban	105	8.4
Other	54	4.3
No Response	10	.8
Total	1,247	100.0

Table 6:

Distribution of Surveys Returned by District Enrollment

Enrollment Range	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1,000	162	13.0
1,000 to 4,999	620	49.7
5,000 to 9,999	225	18.0
10,000 to 24,999	147	11.8
25,000 or more	90	7.2
No Response	3	.2
Total	1,247	100.0

Demographic and Personal Data of Respondents

The personal data reported by those who responded to the survey are provided in Table 7. The majority of respondents were male (59.3%), between the ages of 41-50 (41.6%), white (94.3%), held advanced college degrees (41.2%), earned incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 (42.2%), were married (93.3%), and had children in public schools (60.1%).

Table 7:Distribution of Personal Characteristics Identified by Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
GENDER		
Male	739	59.3
Female	504	40.4
No Response	4	.3
Total	1,247	100.0
ETHNIC DESIGNATION		
White	1,176	94.3
Black	40	3.2
Hispanic	12	1.0
Asian	2	.2
Native American Indian	5	.4
Other	- 0 -	- 0 -
No Response	12	1.0
Total	1,247	100.0
AGE		
25 or under	3	.3
26-35	33	2.5
36-40	136	10.9
41-50	519	41.6
51-60	248	19.8
over 60	166	13.5
No Response	142	11.4
Total	1,247	100.0

Table 7 (continued):

Distribution of Personal Characteristics Identified by Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Did not complete High School	2	.2
High School Graduate	92	7.4
Post High School training	229	18.4
Four Year College Degree	406	32.6
Post College Degree	514	41.2
No Response	4	.3
Total	1,247	100.0
FAMILY INCOME		
Less than \$20,000	12	1.0
20,000 - 39,999	147	11.8
40,000 - 59,999	266	21.3
60,000 - 79,999	260	20.9
80,000 - 99,999	183	14.7
100,000 - 150,000	225	18.0
More than 150,000	120	9.6
No Response	34	2.7
Total	1,247	100.0
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	79	6.3
Married	1,164	93.3
No Response	4	.3
Total	1,247	100.0

Table 7 (continued):

Distribution of Personal Characteristics Identified by Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
TYPE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN ATTEND		
Public	750	60.1
Private	15	1.2
Religious	34	2.7
Home Schooled	4	.3
No School-aged Children	404	32.4
No Response	40	3.3
Total	1,247	100.0
OCCUPATION		
Homemaker	152	12.2
Retired	157	12.6
Construction-trades worker	17	1.4
Clerical Employee	34	2.7
Service Employee	35	2.8
Salesperson	64	5.1
Manager	146	11.7
Entrepreneur	115	9.2
Corporate Executive	113	9.1
Health Professional	92	7.4
Educator	123	9.9
Farmer	46	3.7
Lawyer	50	4.0
Other	101	8.1
No Response	2	.2
Total	1,247	100.0

Table 8 provides data relating to characteristics of school boards represented by the respondents. The majority of school board members who responded served on boards which had between 5 and 7 members (78.3%), were elected (94.4%), served on the board for three years or less (40.5%), and were serving a three or four year term (90.2%).

Table 8:Distribution of School Board Related Characteristics Identified by Respondents

Characteristic		Frequency	Percent
NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS	2-4	11	.9
	5-7	975	78.3
	8-10	227	18.3
	11 or more	29	2.1
	No Response	5	.4
	Total	1,247	100.0
SELECTION PROCESS	Appointed	61	4.9
	Elected	1,177	94.4
	No Response	7	.6
	Total	1,247	100.0
YEARS OF SERVICE ON THE BOARD	0-3	505	40.5
	4-6	312	25.0
	7 or more	430	34.5
	No Response	- 0 -	- 0 -
	Total	1,247	100.0
NUMBER OF YEARS IN A TERM	1-2	15	1.2
	3-4	1,124	90.2
	5 or more	105	8.4
	No Response	3	.2
	Total	1,247	100.0

Table 8 (continued):

Distribution of School Board Related Characteristics Identified by Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
COMPENSATION FOR SERVICE		
Yes	480	38.5
No	761	61.0
No response	6	.5
Total	1,247	100.0
AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION		
Less than \$1,000 per year	155	12.4
1,000 to 2,999 per year	212	17.0
3,000 to 5,000 per year	72	5.8
More than 5,000 per year	24	1.9
No Compensation	761	61.0
No Response	23	1.9
Total	1,247	100.0

Findings

Research Question 1: Do school board members perceive themselves as religiously conservative or liberal?

The survey contained four items which addressed whether school board members responding to the survey perceived themselves as religiously conservative or liberal. Table 9 shows the majority (54.5%) of respondents perceived their religious attitudes as conservative, while 36.1 percent perceived their religious attitudes as liberal. When asked to what extent their religious beliefs affect their decisions on school board issues, the responses were distributed among the five options. 4.8 percent said to a great extent, 13.2 percent said significantly, 26.9 percent said somewhat, 28.9 percent said very little, and 24.9 percent said none. When asked about the extent of their religious involvement, the majority said less than 10 hours per week (73.1%). Finally, the religious group with which the majority of respondents most agree is one of the Protestant denominations (53.6%). The data show that school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as religiously conservative.

Table 9:

Distribution of School Board Members Religious Characteristics

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent
Which most closely reflects your religious attitudes?	Conservative	680	54.0
	Liberal	450	36.1
	No Response	117	9.4
	Total	1,247	100.0
To what extent do your religious beliefs affect your decisions on school board issues?	Great Extent	60	4.8
	Significantly	164	13.2
	Somewhat	335	26.9
	Very Little	361	28.9
	None	311	24.9
	No Response	16	1.3
Total	1,247	100.0	
To what extent are you involved with some form of religious activity?	More than 20 hrs/wk	21	1.7
	Between 10 & 20	102	8.2
	Less than 10 hours	912	73.1
	None	193	15.5
	No Response	19	1.5
Total	1,247	100.0	
With which religious group do you most agree?	None	78	6.3
	Catholic	240	19.2
	Protestant	671	53.8
	Jewish	53	4.3
	Mormon	11	.9
	Buddhist	2	.2
	No Response	192	15.4
Total	1,247	100.0	

Research Question 2: Do school board members perceive themselves as politically conservative or liberal?

The survey contained four items addressing whether school board members responding to the survey perceived themselves as politically conservative or liberal (Table 10). Almost two-thirds (65.4%) of respondents consider their political attitudes to be conservative, while 28.5 percent perceived themselves as liberal. When asked to what extent their political beliefs affect their decisions on school board issues, the majority of respondents said very little (35%) or somewhat (30.6%). When asked about the extent of their political involvement in some form of political activity, the majority said less than 10 hours per week (57%). Finally, the political party with which the majority of respondents most agree is the Republican Party (51.7%). The data show that the respondents perceived themselves as politically conservative.

Table 10:

Distribution of School Board Members Political Characteristics

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent
Which most closely reflects your political attitudes?	Conservative	815	65.4
	Liberal	355	28.5
	No Response	77	6.2
	Total	1,247	100.0
To what extent do your political beliefs affect your decisions on school board issues?	Great Extent	34	2.7
	Significantly	167	13.4
	Somewhat	381	30.6
	Very Little	436	35.0
	None	219	17.6
	No Response	10	.8
Total	1,247	100.0	
To what extent are you involved with some form of political activity?	More than 20 hrs/wk	54	4.3
	Between 10 & 20	141	11.3
	Less than 10 hours	711	57.0
	None	326	26.1
	No Response	15	1.2
Total	1,247	100.0	
With which political party do you most agree?	Democrat	494	39.6
	Republican	645	51.7
	None	108	8.7
	No Response	- 0 -	- 0 -
Total	1,247	100.0	

Research Question 3: What are school board members' attitudes on education issues dealing with separation of church and state and school choice?

To address school board members' attitudes on separation of church and state issues, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with five statements (Table 11). Two-thirds of the respondents disagreed with the statement that America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools (65.9%). More than three-fourths of the respondents agreed that, like other groups (such as Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts), religious groups should be able to hold religious activities in public school facilities after school hours (76.7%). Slightly more than half the respondents disagreed that student initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable (51.5%). Less than half of the respondents (47.8%) disagreed that student initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable. Almost half of the respondents (49.5%) agreed that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. These data show that school board members, as a whole, have mixed attitudes about separation of church and state issues.

Table 11:

Distribution of School Board Members Responses to Statements dealing with Separation of Church and State

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	Agree	388	31.1
	Disagree	822	65.9
	No Response	37	3.0
	Total	1,247	100.0
Like other groups...religious groups should be allowed to hold religious activities in public school facilities after school hours.	Agree	956	76.7
	Disagree	266	21.3
	No Response	25	2.0
	Total	1,247	100.0
Student-initiated non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	Agree	537	43.1
	Disagree	642	51.5
	No Response	68	5.5
	Total	1,247	100.0
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	Agree	617	49.5
	Disagree	498	39.9
	No Response	132	10.6
	Total	1,247	100.0
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	Agree	559	44.8
	Disagree	596	47.8
	No Response	92	7.4
	Total	1,247	100.0

To address school board members' attitudes toward issues dealing with school choice, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with six statements. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (63%) agreed that school choice plans will widen the economic gap between public schools. Almost the same percentage (62.2%) agreed that school choice plans will widen the racial gap between public schools, and almost 60 percent agreed that school choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities. Slightly more than half of the respondents (50.5%) disagreed that school choice plans will improve public schools through competition. A majority of respondents (52.5%) agreed that school choice plans should be limited to within a school district. A majority of respondents (57.3%) also disagreed that school choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state (Table 12).

Concerning the issue of home schooling, more than three quarters of the respondents (76.2%) disagreed with the statement that public schools should be required by law to provide home-schooled children with co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities. Sixty percent of respondents agreed that teachers of home-schooled children should be state certified to teach their children at home (Table 12).

In responding to the issue of tuition tax credits, almost eighty percent (78.8%) disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given

to parents who send their children to private school. Almost the same percentage (78.7%) also disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious schools. A higher percentage of respondents (83.4%) disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given to parents that teach their children at home (Table 12). More than three quarters of the respondents (77.4%) disagreed with the statement that charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools (Table 12).

Responding to statements about voucher plans, a majority (52.6%) of respondents agreed that parents' choices should be limited to public schools only. Almost eighty percent of the respondents (79.3%) disagreed that private schools (but not religious schools) should be included in voucher plans. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (63.7%) disagreed with the statement that voucher plans should be open to public, private, and religious schools. When specifying the type of religious schools to be included in voucher plans, almost the same percentage agreed with each of the specified religious schools (62.3 percent agreed that Catholic schools be included; 63.3 percent agreed that Protestant schools be included; 62.4 percent agreed that Hebrew schools be included; and 63.3 percent agreed that Muslim schools be included) (Table 12).

Table 12:

Distribution of School Board Members' Attitudes on Issues Dealing with School Choice

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent
School choice plans widen economic gaps	Agree	786	63.0
	Disagree	388	31.1
	No Response	73	5.9
	Total	1,247	100.0
School choice plans widen racial gaps	Agree	776	62.2
	Disagree	376	30.2
	No Response	95	7.6
	Total	1,247	100.0
School choice plans force responsiveness	Agree	742	59.5
	Disagree	434	34.8
	No Response	71	5.7
	Total	1,247	100.0
School choice plans improve public schools thru competition	Agree	539	43.2
	Disagree	630	50.5
	No Response	78	6.3
	Total	1,247	100.0

Table 12 (continued):

Distribution of School Board Members' Attitudes on Issues Dealing with School Choice

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent
School choice plans should be limited to within school districts	Agree	654	52.4
	Disagree	481	38.6
	No Response	112	9.0
	Total	1,247	100.0
School choice plans should be statewide	Agree	416	33.4
	Disagree	714	57.3
	No Response	117	9.4
	Total	1,247	100.0
Public schools should be required by law to provide home-schooled children with co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities.	Agree	290	23.3
	Disagree	930	74.6
	No Response	27	2.2
	Total	1,247	100.0
Teachers of home-schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home.	Agree	749	60.1
	Disagree	459	36.8
	No Response	39	3.1
	Total	1,247	100.0
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private schools	Agree	243	19.5
	Disagree	983	78.8
	No Response	21	1.7
	Total	1,247	100.0

Table 12 (continued):

Distribution of School Board Members' Attitudes on Issues Dealing with

School Choice

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious school	Agree	240	19.2
	Disagree	982	78.7
	No Response	25	2.0
	Total	1,247	100.0
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who home school their children.	Agree	175	14.0
	Disagree	1,045	83.8
	No Response	27	2.2
	Total	1,247	100.0
Charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools.	Agree	226	18.1
	Disagree	965	77.4
	No Response	56	4.5
	Total	1,247	100.0
Voucher plans should be limited to public schools only	Agree	656	52.6
	Disagree	442	35.4
	No Response	149	11.9
	Total	1,247	100.0
Voucher plans should be open to public & private schools (not religious)	Agree	72	5.8
	Disagree	989	79.3
	No Response	186	14.9
	Total	1,247	100.0

Table 12 (continued):

Distribution of School Board Members' Attitudes on Issues Dealing with
School Choice

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent
Voucher plans should be open to public, private, and religious schools	Agree	344	27.6
	Disagree	794	63.7
	No Response	109	8.7
	Total	1,247	100.0
Voucher plans should include Catholic Schools	Agree	345	27.7
	Disagree	777	62.3
	No Response	125	10.0
	Total	1247	100.0
Voucher plans should include Muslim Schools	Agree	333	26.7
	Disagree	789	63.3
	No Response	125	10.0
	Total	1,247	100.0
Protestant Schools	Agree	340	27.6
	Disagree	781	62.6
	No Response	126	10.1
	Total	1,247	100.0
Hebrew Schools	Agree	344	27.3
	Disagree	778	62.4
	No Response	125	10.0
	Total	1,247	100.0

Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?

Table 13 compares the responses from those who considered themselves religiously conservative with those who considered themselves religiously liberal, relative to selected issues of separation of church and state and school choice. The table reports the distribution of the responses for each of the statements crosstabbed against the respondents' perceived religious attitudes.

Of the 371 (33.7%) school board members who agreed that America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools, 307 (82.7%) considered themselves religious conservatives. Of the 869 (78.3%) respondents who agreed with the statement that religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hours, 541 (62.3%) considered themselves religious conservatives. Of the 496 (46.4%) school board members who agreed that student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable, 340 (68.5%) perceived themselves religious conservatives. Of the 572 respondents (56.1%) agreed that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation, 412 (72%) of those perceived themselves to be religious conservatives. Finally, of the 631 (59.9%) school board

members who responded agreed that student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable, 415 (78.3%) perceived themselves religious conservatives.

Data show that there is a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes about the selected education issues. In the area of separation of church and state, the issues which emerged, reflecting that relationship, include a desire to have a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. Even though only one third of the respondents agreed with the statement, almost 83 percent of those agreeing perceived themselves religiously conservative. A second issue which emerged with those who perceived themselves religiously conservatives had to do with the delicate balance between protecting individual religious freedom and ensuring government and church separation. Seventy-two percent of those who agreed that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring separation between church and state perceived themselves as religious conservatives. Finally, 78 percent of those who agreed that a student initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable also considered themselves religious conservatives. Data show that there is a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on issues dealing with separation of church and state.

Of the 357 (33.5%) school board members responding who disagreed with the statement that school choice plans will widen economic gaps between public schools, 244 (68.3%) perceived themselves religious conservatives. 343 (32.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement that school choice plans will widen racial gaps between public schools. 240 (70%) of those school board members perceived themselves religious conservatives. Of the 684 (64%) respondents who agree that school choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities, 442 (64.6%) perceived themselves religious conservatives. 498 (46.9%) respondents agreed that school choice plans will improve public schools through competition (Appendix B). Of those members, 349 (70.1%) consider themselves religious conservatives. Of the 437 (42.1%) school board members who disagreed with that statement that school choice plans should be limited to within a school district, 283 (64.8%) perceived themselves religious conservatives (Appendix B). 387 (37.4%) respondents agreed that school choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state, and 265 (68.5%) of those perceived themselves religious conservatives. Only 270 (24.4%) respondents agreed that public schools should be required by law to provide home schooled children co and extra curricular opportunities, of those, 177 (65.6%) perceived themselves religious conservatives (Appendix B). Of the 422 (38.4%) respondents who disagreed

with the statement that teachers of home-schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home, 252 (59.7%) perceived themselves religious conservatives (Appendix B). Of those respondents who agreed that tuition tax credits should be given to private schools (225, 20.2%), religious schools (224, 20.2%), and home schoolers (164, 14.8%), almost eighty percent of those school board members perceived themselves religious conservatives (Appendix B). Of the 203 (18.8%) respondents who agreed that charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools, 139 (68.5%) perceived themselves religious conservatives (Appendix B).

When dealing with issues pertaining to voucher plans, those who perceived themselves religious conservatives comprised about three quarters of those who reflected positions espoused by Christian Right groups. For example, of the 319 (30.9%) school board members who agreed that in voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools, 242 (75.9%) of them perceived themselves religious conservatives. In addition, almost the same percentage of respondents agreed that voucher plans should include Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim schools (Appendix B).

The two school choice issues which emerged dealt with voucher plans and tuition tax credits. Of the 31 percent of respondents who agreed that

voucher plans should be made available to parents permitting choices to all public, private, and religious schools, 76 percent perceived themselves as religiously conservative. Even though only 20 percent agreed that tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to either private or religious schools, almost 80 percent of those agreeing perceived themselves as religious conservatives. In addition, while less than 15 percent agreed that tuition tax credits should be given to parents who teach their children at home, 80 percent perceived themselves religious conservatives. Data show that there is a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on issues dealing with school choice.

Table 13:
Distribution Comparisons Between Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to Selected Education Issues

STATEMENT	RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVE			RELIGIOUS LIBERAL		
	% AGREE	% DISAGREE	TOTAL	% AGREE	% DISAGREE	TOTAL
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	82.7	48.0	59.7	17.3	52.0	40.3
Like other groups...religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hrs.	62.3	53.5	59.7	37.7	46.5	40.3
Student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	68.5	51.6	59.5	31.5	48.4	40.5
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	72.0	48.1	61.5	28.0	51.9	38.5
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	78.3	41.2	59.9	21.7	58.8	40.1
School choice plans will widen economic gaps.	55.1	68.3	59.5	44.9	31.7	40.5
School choice plans will widen racial gaps.	55.4	70.0	60.1	44.6	30.0	39.9
School choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state.	68.5	55.2	60.2	31.5	44.8	39.8
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private schools.	78.2	55.5	60.1	21.8	44.5	39.9
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious schools.	79.5	55.2	60.1	20.5	44.8	39.9
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools.	75.9	54.3	60.9	24.1	45.7	39.1

Note: Percentages in the Total columns vary due to the different number of school board members who did not respond to those statements.

Research Question 5: Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived political leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?

Table 14 compares the respondents who consider themselves politically conservative with those who consider themselves politically liberal, relative to selected issues of separation of church and state and school choice. The table reports the distribution of the responses for each of the statements, crosstabbed against the respondents' perceived political attitudes.

Of the 376 (33%) school board members who agreed that America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools, 329 (87.5%) considered themselves political conservatives. Of the 899 (78.4%) respondents who agreed with the statement that religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hours, 641 (71.3%) considered themselves political conservatives. Of the 507 (45.8%) school board members who agreed that student initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable, 399 (78.7%) perceived themselves political conservatives. 588 (56%) respondents agreed that protecting individual political freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. 480 (81.6%) of them perceived themselves political conservatives. Finally, of the 538 (49.5%) school board members who agreed that student initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable, 462

(85.9%) perceived themselves political conservatives.

Data show that there is a relationship between school board members' perceived political leanings and their attitudes about separation of church and state and school choice issues. In the area of separation of church and state, three issues emerged, reflecting that relationship. Of the 33 percent of the respondents who agreed to have a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools, more than 87 percent of them perceived themselves politically conservative. Those respondents who perceived themselves politically conservative comprised almost 82 percent of the 56 percent of those who agreed that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. Finally, of the almost 50 percent of respondents who agreed that student initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable, 86 percent perceived themselves as politically conservative.

Of the 372 (33.7%) school board members who disagreed with the statement that school choice plans will widen economic gaps between public schools, 306 (82.3%) perceived themselves political conservatives. Of the 358 (33%) respondents who disagreed with the statement that school choice plans will widen racial gaps between public schools, 296 (82.7%) perceived themselves political conservatives. Of the 705 (63.9%) respondents who agreed that school choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities, 539 (76.5%) perceived

themselves political conservatives (Appendix C). Of the 515 (46.9%) respondents who agreed that school choice plans will improve public schools through competition, 420 (81.6%) perceived themselves political conservatives (Appendix C). Of the 416 (42.8%) school board members who disagreed with the statement that school choice plans should be limited to within a school district, 345 (74.8%) perceived themselves political conservatives. Of the 400 (37.4%) respondents who agreed that school choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state, 322 (80.5%) perceived themselves political conservatives.

Only 279 (24.4%) respondents agreed that public schools should be required by law to provide home schooled children co and extra curricular opportunities. However, 197 (70.6%) perceived themselves political conservatives (Appendix C). Of the 433 (38.2%) respondents who disagreed with the statement that teachers of home schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home, 321 (74.1%) perceived themselves political conservatives (Appendix C).

Of all respondents who agreed that tuition tax credits should be given to all private, religious, and home schools, almost 90 percent of them perceived themselves political conservatives. Of the 216 (19.3%) respondents who agreed that charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools, 174 (80.6%) perceived themselves political conservatives (Appendix C).

When dealing with issues pertaining to voucher plans, those who perceived

themselves political conservatives comprised about 85 percent of those who agreed that voucher plans should include private, religious, and home schools. For example, only 329 (30.9%) agreed that in voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools, but 281 (85.4%) perceived themselves political conservatives. In addition, the same percentage of respondents agreed that voucher plans should be made available to Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim schools (Appendix C).

Table 14:
Distribution Comparisons Between Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to Selected Education Issues

STATEMENT	POLITICAL CONSERVATIVE			POLITICAL LIBERAL		
	% AGREE	% DISAGREE	TOTAL	% AGREE	% DISAGREE	TOTAL
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	87.5	60.6	69.5	12.5	39.4	30.5
Like other groups...religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hrs.	71.3	63.7	69.7	28.7	36.3	30.3
Student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	78.7	60.6	68.9	21.3	39.4	31.1
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	81.6	56.1	70.4	18.4	43.9	29.6
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	85.9	52.8	69.2	14.1	47.2	30.8
School choice plans will widen economic gaps.	63.0	82.3	69.5	37.0	17.7	30.5
School choice plans will widen racial gaps.	64.3	82.7	70.4	35.7	17.3	29.6
School choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state.	80.5	64.0	70.2	19.5	36.0	29.8
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private schools.	89.4	64.9	69.9	10.6	35.1	30.1
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious schools.	88.8	65.1	69.9	11.2	34.9	30.1
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools.	85.4	64.0	70.6	14.6	36.0	29.4

Note: Percentages in the Total columns vary due to the different number of school board members who did not respond to those statements.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided demographic information about the respondents and presented the findings related to the research questions. In response to the first two research questions, the data clearly show that the majority of school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as religious and political conservatives.

The data which reported the respondents' attitudes on educational issues dealing with church and state separation and school choice, show less clear results. As a group, school board members do not necessarily reflect positions taken by members of the Christian Right on those issues. For example, in the area of separation of church and state, less than one-third of the respondents agreed that America needed a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. In the area of school choice, almost two-thirds of the respondents agreed that school choice plans will widen economic and racial gaps between schools. On the topic of voucher plans, almost two-thirds disagree that such plans should be open to public, private, and religious schools.

However, when examining the responses which reflect the positions of the Christian Right pertaining to the identified education issues, those who perceived themselves as religious conservatives, and to a greater extent, those who perceived themselves as political conservatives clearly reflected the positions espoused by

Christian Right groups. The data show that there is a relationship between a school board member's perceived religious leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues. There is a stronger relationship between a school board member's political leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues.

Chapter 4 reported the study data which were collected through surveys. The chapter provided demographic information about the respondents, presented the findings related to each research question, and summarized the results.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the study that was conducted. This summary will include a review of the purpose of the study, a re-statement of the research questions, a summary of the related literature which was reviewed, the research methodology used, and a summary of the findings and conclusions. Recommendations for further study conclude this chapter.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between school board members' religious and political leanings and their attitudes on selected education issues in which members of the Christian Right are active.

Restatement of Research Questions

The research questions for this study were, (1) Do school board members perceive themselves as religiously conservative or liberal? (2) Do school board members perceive themselves as politically conservative or liberal? (3) What are school board members' attitudes on education issues dealing with separation of

church and state and school choice? (4) Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived religious leanings and their attitudes on these education issues? (5) Is there a relationship between school board members' perceived political leanings and their attitudes on these education issues?

Research Methodology

The researcher used descriptive research methodology for this study. As Mouly (1970) stated,

No category of educational research is more widely used than the type known variously as the survey, the normative survey, or descriptive research. This is a broad classification comprising a variety of specific techniques and procedures, all similar from the standpoint of purpose, namely, to establish the status of the phenomenon under investigation. (p. 32)

Fowler (1993) stated that the purpose of the survey is to provide statistics that is quantitative or numerical descriptions of some aspects of the study population. The main way of collecting information is by asking people questions; their answers constitute the data to be analyzed.

While there is great variety in the purposes of survey research, Babbie (1973) identified three general objectives: (1) *description* is the ability to make descriptive

assertions about the distribution of traits among a carefully selected sample of respondents and to infer a comparable description of the larger population; (2) *explanation* is the ability to make explanatory assertions about the population; and (3) *exploration* is the ability to search for additional possibilities.

Survey research deals with the incidence, distribution, and interrelations of psychological and sociological variables. Psychological variables include opinions and attitudes, on the one hand, and behavior, on the other. Sociological variables are attributes of individuals that spring from their membership in social groups: sex, income, political and religious affiliation, socio-economic status, education, age, living expenses, occupation, race, and so on.

In this study, a nationwide stratified sample was surveyed by means of a mailed questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire has many advantages, such as: (1) it permits wide coverage at a minimum expense both in money and effort, (2) it reaches persons who are difficult to contact, (3) it makes for greater validity in the results through promoting the selection of a larger and more representative sample, and (4) if anonymous, it may elicit more candid and objective replies. Another advantage of the questionnaire is that each respondent receives the same set of questions phrased in exactly the same way. This process is analogous to taking a standardized test.

For the above reasons, the researcher selected descriptive survey procedures to

determine the attitudes of local school board members toward selected issues in which members of the Christian Right are active and to study the relationship between attitudes and selected demographic and personal variables stated in the research questions.

Results

A description of the sample by geographic region is displayed in Table 4. A stratified random sample of 6,135 school board member subscribers to *The American School Board Journal* was identified. During the week of January 4, 1996, school board members who made up the sample were mailed a cover letter and survey (Appendix A). Over an eight week period ending March 1, 1996, 1,247 surveys (20.3%) were returned and subsequently analyzed.

Of the total surveys analyzed, 6.7 percent were from the New England Region, 18.1 percent from the Middle Atlantic Region, 26.2 percent from the East North Central Region, 12.1 percent from the West North Central Region, 12.5 percent from the South Atlantic Region, 4.7 percent from the East South Central Region, 6.7 percent from the West South Central Region, 5.8 percent Mountain Region, and 6.5 percent from the Pacific Region (Table 4).

The distribution of returned surveys by community type is described in Table 5. The majority of the respondents indicated that their community can best be

described as suburban (34.0%). 20.1 percent stated that their community type was small town, 32.3 percent rural, and 8.4 percent urban.

Table 6 provides data relating to distribution of responses by a district's student enrollment. The highest response was from school board members whose districts ranged from 1,000 to 4,999 students (49.7%). The smallest response rate came from board members whose districts are greater than 25,000 students (7.2%).

The personal data reported by those who responded to the survey are provided in Table 7. The majority of respondents were male (58.9%), between the ages of 41-50 (41.6%), white (94.3%), held advanced college degrees (41.2%), earned incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 (42.2%), were married (93.3%), and had children in public schools (60.1%).

Table 8 provides data relating to school boards represented by the respondents. The majority of school board members who responded served on boards which had between 5 and 7 members (78.3%), were elected (94.4%), served on the board for three years or less (40.5%), and were serving a three or four year term (90.2%).

The survey contained four items which addressed whether school board members responding to the survey perceived themselves as religiously conservative or liberal. Table 9 shows the majority (54.5%) of respondents perceived their religious attitudes as conservative, while 36.1 percent perceived their religious attitudes as liberal. When asked to what extent their religious beliefs affect their decisions on

school board issues, the responses were distributed among the five options. Almost 5 percent (4.8%) said to a great extent, 13.2 percent said significantly, 26.9 percent said somewhat, 28.9 percent said very little, and 24.9 percent said none. When asked about the extent of their religious involvement, the majority said less than 10 hours per week (73.1%). Finally, the religious group with which the majority of respondents most agree is one of the Protestant denominations (53.6%). The data show that the school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as religiously conservative.

The survey contained four items addressing whether school board members responding to the survey perceived themselves as politically conservative or liberal (Table 10). Almost two-thirds (65.4%) of respondents consider their political attitudes to be conservative, while 28.5 percent perceived themselves as liberal. When asked to what extent their political beliefs affect their decisions on school board issues, the majority of respondents said very little (35%) or somewhat (30.6%). When asked about the extent of their political involvement in some form of political activity, the majority said less than 10 hours per week (57%). Finally, the political party with which the majority of respondents most agree is the Republican Party (51.7%). The data show that the respondents perceived themselves as politically conservative.

To address school board members' attitudes on separation of church and state

issues, respondents were asked agree or disagree with five statements (Table 11). Two-thirds of the respondents disagreed with the statement that America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools (65.9%). More than three-fourths of the respondents agreed that, like other groups (such as Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts), religious groups should be able to hold religious activities in public school facilities after school hours (76.7%). Slightly more than half the respondents disagreed that student initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable (51.5%). Almost half of the respondents (49.5%) agreed that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. Finally, less than half of the respondents (47.8%) disagreed that student initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.

To address school board members' attitudes toward issues dealing with school choice, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with six statements. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (63%) agreed that school choice plans will widen the economic gap between public schools. Almost the same percentage (62.2%) agreed that school choice plans will widen the racial gap between public schools, and almost 60 percent agreed that school choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities. Slightly more than half of the respondents (50.5%) disagreed that school choice plans will improve public schools through competition. A majority of respondents (52.5%) agreed that school choice plans should be limited

to within a school district. A majority of respondents (57.3%) also disagreed that school choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state (Table 12).

Concerning the issue of home schooling, more than three quarters of the respondents (76.2%) disagreed with the statement that public schools should be required by law to provide home schooled children with co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities. Sixty percent of respondents agreed that teachers of home schooled children should be state certified to teach their children at home (Table 12).

In response to the issue of tuition tax credits, almost eighty percent (78.8%) disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private school. Almost the same percentage (78.7%) also disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious schools. A higher percentage of respondents (83.4%) disagreed with the statement that tuition tax credits should be given to parents that teach their children at home (Table 12). More than three quarters of the respondents (77.4%) disagreed with the statement that charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools (Table 12).

Responding to statements about voucher plans, a majority (52.6%) of respondents agreed that such plans should be limited to public schools only. Almost eighty percent of the respondents (79.3%) disagreed that private schools (but not

religious schools) should be included in voucher plans. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (63.7%) disagreed with the statement that voucher plans should be open to public, private, and religious schools. When specifying the type of religious schools to be included in voucher plans, almost the same percentage agreed with each of the specified religious schools (62.3 percent agreed that Catholic schools be included, 63.3 percent agreed that Protestant schools be included, 62.4 percent agreed that Hebrew schools be included, and 63.3 percent agreed that Muslim schools be included) (Table 12).

In conclusion, the data which reported the respondents' attitudes on education issues dealing with church and state separation and school choice, reflecting the positions of Christian Right groups, show less clear results. As a group, school board members do not necessarily reflect positions taken by members of the Christian Right on those issues.

Part III requested information about what school board members considered as pressing concerns in their districts. Part IV asked what educational publications they receive and which of those publications do they regularly read. Additional comments were requested to be written on the final survey page. These data were requested by the publishers of *The American School Board Journal*, but not used for this study.

Conclusions

The data clearly show that the school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as religious conservatives. Of the 1,247 respondents, 678 (54.4%) consider themselves religious conservatives. The majority of respondents indicated that the religious group with which they most agree is Protestant (668, 53.6%). The next largest group was Catholic (240, 19.2%).

The data also clearly show that the school board members who responded to the survey perceived themselves as political conservatives. Of the 1,247 respondents, 813 (62.2%) define themselves politically conservative, while only 355 (28.5%) perceived themselves politically liberal. In addition, 645 (51.7%) indicated that they most agree with the Republican Party.

It appears that as a group, school members who responded to the survey do not consistently reflect the positions of members of the Christian Right. Examining those issues and responses reveals more balanced attitudes regarding separation of church and state and school choice issues, when compared to the positions espoused by Christian Right Groups..

In the area of separation of church and state, Christian Right groups are strong proponents of a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. However, only 31.2 percent of the respondents agreed with that position. When responding to the desirability of Christian or non-Christian prayer at school

functions, school board members were split. Just under 44 percent agreed with the desirability of having Christian prayer and just over 43 percent agreed with the desirability of non-Christian prayer. Meanwhile, Christian Right groups strongly endorse prayer in public schools. They also strongly agree that protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. However, less than 50 percent of the respondents agreed with that position. Finally, the respondents overwhelmingly agreed (76.7%) with a Christian Right position which allows access to religious groups to hold religious activities in public school facilities after school hours. This result can be explained, in part, by recent Supreme Court decisions (most notably the *Lamb's Chapel* decision), and the enactment of the Equal Access Act.

When examining the issue of school choice, respondents strongly disagreed with Christian Right positions. For example, almost two-thirds of responding school board members agreed that school choice plans will widen economic and racial gaps between schools, which are the opposite views of Christian Right groups. They did, however, agree with the Christian Right position that school choice plans will force schools to be more responsive to their communities. In addition, respondents overwhelmingly disagreed with the Christian Right position regarding whether tuition tax credits and voucher plans should include private and religious schools. Almost eighty percent of the respondents disagreed with the idea of giving tuition tax credits

to parents who send their children to private or religious schools. Almost two-thirds of respondents disagreed with voucher plans that would be open to private and religious schools. Christian Right groups strongly endorse tuition tax credits and voucher plans to include private and religious schools.

When examining the responses which reflect the positions of the Christian Right pertaining to the identified education issues, those who perceived themselves as religious conservatives, and to a greater extent, those who perceived themselves as political conservatives clearly reflected those positions. The data show that there is a relationship between a school board member's perceived religious leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues, and there is a stronger relationship between a school board member's political leaning and their attitudes on the selected education issues.

In light of the fact that the majority of the respondents were retired, highly educated, white, male, and agreed most with Republican Party positions, the conservative views expressed would appear to be a logical outcome.

Recommendations

If this study were to be replicated, a greater focus should be put on the issues which emerged from the survey data. Those issues include a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools and school choice issues (including vouchers and tuition tax credits). More detailed questions can be composed which may be able to provide more textured information about the issues and the respondents. Further, more sophisticated statistical analysis can be made to derive information that goes beyond the scope of this study's research questions. For example, a matrix can be built which includes four quadrants. Quadrant 1 would include those who perceived themselves as religious conservatives and political conservatives. Quadrant 2 would include those who perceived themselves as religious conservatives and political liberals. Quadrant 3 would include those who perceived themselves as religious liberals and political conservatives. Quadrant 4 would include those who perceived themselves religious liberals and political liberals. Respondents in each of those quadrants would then be crosstabbed with the identified education issues. This data would provide more focused information about the relationship between a school board member's perceived religious and political leanings and their attitudes about those education issues.

In addition, qualitative data can be collected from school board members through focus groups and structured interviews about the issues which emerged in the

survey data. These research projects would also provide more textured and in-depth information about the relationship between school board members' political and religious leanings and their attitudes about a constitutional amendment permitting prayer in public schools, voucher plans, and tuition tax credits.

More closely examining the similarities and differences between school board members' religious leanings and political leanings and the impact of those leanings on school board members' attitudes on education issues would be enlightening. The survey data in this study reported a stronger relationship between political leanings and education attitudes, than with religious leanings and education attitudes.

Appendix A

THE AMERICAN
**SCHOOL
 BOARD**
 JOURNAL

1680 DUKE STREET
 ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314-3493
 (703) 838-6722
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Dear Subscriber,

For the last 17 years, *The American School Board Journal* and Virginia Tech have questioned board members about their concerns and the special challenges they face. Here's your chance to stand up and be counted, too.

By completing the enclosed survey, you'll be helping to achieve a greater understanding and deeper appreciation of school board service. At the same time, you'll be making your views count among other school leaders across North America.

The survey results, which will be featured in our January 1997 issue, traditionally are publicized from coast to coast by the national wire services and local news media. This exposure helps promote the importance of board service and calls attention to the achievements and concerns of local school leaders such as yourself.

Your participation is crucial for the survey to be valid. Only a select number of board members were chosen to receive this survey, so it's essential that you take a minute now to complete it.

A postage-paid, self addressed envelope is included for your convenience. All individual responses will be kept confidential.

I know you're busy, so I'm especially grateful for your time and cooperation.

Cordially,



Gregg W. Downey
 Editor-in-Chief

PS. To be eligible to win our latest published book *Taking Back Tomorrow* affix your mailing label to the postage-paid envelope when you mail your survey back. After the surveys are removed, we'll pick five envelopes at random. The lucky winners will receive *Taking Back Tomorrow*, which tells school leaders how to safeguard their students and schools and how to understand the forces at work in these troubled times.

1996 National Survey of School Board Members

The American School Board Journal/Virginia Tech

Introduction: This survey is intended to measure how you feel about selected education issues. Part I asks for demographic information; Part II asks you to respond to statements by circling A if you agree and D if you disagree; Part III asks you to identify three pressing concerns in your district; and Part IV asks you which professional publications you receive and read.

Thank you for responding to this annual survey. Results in the aggregate will be published in an upcoming issue of *The American School Board Journal*. No individual responses ever will be published, and your completed survey will be held in the utmost confidence by the researchers at Virginia Tech.

PART I: Demographic information

1. In what state is your school district?

2. What is the approximate enrollment of your school district?
 _____ Fewer than 1,000
 _____ 1,000 to 4,999
 _____ 5,000 to 9,999
 _____ 10,000 to 24,999
 _____ 25,000 or more
3. What kind of community does your school district serve?
 _____ Rural
 _____ Small town
 _____ Suburban
 _____ Urban
 _____ Other (please specify) _____
4. Please indicate your gender.
 _____ Female _____ Male
5. Please indicate your race.
 _____ Native American Indian
 _____ Black
 _____ White
 _____ Asian
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ Other (please specify) _____
6. Please indicate your age. _____
7. What is your current occupation? (Check one)
 _____ homemaker
 _____ retired
 _____ construction-trades worker
 _____ clerical employee
 _____ service employee
 _____ salesperson
 _____ manager
 _____ entrepreneur
 _____ corporate executive
 _____ health professional
 _____ educator
 _____ farmer
 _____ lawyer
 _____ other (please specify) _____
8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 _____ did not complete high school
 _____ high school graduate
 _____ post high school training
 _____ four-year college degree
 _____ postgraduate college degree
9. What is your approximate family income?
 _____ less than \$20,000
 _____ \$20,000 to \$39,999
 _____ \$40,000 to \$59,999
 _____ \$60,000 to \$79,999
 _____ \$80,000 to \$99,999
 _____ \$100,000 to \$150,000
 _____ more than \$150,000

10. What is your marital status?
 married single
11. What type of schools (K-12) are your children currently attending?
 a. public school yes no
 b. private non-religious school yes no
 c. religious school yes no
 d. home school yes no
 e. none
12. With which political party do you most agree?
 Democrat Republican
13. Which most closely reflects your overall political attitude?
 conservative liberal
14. How many hours each week do you spend in some form of political activity?
 more than 20 hours a week
 between 10 and 20 hours a week
 less than 10 hours a week
 none
15. To what extent do your political beliefs affect your decisions on school board issues?
 great extent
 significantly
 somewhat
 very little
 none
16. With which religious group do you most agree?
 (please be specific) _____
17. Which most closely reflects your overall religious beliefs?
 conservative liberal
18. To what extent do your religious beliefs affect your decisions on school board issues?
 great extent
 significantly
 somewhat
 very little
 none
19. How many hours each week do you spend in some form of religious activity?
 more than 20 hours a week
 between 10 and 20 hours a week
 less than 10 hours a week
 none
20. How many years have you served on this school board?
 _____ years
21. How many years on the board is considered a term?
 _____ years
22. How many members are on your school board?
 _____ members
23. How are members of your school board chosen?
 appointed elected
24. Are you compensated for your service as a board member?
 yes no
25. If yes, how much? _____
26. Did your employer encourage you to run for school board?
 yes, by company policy
 yes, by informal understanding
 no
27. Does your employer allow you to take time from work, if necessary, to perform your school board duties?
 yes, by company policy
 yes, by informal understanding
 no
28. Do other employers in your community generally encourage employees to run for school board seats?
 yes no
29. Do other employers in your community generally allow their employees to take time from work to perform school board duties?
 yes no

PART II: Attitudes about selected education issues

Directions: Please respond to the following statements by agreeing (A) or disagreeing (D). Circle the ONE answer that best represents your attitude.

1. Parents should decide what books are made available to their children in the . . .
 - a. classroom. A D
 - b. library. A D
 2. Public schools should help students think critically, understand complex relationships, and solve complicated problems, as well as instill knowledge of facts. A D
 3. Family values are strengthened by teaching critical thinking skills in public schools. A D
 4. School choice plans . . .
 - a. will widen the economic gaps between public schools. A D
 - b. will widen the racial gaps between public schools. A D
 - c. will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities. A D
 - d. will improve public schools through competition. A D
 - e. should be limited to within a school district. A D
 - f. should be open to all schools throughout the state. A D
 5. America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools. A D
 6. Public schools should begin comprehensive sex education programs (often called family life education) in elementary schools. A D
 7. Public schools should set clear guidelines on what students should learn and what teachers should teach. A D
 8. Public schools should improve students' self-esteem. A D
 9. Public schools should be required by law to provide home-schooled children with co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities (such as science labs, musical group and sports team membership). A D
 10. Parents should register (opt-in) their children for potentially controversial courses and programs the parents want. A D
 11. Like other groups (such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts), religious groups should be able to hold activities in public school facilities after school hours. A D
 12. Public schools should give boys and girls equal opportunities in . . .
 - a. athletics A D
 - b. curriculum A D
 13. Teachers of home-schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home. A D
 14. Student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable. A D
 15. Public schools should teach values and morals. A D
 16. Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who . . .
 - a. send their children to private school. A D
 - b. send their children to religious school. A D
 - c. teach their children at home. A D
 17. Teaching critical thinking skills in public school undermines family values. A D
 18. Charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools. A D
 19. In voucher plans, parents' choices should be . . .
 - a. limited to public schools only. A D
 - b. open to public and private schools (but not to parochial schools). A D
 - c. open to all public, private, and parochial schools. A D
- [NOTE: If you agree with c, please respond to statements d, e, f, g, and h on the following page. If you disagree with c, go on to number 20.]

The following schools should be included in voucher plans . . .

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| d. Catholic schools. | A | D |
| e. Muslim schools. | A | D |
| f. Protestant schools. | A | D |
| g. Jewish day schools. | A | D |
| h. Other (please specify). | A | D |
-

20. Public school counseling programs are necessary. A D

21. Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation. A D

22. Public schools should offer a sex education program in high school that provides factual information about . . .

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a. abstinence. | A | D |
| b. contraception. | A | D |
| c. prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. | A | D |
| d. homosexuality. | A | D |
| e. abortion. | A | D |

23. Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable. A D

PART III: Pressing Concerns

From the following list, please rank the top three most pressing concerns in your school district. Write a 1 next to your most pressing concern; 2 next to your second most pressing concern; and 3 next to your third most pressing concern.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| _____ Integration/busing | _____ Personnel issues | _____ Collective bargaining |
| _____ At-risk students | _____ State mandates | _____ School finance/budget |
| _____ Increasing enrollment | _____ Curriculum development | _____ Use of drugs and/or alcohol by students |
| _____ Declining enrollment | _____ Technology | _____ AIDS education |
| _____ Crime and violence | _____ Parent involvement | _____ Truancy and dropouts |
| _____ Management issues | _____ Immigration | _____ School choice/vouchers/charter schools |
| _____ Facilities | _____ Race relations | _____ Prayer in school/equal access/religious issues |
| | | _____ Other (please specify) _____ |

PART IV: Publications

Please check which publications you receive and which you read regularly.

- | | Receive | Read regularly | | Receive | Read regularly |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------|
| The American School Board Journal | _____ | _____ | School Administrator | _____ | _____ |
| School Board News | _____ | _____ | Educational Leadership | _____ | _____ |
| NASSP Bulletin | _____ | _____ | Phi Delta Kappan | _____ | _____ |
| School Planning & Management | _____ | _____ | Principal | _____ | _____ |
| American School & University | _____ | _____ | School Business Affairs | _____ | _____ |
| The Executive Educator | _____ | _____ | Education Week | _____ | _____ |

NOTE: If you have any additional comments, please make them on this page.
Use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to return your completed survey to:

The American School Board Journal
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Appendix B

Table 15

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to a Separation of Church and State Issues (constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	agree	307	82.7	64	17.3	371	33.7
	disagree	350	48.0	379	52.0	729	66.3
	Total	657	59.7	443	40.3	1,100	100.0

Table 16

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (equal access)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Like other groups... religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hours.	agree	541	62.3	328	37.7	869	78.3
	disagree	129	53.5	112	46.5	241	21.7
	Total	657	59.7	443	40.3	1,100	100.0

Table 17

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (non-Christian prayer)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	agree	340	68.5	156	31.5	496	46.4
	disagree	295	51.6	277	48.4	572	53.6
	Total	635	59.5	433	40.5	1,068	100.0

Table 18

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (individual freedom v. separation of church and state)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	agree	412	72.0	160	28.0	572	56.1
	disagree	215	48.1	232	51.9	447	43.9
	Total	627	61.5	392	38.5	1,019	100.0

Table 19

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (Christian prayer)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	agree	415	78.3	115	21.7	530	50.3
	disagree	216	41.2	308	58.8	524	49.7
	Total	631	59.9	423	40.1	1,054	100.0

Table 20

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: widen economic gaps)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will widen economic gaps between public schools.	agree	391	55.1	319	44.9	710	66.5
	disagree	244	68.3	113	31.7	357	33.5
	Total	635	59.5	432	40.5	1,067	100.0

Table 21

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: widen racial gaps)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will widen racial gaps between public schools.	agree	392	55.4	316	44.6	708	67.4
	disagree	240	70.0	103	30.0	343	32.6
	Total	632	60.1	419	39.9	1,051	100.0

Table 22

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: force responsiveness)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities.	agree	442	64.6	242	35.4	684	64.0
	disagree	201	52.2	184	47.8	385	36.0
	Total	643	60.1	426	39.9	1,069	100.0

Table 23

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(school choice plans: improve public schools through competition)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will improve public schools through competition.	agree	349	70.1	149	29.9	498	46.9
	disagree	289	51.2	275	48.8	564	53.1
	Total	638	60.1	424	39.9	1,062	100.0

Table 24

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: limited to within school districts)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans should be limited to within a school district.	agree	338	56.2	263	43.8	601	57.9
	disagree	283	64.8	154	35.2	437	42.1
	Total	621	59.8	417	40.2	1,038	100.0

Table 25

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: open to all schools throughout the state)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state.	agree	265	68.5	122	31.5	387	37.4
	disagree	358	55.2	290	44.8	648	62.6
	Total	623	60.2	412	39.8	1,035	100.0

Table 26

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (home schooling: co and extra curricular opportunities)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Public schools should be required by law to provide home-schooled children with co & extra curricular opportunities.	agree	177	65.6	93	34.4	270	24.4
	disagree	488	58.4	348	41.6	836	75.6
	Total	665	60.1	441	39.9	1,106	100.0

Table 27

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (home schooling: state certify teachers)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Teachers of home-schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home.	agree	404	59.8	272	40.2	676	61.6
	disagree	252	59.7	170	40.3	422	38.4
	Total	656	59.7	442	40.3	1,098	100.0

Table 28

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (tuition tax credits: private schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private school.	agree	176	78.2	49	21.8	225	20.2
	disagree	492	55.5	395	44.5	887	79.8
	Total	668	60.1	444	39.9	1,112	100.0

Table 29

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (tuition tax credits: religious schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious school.	agree	178	79.5	46	20.5	224	20.2
	disagree	448	55.2	396	44.8	884	79.8
	Total	666	60.1	442	39.9	1,108	100.0

Table 30

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (tuition tax credits: home schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who teach their children at home.	agree	129	78.7	35	21.3	164	14.8
	disagree	534	56.7	408	43.3	942	85.2
	Total	663	59.9	443	40.1	1,106	100.0

Table 31

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (charter schools: more accountable)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools.	agree	139	68.5	64	31.5	203	18.8
	disagree	499	57.0	376	43.0	875	81.2
	Total	638	59.2	440	40.8	1,078	100.0

Table 32

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: limited to public schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be limited to public schools only.	agree	318	53.0	282	47.0	600	60.1
	disagree	282	70.7	117	29.3	399	39.9
	Total	600	60.1	399	39.9	999	100.0

Table 33

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: public and non-religious private schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to public and private schools (but not to parochial schools).	agree	38	55.9	30	44.1	68	7.1
	disagree	535	59.8	360	40.2	895	92.9
	Total	573	59.5	390	40.5	963	100.0

Table 34

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: all public, private, and parochial schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools.	agree	242	75.9	77	24.1	319	30.9
	disagree	388	54.3	327	45.7	715	69.1
	Total	630	60.9	404	39.1	1,034	100.0

Table 35

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Catholic schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Catholic schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	243	75.9	77	24.1	320	31.4
	disagree	381	54.6	317	45.4	698	68.6
	Total	624	61.3	394	38.7	1,018	100.0

Table 36

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Muslim schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Muslim schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	233	75.6	75	24.4	308	30.3
	disagree	391	55.1	319	44.9	710	69.7
	Total	624	61.3	394	38.7	1,018	100.0

Table 37

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Protestant schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Protestant schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	240	76.2	75	23.8	315	31.0
	disagree	383	54.6	319	45.4	702	69.0
	Total	623	61.3	394	38.7	1,017	100.0

Table 38

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Religiously Conservative and Religiously Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Jewish schools)

Statement	Response	Religious Conservative		Religious Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Jewish schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	244	76.5	75	23.5	319	31.3
	disagree	380	54.4	319	45.6	699	68.7
	Total	624	61.3	394	38.7	1,018	100.0

Appendix C

Table 39

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to a Separation of Church and State Issues (constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	agree	329	87.5	47	12.5	376	33.0
	disagree	462	60.6	300	39.4	762	67.0
	Total	791	69.5	347	30.5	1,138	100.0

Table 40

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (equal access)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Like other groups... religious groups should be able to hold religious services in public school facilities after school hours.	agree	641	71.3	258	28.7	899	78.4
	disagree	158	63.7	90	36.3	248	21.6
	Total	799	69.7	348	30.3	1,147	100.0

Table 41

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (non-Christian prayer)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-initiated and led non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	agree	399	78.7	108	21.3	507	45.8
	disagree	363	60.6	236	39.4	599	54.2
	Total	762	68.9	344	31.1	1,106	100.0

Table 42

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (individual freedom v. separation of church and state)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	agree	480	81.6	108	18.4	588	56.0
	disagree	259	56.1	203	43.9	462	44.0
	Total	739	70.4	311	29.6	1,050	100.0

Table 43

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to Separation of Church and State Issues (Christian prayer)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	agree	462	85.9	76	14.1	538	49.5
	disagree	290	52.8	259	47.2	549	50.5
	Total	752	69.2	335	30.8	1,087	100.0

Table 44

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(school choice plans: widen economic gaps)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will widen economic gaps between public schools.	agree	461	63.0	271	37.0	732	66.3
	disagree	306	82.3	66	17.7	372	33.7
	Total	767	69.5	337	30.5	1,104	100.0

Table 45

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: widen racial gaps)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will widen racial gaps between public schools.	agree	467	64.3	259	35.7	726	67.0
	disagree	296	82.7	62	17.3	358	33.0
	Total	763	70.4	321	29.6	1,084	100.0

Table 46

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: force responsiveness)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will force public schools to be more responsive to their communities.	agree	539	76.5	166	23.5	705	63.9
	disagree	236	59.1	163	40.9	399	36.1
	Total	775	70.2	329	29.8	1,104	100.0

Table 47

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(school choice plans: improve schools through competition)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans will improve public schools through competition.	agree	420	81.6	95	18.4	515	46.9
	disagree	351	60.1	233	39.9	584	53.1
	Total	771	70.2	328	29.8	1,099	100.0

Table 48

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: limited to within school districts)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans should be limited to within a school district.	agree	408	66.3	207	33.7	615	57.2
	disagree	345	74.8	116	25.2	416	42.8
	Total	753	70.0	323	30.0	1,076	100.0

Table 49

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (school choice plans: open to all schools throughout the state)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
School choice plans should be open to all schools throughout the state.	agree	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	37.4
	disagree	429	64.0	241	36.0	670	62.6
	Total	751	70.2	319	29.8	1,070	100.0

Table 50

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (home schooling; co and extra curricular opportunities)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Public schools should be required by law to provide home schooled children with co & extra curricular opportunities.	agree	197	70.6	82	29.4	279	24.4
	disagree	598	69.1	268	30.9	866	75.6
	Total	795	69.4	350	30.6	1,114	100.0

Table 51

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (home schooling: state certify teachers)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Teachers of home schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home.	agree	473	67.5	228	32.5	701	61.8
	disagree	321	74.1	112	25.9	433	38.2
	Total	794	70.0	340	30.0	1,134	100.0

Table 52

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(tuition tax credits: private schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private school.	agree	210	89.4	25	10.6	235	20.4
	disagree	595	64.9	322	35.1	917	79.6
	Total	805	69.9	347	30.1	1,152	100.0

Table 53

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(tuition tax credits: religious schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious school.	agree	206	88.8	26	11.2	232	20.2
	disagree	596	65.1	320	34.9	916	79.8
	Total	802	69.9	346	30.1	1,148	100.0

Table 54

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (tuition tax credits: home schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who teach their children at home.	agree	145	85.3	25	14.7	170	14.8
	disagree	654	67.0	322	33.0	976	85.2
	Total	799	69.7	347	30.3	1,146	100.0

Table 55

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(charter schools: more accountable)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools.	agree	174	80.6	42	19.4	216	19.3
	disagree	599	66.5	302	33.5	901	80.7
	Total	773	69.2	344	30.8	1,117	100.0

Table 56

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(voucher plans: limited to public schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be limited to public schools only.	agree	389	63.4	225	36.6	614	59.7
	disagree	326	78.6	89	21.4	415	40.3
	Total	715	69.5	314	30.5	1,029	100.0

Table 57

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: public and non-religious private schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to public and private schools (but not to parochial schools).	agree	58	85.3	10	14.7	68	6.9
	disagree	633	68.6	290	31.4	923	93.1
	Total	691	69.7	300	30.3	991	100.0

Table 58

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: public, private, and parochial schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
In voucher plans, parents' choices should be open to all public, private, and parochial schools.	agree	281	85.4	48	14.6	329	30.9
	disagree	472	64.0	265	36.0	737	69.1
	Total	753	70.6	313	29.4	1,066	100.0

Table 59

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Catholic schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Catholic schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	281	85.2	49	14.8	330	31.4
	disagree	466	64.7	254	35.3	720	68.6
	Total	747	71.1	303	28.9	1,050	100.0

Table 60

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(voucher plans: Muslim schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Muslim schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	270	84.9	48	15.1	318	30.3
	disagree	477	65.2	255	34.8	732	69.7
	Total	747	71.1	303	28.9	1,050	100.0

Table 61

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues (voucher plans: Protestant schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Protestant schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	276	84.9	49	15.1	325	31.0
	disagree	470	64.9	254	35.1	724	69.0
	Total	746	71.1	303	28.9	1,049	100.0

Table 62

Distribution Comparisons Between Perceived Politically Conservative and Politically Liberal School Board Members Relative to School Choice Issues
(voucher plans: Jewish schools)

Statement	Response	Political Conservative		Political Liberal		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Jewish schools should be included in voucher plans.	agree	280	85.1	49	14.9	329	31.3
	disagree	467	64.8	254	35.2	721	68.7
	Total	747	71.1	303	28.9	1,050	100.0

Appendix D

Appendix D contains a comparison of the distribution of responses to political and religious leanings and attitudes toward selected education issues of school board members who were used in the sample with those who were not included in the sample. Surveys which were not included in the sample occurred because they arrived after the cut-off date. Also included in this appendix are comments made by the respondents in the sample. The comments were categorized into (a) comments regarding separation of church and state issues, (2) comments regarding school choice issues, and (3) general comments.

Post evidence of the quality of the survey indicate strong positive data. When comparing the distribution results of the 114 surveys, which were returned after the deadline and not used in the sample data, with the distribution results of the 1,247 survey which were used in the sample, many similarities are evident. Table 61 contains those similarities.

Table 63:

Comparison of Sample and Non-Sample Distribution of School Board Members'Political and Religious Leanings and Their Attitudes on Selected Education Issues

Question/Statement	Response	Sample		Non-Sample	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Which most closely reflects your political attitudes?	Conservative	815	65.4	79	69.3
	Liberal	355	28.5	35	30.7
	No Response	77	6.2	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Which most closely reflects your religious attitudes?	Conservative	680	54.0	72	63.2
	Liberal	450	36.1	42	36.8
	No Response	117	9.4	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	1000	114	100
America needs a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools.	Agree	388	31.1	49	43
	Disagree	822	65.9	65	57
	No Response	37	3.0	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Like other groups...religious groups should be allowed to hold religious activities in public school facilities after school hours.	Agree	956	76.7	87	76.3
	Disagree	266	21.3	26	22.8
	No Response	25	2.0	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Student-initiated non-Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	Agree	537	43.1	56	49.1
	Disagree	642	51.5	58	50.9
	No Response	68	5.5	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100

Table 63 (continued):

Comparison of Sample and Non-Sample Distribution of School Board Members'Political and Religious Leanings and Their Attitudes on Selected Education Issues

Question/Statement	Response	Sample		Non-Sample	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Protecting individual religious freedom is more important than ensuring government and church separation.	Agree	617	49.5	67	58.8
	Disagree	498	39.9	46	40.4
	No Response	132	10.6	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Student-initiated and led Christian prayer at school functions is desirable.	Agree	559	44.8	64	56.1
	Disagree	596	47.8	50	43.2
	No Response	92	7.4	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
School choice plans widen economic gaps.	Agree	786	63.0	76	66.7
	Disagree	388	31.1	38	33.3
	No Response	73	5.9	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
School choice plans widen racial gaps.	Agree	776	62.2	81	71.1
	Disagree	376	30.2	33	28.9
	No Response	95	7.6	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
School choice plans force schools to be more responsive.	Agree	742	59.5	69	60.5
	Disagree	434	34.8	44	38.6
	No Response	71	5.7	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100

Table 63 (continued):

Comparison of Sample and Non-Sample Distribution of School Board Members'Political and Religious Leanings and Their Attitudes on Selected Education Issues

Question/Statement	Response	Sample		Non-Sample	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
School choice plans improve public schools through competition.	Agree	539	43.2	50	43.9
	Disagree	630	50.5	63	55.3
	No Response	78	6.3	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
School choice plans should be limited to within school districts.	Agree	654	52.4	61	53.5
	Disagree	481	38.6	51	44.7
	No Response	112	9.0	2	1.8
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
School choice plans should be statewide.	Agree	416	33.4	39	34.2
	Disagree	714	57.3	74	64.9
	No Response	117	9.4	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Public schools should be required by law to provide home schooled children with co & extra curricular activities.	Agree	290	23.3	22	19.3
	Disagree	930	74.6	92	80.7
	No Response	27	2.2	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Teachers of home schooled children should be certified by the state to teach their children at home.	Agree	749	60.1	78	68.4
	Disagree	459	36.8	35	30.7
	No Response	39	3.1	1	.9
	Total	1,247	100	114	100

Table 63 (continued):

Comparison of Sample and Non-Sample Distribution of School Board Members'Political and Religious Leanings and Their Attitudes on Selected Education Issues

Question/Statement	Response	Sample		Non-Sample	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to private school.	Agree	243	19.5	31	27.2
	Disagree	983	78.8	83	72.8
	No Response	21	1.7	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who send their children to religious school.	Agree	240	19.2	30	27.2
	Disagree	982	78.7	84	73.7
	No Response	25	2.0	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Tuition tax credits should be given to parents who teach their children at home.	Agree	175	14.0	16	14.0
	Disagree	1,045	83.8	98	86.0
	No Response	27	2.2	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Charter schools will be more accountable to their communities than public schools.	Agree	226	18.1	21	18.4
	Disagree	965	77.4	93	81.6
	No Response	56	4.5	-0-	-0-
	Total	1,247	100	114	100
Voucher plans would be open to public, private, and religious schools.	Agree	344	27.6	38	18.4
	Disagree	794	63.7	76	81.6
	No Response	109	8.7	-0-	-0-

Comments

Pertaining to Separation of Church and State

Should teach or reinforce common values not morals (should be taught at home) Prayer should be student initiated moments of silence or non denominational - On #21 why is it either/or? Shouldn't we have both? Sex Ed belongs at home - it isn't preventive to teach it at school.

Freedom is being accomplished by separation of church and gov't.

I strongly believe that religious education belongs in the home and with religious institutions. If the public schools teach or preach religion, it would be the religion of the majority not the beliefs of all. All students may pray in school now, silently. Those who feel their children need to spend their school day in a religious atmosphere should send their children to private school at their own expense.

What, exactly is the purpose of this? There are numerous questions surrounding Christian vs. non-Christian values, prayer, school choice! Is this about being a board member or about getting back up for religious right/left groups?

Question 21 doesn't make sense: the point of separation of church and state is to protect individual freedom.

Schools have always taught values - the issue is to teach values which are nonsectarian and generally accepted and which protect the rights of all.

Non-Christian prayer is better than no prayer at all.

I noticed that several religion questions were asked (esp. prayer). I feel that there is nothing harmful about praying in public, and in fact a "calming" effect can help settle potential volatile students. I don't even feel that it has to mention God, Christ, or any religion per se - The messages most religions that I'm familiar with teach are peaceful, positive messages - why do way with prayer? Take a vote and be done with it!

With regard to religion, prayer is allowed in public schools. Prayer should not be an organized group activity whether Christian or non-Christian.

Your questions about school prayer are not precise enough. However, my belief is that students should be able to pray individually or in groups at school. I question collective prayer at official school functions. I am a religious person, I think, but I do not believe collective prayer is mandated by God.

Re: #14 and #22 - School prayer: I don't think any prayer is "desirable," but neither do I have a problem if students choose to "initiate" a prayer. A school shouldn't be afraid to be like the community in which it operates.

George Washington was not a religious fanatic. He was a realist. George Washington was being realistic when he said, "Democracy without God and the Bible is impossible." A free society such as ours will self-destruct if its members don't willingly obey the Ten Commandments. Public education should impart these basic values to future generations.

Freedom of speech and freedom of religion should not stop at the school door under the guise of "separation of church and state." (My copy of the Constitution contains no such clause!).

Religion in public schools need not be an issue, if time were given to understanding and teaching the true nature of religion and spirituality.

In question #21 - I believe that my individual religious freedom is best protected, being a minority, by ensuring government (including school districts in govt.) and church separation. We must be careful to protect the rights of all religious beliefs and allow for removal or children, or non participation in certain areas because of religious beliefs.

I oppose a constitutional amendment to allow public prayer. I oppose any activity which amounts to pressure on students to engage in prayer (Christian or otherwise) but I fully expect and appreciate the fact that individual students and staff of all faiths always have and always will pray on their own in school. That is desirable.

A constitution amendment allowing prayer in schools is not necessary. The Supreme Court and the Constitution have guaranteed this right for many, many years.

I believe integrity, ethics, high standards for achievement, and pride in a job well done are moralistic values that cross all cultural groups. Prayer, or

philosophic reflection, inspiration, or meditation is helpful to all humans. Allowing families to have input in schools keeps families strong and children successful.

The less government and unions connected with the school, the better off we will be.

Pertaining to School Choice

Charter schools “communities” will become elitist groups and will not represent true cross sections of a community. It will be very easy for a school to show impressive results, when you can pick the students that you want to have in your school. Also, what will happen to schools when the first law suit is filed against a school board because someone’s child did not receive equal access to opportunities available in a “charter” school, since their child stayed at the “regular” school? Let’s throw in some other variables too - like Mom and Dad “forgot” to fill out the charter school application and “forgot” to send it in, but thought their child was at the charter school.

State and National School Board Associations should be working to protect the interests of public education and providing the means to improve public education rather than promote programs such as private school choice and vouchers that will reduce financial resources necessary to provide quality programs in the public schools.

The voucher system seems unfair, discriminatory and elitist as does charter schools and school choice. Public school is for all Americans - to learn how to live together and be tolerant of one another. Voucher systems derail this idea - making some "better" - If it's innovative try a pilot program in Public school!

I do not favor vouchers - but if they are used - parents and students' choices should not be limited!

Do not agree with vouchers. It will ruin the public school system.

#18 Charter schools and/or public schools are only as accountable as the system provides. Charter schools could be more accountable if set up properly.

Vouchers and Charters are attempts at undermining democracy in favor of elitism.

Vouchers will cause the destruction of the private school system with public money goes public control. Private schools do not want to operate under equal guidelines as public schools.

Too many negatives for me to support school choice ever.

Although I am a conservative republican and a Roman Catholic who attended a parochial grade school, I am appalled at the Republican party's initiatives to undermine public education via vouchers ... disguised as school "choice" or "competition." Here in Pennsylvania, my view is shared by nearly all school directors - many of whom have stopped participating in Republican politics as a result of this issue. I believe these initiatives post a substantial threat to the very existence of public education!

We do not need any voucher systems. It would be great to be able to pay teachers on a merit system.

General Comments

Thanks for letting me participate!

Because of the teachers unions public education in this country is in deep trouble. Children graduate (HS) who can't read and function at the eighth grade level. Our school district spends about \$6,800 per student and can't compete with Catholic schools which spend \$2,500 per student. Teachers salaries are the big difference. You should read our teachers contract - it's a mess!!!

School funding needs to have a increase. A supplement of funding is needed through federal or state measures without always going to local taxpayer.

Many of the preceding questions are difficult to assign an A or D to, without qualification. For instance, for #22 I have assigned an "A" to most topics, but I would only agree if each program was very well defined with regard to curriculum and objective.

#22 - Do not like the word factual - otherwise agree

#6 - Do not like comprehensive - otherwise agree

The federal government must stop forcing mandates - especially on small school districts - regarding students with physical disabilities. We are not equipped (and it is impossible to become equipped) with our current budget scenario.

One of the most "pressing" concerns in our district is the financial burden of special education, particularly having to provide maintenance-care for the severe and profound children. These children need care, but in a health and/or, mental care facility. The ineducable should not be the responsibility of education institutions. But the regulations surrounding all of special education are literally stealing from the total student body. This year in a property poor district we have to expend \$1,1000,000 over what monies we receive for special education.

Everything received on a local, county, or state basis is read regularly. Major concerns are special interest groups elected to school boards, state and federal mandates with no funds attached, and quick fix experiments handed down by political agendas on a state level.

You are not on track. The issues focused on are what the mass media would look at. I question your intent. Are you part of the "ultra wing" right or left?

Part III - All issues important and most contingent on each other. i.e. at risk, crime, violence, facilities, parent involvement, race relations, finance, truancy and dropouts. Hard to limit to three.

Part III Choices picked do not indicate what I feel is most important, but rather the most pressing concerns for our particular district. For instance, I did not indicate "technology" because we have recently installed "state-of-the-art" tech-ed centers at both middle school and high school level.

Local schools need the right to discipline students.

Your survey seems to be trying to tie religion and politics to school board decisions. Realistically, it's a personal goal or goal of the group who feels they got you elected. That causes the most poor decisions to be made. Educational goals, religious goals, or political goals don't overwhelm small school districts' decision making process. People care more about coached and winning seasons than they do education!

It's unfortunate, but I find that this survey pertains to more concern of social problems of a school district rather than state mandates, fin., budgets, tech., curric. "Reading, Writing, Arithmetic."

There is no money available to extend vouchers to non-public students. If I thought MI could afford this option, I might change my mind.

Believe it or not heterogeneous grouping is dumbing down the top 20+% of students in our schools. Parents of these students are desperately looking for private or public alternatives and at least in our area are the primary supporters of charter schools and other moves towards public funding of private schools. Heterogeneous grouping will be known in the future as the policy which tore the public schools apart! We did it to ourselves!

I feel issues such as sex education, morals, values, self-esteem should be taught at home and enhanced in our schools. However, with our changing society the schools are, I feel, forced to take on more and more the parents' role, and should not have to.

My school board term has been a most "depressing" experience. At its start, we had a super team of board members, a superb superintendent, a very dedicated staff of teachers and administrators for the most part. Despite all those strengths and a very good system (ref: test scores), I have watched an increasingly ugly, non-supportive temperament develop in the community around budgetary issues - in general and teacher salary issues specifically. Over three years, we have continually fought to prevent major dismantling of an excellent program. The educational aspect of the job is a refreshing challenge but such a tiny part compared to the major specter of budget battles which are destroying - at an ever increasing rate - that which our school system has worked so hard in the last few years to build up. I fear for the public school system these next few years!

Why do you promote Goals 2000 ideology in your magazine? Are you subsidized by the U.S., Dept. of Education or NEA? How about an insightful article on this controversy - pro and con? You know that 4 states have kicked Goals 2000 - OBE out and refused the funding - Virginia, New Hampshire, Alabama and Montana. Inform the school board about this controversy. It will not go away, until it is forced to. For more information contact Gary Bauer at the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. (800) 225-4008 - (202) 393-7675 or Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs or the South

Dakota Farm Bureau. Let's not keep wearing rose colored glasses on this subject.

Why not include questions regarding curriculum and changing needs in society and industry. Do our schools really prepare students to be life long learners?

4= Re. School choice: ()A ()D

1= too definitive

14 and 23=Appears to me, you should pose one question re. "Nondenominational."

21=seems inconsistent

26-27-28-29= I am retired.

I strongly believe that religious education belongs in the home and with religious institutions. If the public schools teach or preach religion, it would be the religion of the majority not the beliefs of all. All students may pray in school now, silently. Those who feel their children need to spend their school day in a religious atmosphere should send their children to private school at their own expense.

What, exactly is the purpose of this? There are numerous questions surrounding Christian vs. non-Christian values, prayer, school choice! Is this about being a board member or about getting back up for religious right/left groups?

Tenure issues are important for two main reasons. 1) Difficult to differentially reward the outstanding teacher. 2) Difficult to fire the perennial poor performing teacher. A high paid teacher with a reputation as being a lousy teacher does untold harm to the reputation of all teachers. Taxpayers take it out on teachers in general via budgeted votes. Current tenure rules are sometimes the profession's worst enemy.

I would appreciate a survey dealing with concerns of appropriate hiring practices, regulations and standards of curriculum and availability of programs to insure the success of the student.

I feel the questions concerning this survey are rather ambiguous and slanted toward the liberal and non Christian beliefs.

14 and 23 are very much related and should have been combined or consecutive; one without the other is "unfair" and so I chose to disagree with 14 and avoided your bait/trap in 23!

This survey seems inclined to be quite biased and quite liberal particularly in Part II's questions. It is not wrong to have "values" and this does not mean I am part of the "religious right." I'm of the impression that this is the reason for the survey. I hope I'm wrong. School Board Member in Western New York State

Too much money going toward teachers' salaries instead of technology, that will benefit students. Needed: teacher's Greed changed to Gratitude!

*Question 21 doesn't make sense: the point of separation of church and state is to protect individual freedom.

*Question 4 is hard to answer: It depends on the nature of the choice plans. Many of the other questions have the same problem: they are "loaded," and could be answered either way, depending on interpretation. You need to make your questions much more precise and allow for a greater range of answers.

This is a K-6 grade district. Filters into a larger 7-12 district. I serve on both, but answered as a component, K-6 board member.

This survey may be about attitudes, but the underlying theme is clearly conservative vs. liberal. May I suggest you survey the effects of attitude. The last 30 years of dominant liberal solutions to public problems has, in my opinion, never been measured in terms of results. We seem to only want to accept today's dilemmas and attempt to do more of the same old feel good methods. Responsibility and accountability are seldom advanced as solutions.

Right now in most sex ed. classes, abstinence is not really taught. They seem to think that teens are like animals and not people that can make their own decisions. With the AIDS education they are stressing condoms which by the FDA has said that they are only 81% effective for pregnancy, which, they need to say why they fail most often. HIV is a lot smaller than sperm. If abortion is to be taught then fetal development should also be taught with an ultrasound movie so that the kids know what is truly happening and can make an informed decision.

I have just completed my last term on the school board so maybe you don't want my survey. We just finished an election (I chose not to run for re-election) in which the Republican party and Christian Coalition were openly seeking seats for the first time. One was elected, the others defeated. (The Republican party and Christian Coalition are fairly synonymous in this case - in this locale.) I expect it to be an ongoing battle as they are willing pump five times the dollars into school campaigns than have ever been spent before!

Your questionnaire seems to perhaps have a slanted view. Many Christians, such as myself, are supporters of public schools and are not extremists. I do not think most conservative Christians are "the enemy" of public schools either.

Dear Sirs -

I found this survey dealt very little with the achievements and only a small "slice" of concerns (basically religious/political issues). Only part III gave a more balanced view. In the past I have found articles in the ASBJ that were clearly prejudiced against the Christian view point. I trust that this no longer takes place, and that this "Quiz" on our religious beliefs will not be misused.

The American School Board Journal continues to ignore or only report from a liberal point of view - conservative issues. Ignore us if you choose, treat us as simpletons if you wish, but we will not go away. Your editorial bent is out of the NEA manual. Why not treat us with respect. We are from the same planet. You do not have to roll over just report our issues realistically.

I am a Christian with a strong respect for our Constitution and laws. True faith does not need government to help it. True freedom of conscience is essential, and must include a well-rounded education. Vouchers and Charters are attempts at undermining democracy in favor of elitism. Values and beliefs that won't stand under critical thinking are weak! God gave us brains to use!

Your survey suggests that everything is yes or no / conservative or liberal / -In reality under certain circumstances and guidelines the answers may be different or "possibly." I resent having to be labelled conservative or liberal when in reality I and others are "moderate" - somewhat liberal on some issues and somewhat conservative on others. Underlying all issues should be the question of "what is best for our students?"

Loaded questions - set up to lead to self fulfilling prophecy in results. Total B.S. - get a life!

It appears to me that the survey has a hidden agenda.

In our school district, the school committee submits a proposed budget to our local city council who in turn decides how much money the school district receives. Although, the council cannot control how the money is spent within the school department, they certainly influence expenditures, especially when they have direct contact with union officials of the school department. The whole budget process has become a political circus in our community and in fact, in our whole state!

I'm disappointed with the quality and nature of some of these questions. Like political surveys I sometimes receive they slant the issue and force me onto one side or the other of a hot topic rather than allowing me to state what I think which is far more complex than the simplistic extremes. For example, I oppose a constitutional amendment to allow public prayer. I oppose any activity which amounts to pressure on students to engage in prayer (Christian or otherwise) but I fully expect and appreciate the fact that individual students and staff of all faiths always have and always will pray on their own in school. That is desirable.

I feel I'm too conservative to be a liberal but too liberal to be a conservative. Your question on pressing concerns may give very misleading results. Our school district demographics are very different from the one immediately adjacent to ours... consequently we have very few common concerns.

I am disappointed in the way questions were written. I had expected an unbiased survey of issues/ concerns facing school board members. Instead, I felt a distinct right-wing, conservative Christian bent. Is this the way the whole country is going? What happened to our sense of community, our commitment to working together, of being united.

Many of the issues raised are far too complex to be simplified into "conservative" vs. "liberal" choices. Why not a third alternative for each question? The majority of the American electorate identifies itself as "independent" rather than Republican or Democrat.

I did not like answering the questions in Part II because the questions and the

answer choices were too simplistic. Presenting issues simplistically just exacerbates controversy.

Is this a trick questionnaire?

The questions are too skewed to answer in an intelligent way. The survey seems biased against religious and private education. Asking questions in a more straight forward manner might make the results more credible, but more importantly make the audience of the Journal believe it.

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VITA

Ghassan John Tarazi was born in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 21, 1948. With his immediate family he migrated to the United States in November of 1955. He grew up in Brooklyn, New York and graduated from John Jay High School in 1966. He attended The King's College, from where he earned a Bachelor's degree in History in 1971. He then earned a Master's degree in History from Western Connecticut State University in 1983.

Mr. Tarazi began his teaching career in Putnam County, New York, in 1971. He taught a variety of courses in the social sciences at all secondary grade levels. He was also involved in coaching football and wrestling. He relocated to Fairfax, County, Virginia in 1980. While in the classroom in Fairfax County Public Schools he taught United States History at the middle school level. He was also a special projects teacher, teaching history, English, math, and science courses in a program for high risk dropout students.

Mr. Tarazi has held a variety of administrative and supervisory positions in Fairfax County Public Schools. He was a Research Specialist in the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, a Coordinator of Secondary Programs, and is presently an Assistant Principal at the middle school level. He is also an adjunct instructor with George Mason University and George Washington University.

Mr. Tarazi is married and has one son, Jason.