

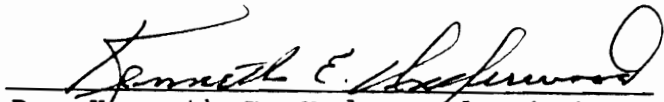
A National Study of What School Board Members
Believe to be Most Essential to Their Effectiveness

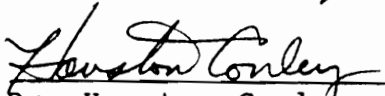
by

Jesse L. Freeman

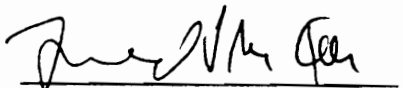
Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Administration


Approved:



Dr. Kenneth E. Underwood, Chairman


Dr. Houston Conley
Co-Chairman


Dr. Jim C. Fortune


Dr. Ronald L. McKeen


Dr. Wayne M. Worner


Dr. Mary Anne Lecos

October, 1990

Blacksburg, Virginia

A National Study of What School
Board Members Believe to be Most
Essential to Their Effectiveness

By

Jesse L. Freeman

Committee Chairman: Kenneth E. Underwood
Educational Administration

(ABSTRACT)

The major purpose of this study was to determine what school board members believe to be most essential to their effectiveness; board members' perceptions of their knowledge in the essential areas of board responsibility; and how they gain information and training to become more effective in these essential areas.

The study utilized descriptive research methodology and survey technique to gather data from a national sample of school board members. A stratified random sample of board members was selected from the list of subscribers to the American School Board Journal. The survey was designed to collect demographic and personal data about board members and to obtain information on their perceptions of the most essential facets of school board membership. In addition, the survey asked board members to rate their

strengths and weaknesses in these essential areas, and how they gained information and training in their districts. Of the 3,744 or 15.5% subscribers sampled, 968 or 25.6% responded. The study was sponsored by The American School Board Journal, published by the National School Boards Association, the national professional organization for school board members in the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer expresses his sincere appreciation to The American School Board Journal and to those whose assistance, cooperation, encouragement and time made this dissertation possible.

Dr. Kenneth Underwood, chairman of the writer's dissertation, is especially recognized for his encouragement and continued effort to make himself available to render his wise counsel.

Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Houston Conley, co-chairman of the writer's dissertation committee who encouraged the writer throughout the writing process.

Further appreciation is expressed to the other members of the writer's dissertation committee: Dr. Jim Fortune, for making himself available for phone calls at his office and at his home; Dr. Ronald McKeen for his assistance in developing the questionnaire; Dr. Wayne Worner for his encouragement and direction at the beginning of the writing process, and Dr. Mary Anne Lecos for her time and cooperation.

The writer is grateful for the support of his friends who insisted that he stay on target throughout the writing of the dissertation.

Finally, the writer expresses gratitude to his family: to his wife Chris, his children Kevin and Kendra who endured the disruption in family life and his nephew Broderick who neglected his family to assist him in completing the research.

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Statement of Need.....	4
	Statement of Problem.....	7
	Research Questions.....	7
	Definitions.....	7
	Limitations of the Study.....	8
	Organization of the Study.....	9
2	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	11
	Responsibilities of the School Board and School Board Members.....	18
	Indicators of Effective School Board Members.....	27
	Summary.....	47
3	METHODOLOGY.....	49
	Research Methodology.....	49
	Sample.....	52
	Instrumentation.....	55
	Collection of Data.....	57
	Method of Analysis.....	58
	Summary.....	59
4	RESULTS.....	60
	Description of Sample.....	60

Chapter	Page
Demographic Data Relative to Respondents.....	60
Personal Data Relative to Respondents.....	64
School Board Characteristic Relative to Respondents.....	73
Findings for Each Research Question.....	77
Question 1.....	77
Question 2.....	81
Question 3.....	87
Question 4.....	106
Summary.....	115
5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	117
Purpose of the Study.....	118
Research Questions Restated.....	118
Research Methodology.....	119
Results.....	121
Conclusions.....	124
Recommendations for Further Study.....	132
REFERENCES.....	134
APPENDIX.....	138
VITA.....	144

List of Tables

Table 1: Regions of the United States According to National School Board Association Membership.....

Table 2: Population and Sample by Region.....

Table 3: Distribution of Returned Surveys by Region and in Relation to National Distribution of School Districts.....

Table 4: Distribution of Returned Surveys by Enrollment Size and in Relation to National Distribution of School Districts.....

Table 5: Distribution of Returned Surveys by Community Description.....

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Sex, Ethnic Designation and Age.....

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by Highest Education Attainment.....

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents by Current Occupation.....

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents by Family Income.....

Table 10: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status Whether or Not They Own Their Home, and Whether or Not They Have Children in Public Schools (K-12).....

Table 11: Distribution of Respondents by Method of Selection to Board.....

Table 12: Size of School Board on Which Respondents Serve.....

Table 13: Distribution of Respondents by Length of Board Service.....

Table 14: Importance of Essential Facets of School Board Membership in Rank-Order as Indicated by Respondents.....

- Table 15: Rank Order of School Board Members' Rating of Their Knowledge or Skills in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership.....
- Table 16: Comparison of Importance of Essential Facets of School Board Membership and School Board Members' Knowledge of Skills in Essential Facets.....
- Table 17: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Size of School District.....
- Table 18: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by System Size) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership.....
- Table 19: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Type of School District.....
- Table 20: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by District Type) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership.....
- Table 21: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Education Level.....
- Table 22: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by Education) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership.
- Table 23: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Region of the Country.....
- Table 24: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Response to Their Knowledge or Skills (by Region) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership.
- Table 25: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by District Size.....

Table 26: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by District Type.....

Table 27: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential of School Board Responsibility by Education Level.....

Table 28: Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceived Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board by Region of Country.

Table 29: Respondents' Indication of Method and Sources Available to School Board Members to Gain Information and Training.....

Table 30: Respondents' Indication of Whether They Make Use of the Sources Available to School Board Members.....

Table 31: Respondents' Indication of Whether Sources and Information Available to School Board Members are Helpful.....

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Although there have been efforts to promote schooling for children ever since the Pilgrims landed, it was not until about the mid-1800's that a system of public schooling came into being. Since its inception, public education has been the foundation of this nation's governmental, social, and economic well-being. Its foundation has been based on the concept of local governance by school boards that are mostly elected to represent the educational priorities and objectives of their communities (Howe, 1987).

Local school board members are among the last grassroots governing bodies that touch all Americans. In one way or another, their actions and efforts touch children, youth, parents, educators, business leaders, and elected officials (Danzberger, 1987). Most Americans believe that education is an investment in the life of an individual and is the foundation of this Nation's existence and its prosperity (Ross, 1987). They have greater expectations for school board members than they do for most elected officials (Weil, 1987). Board members are seen as trustees responsible for a trust established by the community, with students as the beneficiaries of that trust

(Ross, 1987). Thus, effective governance and management of each local board are essential. These boards are as varied and complex as communities themselves. The political and social forces that affect governance and management do not yield to an easy understanding of what is needed to make them more effective (Danzberger, 1987). Board members must be sensitive to the public tendency to credit or blame them for school district matters related to curriculum, budget, and general school district operations (Edwards, 1988). By helping them develop the skills and resources to spend more time and energy on larger issues, the frustration of ineffectiveness that they may experience can be alleviated (Herman, 1987).

Serving on a local board may be frustrating at times and inspirational at others, but it can be a most rewarding experience. There are no professional school board members, only amateurs who hope to make the world a little better through their efforts to improve education. They are idealistic enough to believe that what they do on the behalf of children can make a difference in their communities. They believe that the time that they spend on local boards of education can have a positive effect despite the drawbacks of the office. Most board members are parents, taxpayers and public servants. They subscribe

to the proposition that democracy works and that the public schools are our first line of defense against tyranny both at home and abroad. They subscribe to the sentiments on universal education expressed by Horace Mann, who in his tenth Annual Report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education in 1846, wrote:

I believe in the existence of a great, immortal, immutable principle of natural law or natural ethics. A principle antecedent to all human institutions, and incapable of being abrogated by any ordinance of man which proves the absolute right to an education of every human being that comes into the world, and which, of course, proves the correlative duty of every government to see that the means of education are provided to all (Natile, 1984 p.3).

The very survival of America's public education system, as we know it, will depend on the ability of board members to accommodate the many changes they face. As modern society decentralizes, so must education. No longer can a board afford to look elsewhere for the answers. Successful strategies and approaches must be developed locally by individual schools and systems relying on their own best judgments regarding the educational needs of their localities, the most likely trends in the future, and the most compelling goals that they seek to achieve (Commission on Schooling for the Twenty-First Century, 1984). Moving into the future is not something to be considered only when the superintendent has some free time, or something that

can be limited to a single board meeting (Lewis, 1987). Board members chances at successfully fulfilling these responsibilities depend, in part, upon the educational policymaking process and how these decisions interact with social, economic and technological trends that are already in motion (Kaywell, 1988).

Statement of Need

The primary role of state government is to provide an environment in which its citizens and its economy can flourish. This is a never-ending challenge because of the constantly changing nature of society. The importance of a vigorous educational system for a society's health never changes (Governor's Commission on School Performance, 1989). Because the foundation of school governance rests with the local board, it is essential that boards reexamine the knowledge that is basic to their effectiveness. Schools have not changed as rapidly as the economy and society, and as the 21st Century draws near, boards must assess the recent changes that have occurred in America and in the world. As a result of longer life spans, declining birth rates among white and middle class Americans, a growing number of immigrants, and increasing minority birth rates, the United States will show significant shifts in

racial, cultural, and age distribution among its citizens in the 21st Century (Shannon, 1989). Along with these changes, school board members must also realize that the information age has arrived, and most societal institutions are experiencing profound changes. Business, science, entertainment, medicine, communications, law, banking, travel, government, the military, manufacturing, and agriculture are being transformed by the pressure of new technologies, orchestrated by the computer and linked together across the world (White and Erlbaum, 1987).

School board members are realizing that they can no longer rely on familiar information returning with the pendulum swing. Drastic changes in demographic and personal characteristics of communities are causing board members to look at school district in an entirely different way. Because they want to be effective and want to make their district's schools more effective, they are seeking ways to improve their effectiveness. (The Institute for Educational Leadership, 1988).

Everyone seems to agree that inservice training for school board members is needed, but the essential training that is needed or how it should be undertaken is not clear (Bryant, 1987). Even though Americans cherish the idea of ordinary people setting policy to govern local schools,

local school boards and individual board members are under great pressure. In an effort to improve this nations' schools, the focus is most often on administrators, teachers, students, businesses and community leaders. One of the most important groups is often overlooked; local school boards, the organizations that actually set educational policy for school districts across the United States (Danzberger, 1989). When school systems get into trouble, one common complaint is about the caliber of people who serve on the school board. Even if their honesty is not questioned, their qualifications, their competence, and the quality of their commitment barely get satisfactory grades (Reecer, 1989).

This study is intended to provide current data on the knowledge that school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness, their perceptions of their levels of competency, and the training and resources available to assist them in acquiring necessary skills. The study could also provide organizations with useful information and knowledge necessary to plan staff development activities that will improve school board effectiveness.

Statement of Problem

The major purpose of this study was to determine what knowledge or skills school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness, board members' perceptions of their knowledge in essential areas of board responsibility, and how they gain information and training to become more effective.

Research Questions

The research questions to be addressed were:

1. What facets of school board membership do school board members believe to be most essential to their effectiveness?
2. What do school board members believe to be their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets of school board responsibility?
3. Do these perceptions vary as a consequence of (a) size of school district; (b) type of school district; (c) education of board member; or (d) region of country?
4. How do school board members gain information and training to improve their effectiveness?

Definitions

For this study, terms are defined as follows:

School Board Member. The term school board member, as

used in this study, identifies an individual either elected or appointed who is a member of a local board of education.

School Board. This term refers to a group or committee of people elected or appointed to manage and govern a local public school district.

Demographic Characteristics. This term refers to variables descriptive of a local school district such as regions of the country, type, location, or size.

Personal Characteristics. This term refers to socially relevant variables such as age, sex, race, education and occupation as noted by the respondent.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were:

1. The population from which this sample was drawn was that of subscribers to The American School Board Journal and was not that of the total population serving as school board members in the United States.
2. A follow-up survey could not be conducted in an effort to improve the response rate because The American School Board Journal required anonymity.
3. The responses to the questionnaire were assumed to be the true attitudes of the respondents based

upon their personal observations, experience, and preference.

4. Responses to items on the questionnaire regarding school board characteristics may reflect multiple responses about a particular board because the sample was not limited to only one member of a given board.

Organization of the Study

This study of what school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 11 contains the introduction, statement of need, statement of the problem, research questions, definitions, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature relevant to the responsibilities of school board members, indicators of success of school board members, and future challenges that confront school board members.

Chapter 3 includes a description of research methodology, selection of sample, instrumentation, collection of data, and method of analysis.

Chapter 4 describes the data and the findings of the

survey and provides an analysis of data concerning the research questions.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

American education began near the people in log cabins, in covered wagons along wagon trails, among the cottages of seafaring men, and in sod shanties. Schools soon began to appear wherever there was a book, a query, a wise parent, and an eager young mind. And so an American tradition came to be: free schools for free people (Dykes, 1965, p. 7).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature relevant to school boards and school board members' responsibilities, indicators of their effectiveness, and challenges that they may face in the 21st century. In order to see the changes that have occurred in school board responsibilities, an historical prospective is included.

In the early days, the townspeople handled the affairs of education themselves. Growing out of their own desires and aspirations, education was truly of, by, and for the people. The town meeting was the forum through which the people expressed their wishes regarding the education of their children. Decisions were made by the "body politic." As the country grew, the details of education became too numerous and time consuming for this general body to handle them directly. Recognizing the growing complexity of schools, these early Americans

delegated school responsibilities to a group of elected representatives called selectmen (Dykes, 1965). Each local community elected this body to oversee the business of its schools. This system of educational organization and administration was ideally suited to a pioneer society where localism and democracy were cherished (Knezevich, 1984). Thus, the practice of dividing schools into districts was American in origin, and the board as a governing body for local schools was purely American (Dykes, 1965).

The Massachusetts School Ordinance of 1642 was specific in delegating the responsibility for education to an appointed body (Campbell, 1975). In the words of the ordinance:

This court, taking into consideration the great neglect of many parents and masters in training upon their children in learning and labor . . . do hereupon order and decree that in every town the chosen men appointed for managing the prudential affairs of the same shall henceforth stand charged with the care of the redress of this evil, so as they shall be sufficiently punished by fines for the neglect thereof upon presentment of the grand jury, or any other information or complaint in any court within this jurisdiction; and for this end they, or the greater number of them, shall have the power to take account from time to time of all parents and masters, and of their children, concerning their calling and employment of their children, especially of their ability to read and understand

the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country (Dexter, 1922, p. 584).

The words in the Massachusetts School ordinance made it clear that in every town the chosen men appointed for managing the prudential affairs of each locality were held responsible for and had the power to take account from time to time of all parents, masters, and of their children as it related to their ability to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of the country (Campbell, 1975).

As governmental affairs grew in complexity and the population increased, the responsibilities of the selectmen, as they were called, increased. Because of the growth and expansion of schools, the details of operating them became more burdensome. In an attempt to solve some of these problems the selectmen appointed temporary committees to act for them in education matters. At first, these committees were appointed for specific functions. They had the responsibilities of securing school houses and choosing headmasters (Dykes, 1965). This eventually led to a permanent committee on school visitation similar to the one appointed in Boston in 1721. Dispersal of the population from the New England town and the vast expansion

of the district system led to state legislation to validate and support these existing committees (Knezevich, 1984).

In 1693, a law was enacted that jointly charged towns and their selectmen with maintaining schools and required selectmen to levy taxes if approved by voters during town meetings. More than a hundred years passed before a law in 1798 approved a committee devoted to school problems. Then a law in 1826 established school committees as separate from other governing bodies (Knezevich, 1984).

The duties of these early school committees assumed legislative and supervisory responsibilities. They were responsible for all the details of operating their local schools (Dykes, 1965). As communities continued to grow and more than one school building was needed to serve individual localities, school committees could not continue to give direction to the schools. Because this system proved ineffective, local school boards began to appoint a superintendent on a full time basis to coordinate schools. As would be expected, school principals were reluctant to give up their powers to a board appointed local superintendent. Thus, the evolution of the superintendency was slow (Notle, 1984). At the end of the nineteenth century the school committees, or boards as they had come to be called, of all the large cities and many of

the small localities had appointed school superintendents (Dykes, 1965).

Two significant decisions were made during the middle and late 1800s that have had a lasting effect on school board history. The first occurred in the 1840's when the office of superintendent of schools was created in Boston and the school board began to delegate some of their administrative functions to that office. The second occurred in the 1890's when the decision that lay people from the community would be appointed or elected to serve on local school boards. Lay membership on local school boards peaked by the end of the 19th century at a national level (Callahan, 1975).

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, much discussion occurred among superintendents, about the need to give their office the power, prestige, salary, and security they needed to run effective school systems. They felt that they needed to be empowered as educational leaders to assure that the best educational programs be provided by the schools. The debate that occurred in 1895 over "Who would run the schools?" ended in a compromise that would give local superintendents significant gains. The report that resulted addressed many important questions, to include: Should there be a board of education or a

commissioner with an advisory council? If the board continued to exist, how many members should be on each local board? Should the members be elected or appointed? Who would be responsible for appointing the local superintendent? Who would appoint and discharge teachers? Who would have power over designing the course of study? This report which is known as the "Draper Report", did not recommend elimination of school boards but did recommend turning the operation of schools over to local superintendents (Campbell, 1975). The report had great significance in that evidence suggest that since 1895 schools were removed from partisan politics; the size and number of school boards were reduced; and superintendents have had the power to hire and fire teachers, select textbooks, and generally control educational programs. School boards, however, have retained the power of appointment and dismissal of the superintendent, and the states have maintained school boards that were controlled by lay people from each locality (Campbell, 1975).

In 1931, there were 127,000 independent school systems in America. By 1948, the number had been reduced to 89,000; by 1953 it was 55,000; and by 1961, there were 31,000 independent school districts in the United States. Today that number has been reduced to approximately 15,200

independent school districts (Moloney, 1989). There has also been a decrease in the size of membership on each local board. For example, in 1849 Boston had 214 school board members and Philadelphia as late as 1905 was reported to have 559 school board members. The present size of school boards throughout the United States is much smaller, with most composed of five to seven members (Knezevich, 1984).

There has also been a decline of standing school board committees. In Chicago, in the late 1800s the board had established more than 79 standing committees and by 1922 this number had been reduced to only seven. In 1962, a nationwide study of school boards indicated that only a third of the responding school boards had one or more standing committees. Most boards had assigned executive functions, previously assumed by board committees, to the superintendent (Knezevich, 1984).

The American public school system changed profoundly over the years. In 1931, nearly one million citizens had the opportunity to serve on school boards. Today just over 100,000 serve on local boards across the United States (Shanker, 1989).

Even though the characteristics of school boards and school board members have changed dramatically in the past

few decades, the ultimate goal remains the same: to provide an excellent and equitable education to all the children of this Nation (Shanker, 1989).

Responsibilities of the School Board and School Board

Members

The school board is the public body that is granted the authority and assumes the responsibility to develop local educational policies, see that the policies are implemented, monitor the quality of educational operations, and oversee the delivery of educational services in the most efficient and effective manner. From a legal point of view, school board members are officers of a governmental corporation. This corporation is known as a school district and each board member is a state officer performing duties relative to the state function of education. State statutes define these responsibilities and administrative powers, but many are left to board discretion (Knezevich, 1984).

Many citizens do not know exactly what school board members do or what their duties or responsibilities entail. Others have no idea of the amount of time or the number of board meetings they attend, but most understand that school board members, though influencing board action, are

responsible for the policies that govern schools (Wikindred, 1984). Local school boards and their membership are very different. Some boards serve large, urban districts; some serve rural, suburban, village, town, and small city districts. Enrollments, budgets, staff, and school plants run the gamut in size and complexity. No matter how much local boards and board members differ, they all have one identical responsibility: to represent the best interest of the people and to exercise lay control of education (IEL, 1986).

Policy making. Policy making is a major responsibility of school boards. Policies are general rules about what will be done. Loose use of the term policy can compound problems that people have in understanding it. Often much is implied in this deceptively simple definition (Ross, 1986). A policy may also be defined as a general and goal-oriented statement of intent to act or behave when confronted with a given situation or to achieve a given result within a specified time. It is enunciated as a guideline or a recommended course of action to insure consistency and fairness in dealing with a situation or in achieving a promised result (Knezevich, 1984).

Since school board functions are often determined by state law, policy making is attempted from two perspectives: setting policy that will satisfy the requirements of state law and developing general policy that will enhance the accomplishment of goals or objectives of public education and of a particular school district.

Satisfy the requirement of state law. Board members are responsible to act in conjunction with others serving on their local boards to satisfy the spirit as well as the word of state laws dealing with education and of the regulations of the state education authority (Knezevich, 1984).

School board functions are often determined by state law. Many states have sections of law devoted entirely to the duties and requirements for public schools. In many cases these laws describe exactly what must be done, and when to comply with the various statutes. In Arizona, for example, the delineated areas are quite specific. All curriculum decisions to include individual courses and classes, textbooks, and supplementary reading materials require state board approval (Bacal, 1986).

In order to develop policy that will carry out the responsibilities required by state law, school board members must know the statutory and regulatory

requirements established by the state or have an available source of reference or legal council on such matters (Knezevich, 1984).

Planning and setting goals for the district.

Participating in the process of planning and setting goals for the school district is another major responsibility for school boards. Specific objectives for the schools, strategies for educating students, and methods for measuring the progress of the district toward the goals and objectives should be a result of planning and goal-setting sessions. Boards must play an active role in the district's planning process and each member has the responsibility for active participation (IEL, 1986).

Because policies are expressions of goals of the district, board members have the responsibility for ensuring that they reflect the needs and expectations of the communities they represent (Bacal, 1986). Boards need to know whether a policy is having a desired impact upon established goals and objectives.

Select and evaluate the superintendent. The superintendent of schools is the board's chief executive and should serve as its chief counsel in educational decisions. They are members of the same leadership team, share common goals for enhancing the quality of

education in the district, and often experience the same pressures and criticisms that face public education (Knezevich, 1984). Thus, the selection of a superintendent of schools ranks among the most important tasks that a school board carries out.

The American Association of School Administrators (1980) summarized the board's responsibilities to the superintendent as follows:

- . To delegate to the superintendent responsibility for administrative functions except those specifically reserved through board policy.
- . To support the superintendent fully in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy.
- . To hold the superintendent responsible for administration of the schools through regular, constructive written and oral evaluation of the superintendent's work.
- . To provide the superintendent with a comprehensive employment contract.
- . To give the superintendent the benefits of the board's counsel in matters related to individual board member's expertise, familiarity with the local school system, and community interest.

- . To hold all board meetings with the superintendent or his designee.
- . To consult with the superintendent on all matters, as they arise, that concern the school system and on which the board may take action.
- . To develop a plan for board-superintendent communications.
- . To channel communications with school employees that require action through the superintendent.
- . To take action on matters only after hearing the recommendations of the superintendent.
- . To establish a policy on the effective management of complaints.
- . To provide the superintendent with sufficient administrative help, especially in monitoring teaching and learning,

Sometimes boards are faced with selecting school superintendents in volatile political situations. Under these conditions, they can gain or lose enormous respect depending on their selection (IEL, 1986).

Communications with constituency. Board members have the responsibility to keep the people of the school districts informed and aware of the status, progress, and problems of their schools. The establishment of a

functional community relations program is essential to an adequate communications network between the board and the community. In thinking about a community relations program, a board of education must constantly remember that the schools are owned and operated by the people in their district (Wikindred, 1984). School boards have an obligation and responsibility to communicate about the school district with their community and the various constituencies within it (IEL, 1986).

Ongoing relations with the news media greatly affect the manner in which boards and board members function (IEL, 1986). It is absolutely necessary for boards to devise a policy for communicating with the media. Regardless of the controversy, boards must deal with the media when the problem has public relations implications (Bagin, 1976).

Budget and resource allocations. In the face of increasing cost, business management has become a matter of basic concern to school boards everywhere. Further, cost-conscious taxpayers insist that school boards demonstrate a dollar return for every dollar spent (Dykes, 1965). Money or the lack of it is consistently school boards' biggest worry relative to school operation (Underwood et al, 1985).

This makes budget responsibility another critical task that boards must carry out (Bacal, 1986).

School board members appreciate a fact of life about which most citizens in their districts are unaware: Public education is a major enterprise. They are responsible not only for the success of public education but also for the massive delivery system needed to keep education strong.

It is the school board that has the task of keeping school districts solvent, effecting savings whenever possible, and getting the most out of every tax dollar under its control (Ross, 1988).

Curriculum oversight. Since teaching and learning are ultimate reasons for the existence of school boards, curricular items must be and remain a major responsibility of board members (Holding Effective School Board Meeting, 1986). They have the responsibility for making curriculum judgments in light of rulings and recommendations from state government (Ross, 1986).

Board self-assessment. Board members have the responsibility of developing or having developed a board assessment instrument. They also need to be concerned with the effectiveness of individual members. This regular self-assessment of their collective and individual performance as a governing body is very important if boards

are to deal effectively with complex and changing state and local mandates (IEL, 1986). Self-evaluations may cause emotions to flare if board members relations are especially delicate or the relationships between board members and the superintendent are less than courteous and respectful. If needed, the board can bring in a neutral outsider to keep the lid on the situation. (Holding An Effective School Board Meeting, 1986).

In the process of self-evaluation, there should be an opportunity for assessment of ethical behavior. With the enormous trust that has been given school board members, it is of utmost importance that the highest standard of ethics be set by board members. (Bacal, 1988).

Providing necessary resources and personnel.

Providing for adequate personnel and facilities is a very important duty that school board members must perform. As they recall their experiences with the different personalities on the staffs of the schools they visit, they realize the importance of attracting and keeping the right employees, especially teachers. No school or school system can be better than its personnel. Thus, it is the board's responsibility to determine what educational opportunities and services it wishes to provide, determine the number and kind of personnel required, and then make sure that such

personnel are secured and permitted to work in an atmosphere that supports to high productivity. (Dykes, 1965).

Providing adequate facilities is another important responsibility of school boards. Policies on building new, remodeling old, and disposing of obsolete facilities, and policies on using portable classrooms all require a sizable amount of a board's member time (IEL, 1986).

Indicators of Effectiveness in School Board Members

As the perception of public education's mission expands, the roles of individual school board members and school boards do also (Bacal, 1986). There are clear implications for individual school board members to follow in their quest for effectiveness, but they must realize that their actions produce effective or ineffective boards (IEL, 1986).

Developing policy. Since school boards have been granted the authority and assumed the responsibility to develop local educational policies, they have an awesome responsibility for the administration of public education. Effective board members realize that policy making is a difficult and time-consuming process. It requires discipline and the ability to rise above minutiae to perceive the broad picture of interrelationships in

socially sensitive situations (Knezevich, 1984). They see policy as statements of general principles that they must adopt to help administrators solve similar or recurring problems. They do not expect these policies to attend to the details of day-to-day management and do not attempt to administer the policies that they establish (Carpenter, 1989).

When effective board members are faced with difficult and controversial issues, they solicit public input, but the plan for this input is carefully developed. Whenever they develop policies to resolve or attend to these situations, their primary criterion is how well do these policies meet the needs of students. Effective boards do not develop policies merely for the convenience of administrators and teachers, or to respond to political pressures (IEL, 1986).

Boards that experience frequent success take policy making serious. They take careful steps to gather data, analyze it, and allow for community and staff input.

Effective boards, in consultation with the superintendent, work out and periodically reaffirm the separate areas of administrative and policy responsibilities (IEL, 1986). They have a clear plan on how these responsibilities will be maintained. They do not

confuse the line between policy and administration, because they know that the results will be poor administration (Ross, 1987). Misunderstandings will occur unless boards work diligently to clarify who is responsible for carrying out certain duties and have a well-defined plan for executing shared responsibilities. If there are situations where board members and their superintendent agree that the board will become heavily involved in administration, effective boards make sure that the agreement is well understood by each board member and by the superintendent. Because board turnover is extremely high, effective boards establish procedures for regular review of these agreements. As effective boards develop policy, they act in conjunction with state law (IEL, 1986).

Policy oversight. There is a considerable body of opinion that supports the notion that one measure of a board's effectiveness is the existence of relevant policies to govern the educational affairs in the district (Knezevich, 1984). With this in mind, an effective board member participates in policy oversight meetings and helps to establish policy to govern their own policy making and policy oversight responsibilities. Successful boards agree that monitoring board policy plays an important role in the work of their board. Knowing whether a policy is

having the desired impact and producing the intended outcomes is a characteristic of an effective board. The practice of monitoring policy secures needed knowledge, and gives board members the basis for making appropriate adjustments. Effective boards insist that monitoring established policy gets ample time at board meetings. (IEL, 1986). Boards must realize that regardless of what "policy making" is, and what "policy oversight" implies, neither has meaning unless they are accepted, understood, and enforced by each local board.

Allocation of budget and resources. School board members understand a fact of life that many citizens are not unaware. They understand that public education is a major enterprise and that local public school systems in most localities have the biggest payroll, the most employees, the biggest fleet of vehicles, serve the greatest number of customers, and dispense more tax dollars than any other public agency (Ross, 1987). Nothing says more about what a local school board considers important than its annual budget (Hartley, 1990).

Effective school board members work to ensure an adequate flow of resources and equity in their distribution (IEL, 1986). Hartley (1990) gives the

following steps that effective board members follow in the budget process:

- . Start with fiscal policies. They make a thorough review of board policies regarding the budget and the use of funds.
- . Select a format for the budget. They require a budget format and list expenses according to categories such as salaries, supplies, and textbooks.
- . Ask what assumptions guide the budget. They seek to understand the factors that influence the superintendent's proposed allocation of funds.
- . Ask the tough questions. Effective board members ask the questions that will guide them in making the right decision.
- . Allow room for options. They insist on alternatives when appropriate.
- . Prepare an executive summary. They ask the superintendent to provide a non-technical, easy-to-read summary of the budget.
- . Plan public hearings. They insist on developing a procedure for public hearing.
- . Provide attractive documents. They insist on attractive, well-organized, easy-to-read materials,

using simple graphs and charts to present to the public.

- . Tighten financial controls. Effective board members participate in the monitoring of budget implementation.
- . Conduct a budget postmortem. They ask pertinent questions. Were board predictions accurate? Did monthly budget reports provide a clear picture of the school's funding situation? Effective board members make sure these questions are asked at the end of every fiscal year (Hartley, 1990).

Most importantly effective school board members realize that they have the responsibility for keeping the school system solvent.

Curriculum oversight. One of the most significant impacts on students is through the boards' determination of what is to be taught (Ross, 1987). Effective school boards give a significant amount of their time to curricular items (IEL, 1986). What schools should teach is emerging as a serious concern among board members. More than a third cited curriculum development as one of the three most pressing concerns in their school districts (Cameron, 1988).

Effective school board members understand certain basic facts about the curriculum process in their districts. In order to have a significant impact on curriculum matters, they have knowledge of the following:

- . How the school district defines curriculum
- . The curriculum development process
- . The schedule for curriculum development
- . How priorities for curriculum development are determined
- . How the district implements changes in curriculum
- . How the school district approaches staff development, and
- . How curriculum is evaluated (Campbell, 1990)

School board members who have these basic facts about the curriculum process are more likely to make productive and consistent decisions (Campbell, 1990). They do not need to be curriculum experts, they merely need to know the basic requirements of the curriculum and insist that the staff conducts an ongoing evaluation of curriculum (Pratt, 1989).

Planning and goal setting. Winning board teams move toward their vision by developing specific written goal statements. When this is done, individual board members can speak articulately about these goals, and they use them

to give direction to their staff. Effective board members use strategic planning to define educational goals and objectives. Specific objectives for schools in the district, strategies for educating students, and methods for measuring the progress of the district toward their goals and objectives flow from planning and goal setting sessions (IEL, 1986). Effective board members set a vision for their schools. They realize that without both short and long term goals, schools have no direction and no means of measuring accomplishments. Equally important to deciding on goals are working with local superintendents to set definite priorities and making serious efforts to communicate these goals to members of their staff and community (Pratt, 1989).

Effective school board members draw on the suggestions of administrators, teachers, and parents to develop their mission statement. As they set their vision, they are careful not to lose sight of what is happening in the classroom (Pratt, 1989). A significant portion of a board member's time should be spent in strategic planning with the school district's administration (IEL, 1986). Effective board members conduct a comprehensive study and analyses of their goals based upon reliable data. Without this school boards will drift.

Boards' role in collective bargaining. The bottom line to an effective board's planning is production of an overall model that will initiate, regulate, and evaluate institutional movement commensurate with the priorities and goals they establish (Edwards, 1988).

In November 1960, the teachers of New York City went on strike, and the following year they gained the right to bargain collectively with their local board of education. Since that time, many states have passed laws permitting and regulating collective bargaining (Smith, 1986). How closely should local school boards be involved in contract negotiations? This is a question that more and more boards are asking themselves. Some board members view contract negotiation as central to their board responsibilities, but other board members regard contract negotiations as the responsibility of the superintendent or the chief contract negotiator. The latter boards stay clear of direct negotiations, requiring that the superintendent or chief negotiator give them an update after each session, discussing and approving all proposals, and offering advice on bargaining strategies. McGinnis (1989) agrees with the latter group. She contends that effective boards give the bargaining table a wide birth. She says that like a corporate board of directors, effective school boards limit

their role to setting the policy for bargaining and approving the negotiated settlement (McGinnis, 1989).

Communication. An effective school board has a comprehensive program for communications with its constituencies. This system includes communication with the community, superintendent, board member-to-board member, and all other district organizations to include business and industry. A communication strategy that includes a strong media component helps boards avoid misrepresentation (IEL, 1986).

Effective board members realize that their individual actions reflect on the board as a whole, particularly their relations with other board members. They are motivated only by the desire to serve the community and not by selfish or political motives (AASA Executive Handbook, 1976).

For many years school officials felt little need to consult the community on the question of how the schools should be operated. However, individual board members and local boards now realize input from the community is necessary for their success, and many have developed policies to gain feedback from their communities (AASA Executive Handbook, 1976).

Well-developed community relations programs foster good communications. Effective board members realize that schools are owned by the people. They send their children there to learn, and they pay the bills to keep the schools operating. How they feel, what they believe, and how they act toward the schools, its officers, proposals, and its programs can be summed up as public opinion. Effective board members know something about the nature of public opinion. They realize if they fail to do what the public wants, sharp criticism follows (Wikindred, 1984).

In order for board members to serve their constituents appropriately, they must know what is going on in their system, and realize that the best person to keep them informed is the superintendent. Board/superintendent communications takes a lot of maintenance, but is absolutely necessary for effective school operations. Effective board members stay abreast of education issues. They let their superintendent know they expect to be kept up-to-date on issues of board service and school operations (Lucke, 1989).

Effective boards members have a philosophy that promotes a free-flowing communication system among individual members. They keep one another informed and have ready access to accurate decision-making information

(Banack, 1989). Whenever possible, they work as a unit and not in individual cliques. An open communication system between board members minimizes conflict among them (Wikindred, 1984).

Regular interaction between neighboring school board members and neighboring school boards has proven to be essential to maximizing the effectiveness of local boards and board members. It is the interaction between the local school board and state and national school board associations that provides the necessary communication links to getting the job done (IEL, 1986).

Effective board members understand the role of the media and how they influence public perception. They insist on developing procedures with the local school administration for media contacts and avoid manipulating media attention for personal gains. They realize that media coverage of their schools and school board meetings can be a source of tension and conflict and that the media are doing their job when they closely cover the issues at hand. The coverage includes the conduct of the board and individual board members. Irrespective of the motivation of the media, effective board members are proactive in their relationship with the press and follow established

school board policy and procedures when communicating with the media (IEL, 1986).

Self-assessment. Good conduct is essential for effective board members. The ethical behavior of elected and appointed officials has come under increased scrutiny since the Watergate scandal. Even though school board members do not find themselves faced with dilemmas of this magnitude, at some point during their board careers, most will find themselves in a position in which someone -- a community group, a close friend, even the district superintendents -- will test their scruples or challenge them to compromise their integrity (Freitas, 1989). When this happens, effective board members are able to resist the temptation, because they understand that it is vital that they set examples of the highest possible ethical standards (Bacal, 1986).

What do effective board members do when they are faced with situations that test their ethical character? They follow the law or established board policy and procedure. What if neither the law nor board policy address the specific issues at hand? Every situation has different players and different circumstances, but the process of making ethical decisions is the same no matter what the situation (Freitas, 1989). Effective school board members

realize that unethical conduct creates friction among themselves, therefore, they analyze their decision-making closely (Wikindred, 1984).

Freitas (1989) gives a five-step process that effective board members follow when faced with difficult situations:

1. Get the facts. They review relevant documents and speak to people who are familiar with the situation or issue.

2. Categorize the dilemma. With all the facts at hand, they classify the ethical dilemma into one of the following categories: legal or regulatory issue, board policy issue or other. Dilemmas that fall into the first two categories usually require additional information. For example, they might have to look up the laws or consult past policy manuals. If they need to interpret some legalese, they consult their board attorney.

3. Outline potential responses. They list potential actions they could take. They eliminate those that are illegal or unrealistic.

4. Assess the consequences of each proposal. This step requires them to predict the future; for that reason, any conclusions they reach can have a high degree of probability, but never certainty. Using analogies, looking

at precedents, reviewing past experiences, and relying on a subtle mix of inductive-deductive reasoning will increase the accuracy of their projection.

At this stage, they want to put themselves in the place of others involved.

5. Make a decision and take action. As a final step, they make a rational and defensible decision and announce it to everyone involved in a timely fashion.

Effective board members know that by responding in a thoughtful, methodical way every time their integrity is on the line, they will have a good chance of making sound ethical decisions (Freitas, 1989).

Effective school board members are completely ethical and maintain the highest standards of conduct. To do this, they conduct board business in public -- no private deals, no covert activity, no secret decisions. They are open and trusting in carrying out board responsibilities (Carpenter, 1989).

Selection and evaluation of the superintendent.

Effective school boards establish procedures for selecting and evaluating the superintendent. These responsibilities are among the most important responsibilities that school boards carry out (IEL, 1986). Effective school boards realize that effective superintendents make for an

effective school board (Carpenter, 1989). They know that each board member who participates in this process must have a clear vision of their district's expectations, their district's needs, and the board's desires. They realize that they are under closer public and media scrutiny during the superintendent's selection process than at any other time (IEL, 1986).

After local boards make their selection, they entrust the superintendent to administer the local policies they have developed, and their evaluation is based on the effectiveness of the completed job (Carpenter, 1989). Effective board members see evaluation of their superintendent as a constructive process using specified data (Carpenter, 1989).

The Institute for Educational Leadership (1986) suggested the following series of items that should be part of a board's strategy for selecting and evaluating the superintendent:

- . Use a well defined process for the selection of the new superintendent.
- . Develop a consensus about the desired professional qualities of the superintendent.
- . Review the candidate's experience with previous

superintendents in defining expectations for the new superintendent.

- . Involve the community and staff in defining the criteria for the new superintendent.
- . Consider the essential components of a salary/benefits package when determining superintendent compensation.
- . Conduct a comprehensive formal annual evaluation of the superintendent.
- . Work cooperatively with the superintendent to develop performance objectives consistent with district goals and objectives.
- . Give useful feedback to the superintendent on how he/she is doing.
- . Include issues concerning the board/superintendent relationship in the evaluation instrument.

Effective board members know that if the community is involved in the selection process, it is more likely to agree with their decision. The public wants to see that board members are representing their communities and values fairly (Gallagher, 1984).

Effective board members understand that performance of the superintendent and the board is related to the quality of the board/superintendent relationship, and that two-way assessment of that relationship should be an important

component of the superintendents' evaluation (IEL, 1986). If the data revealed in the evaluation call for changes in the administration, an effective board member has the courage to vote for that change, but in a caring and professional manner (Carpenter, 1989).

Effective board members realize that self-evaluation is good for the soul -- to say nothing about what it can do for their performance (Herman, 1987). At the end of the school year, they are anxious to take an honest look at their successes and failures. They ask important questions. Have individual schools and the system as a whole attain their stated goals? What can be done to reach unrealized goals? What goals should be on next year's agenda? By seeking answers to these questions, they discover where resources can be redirected and where more work is needed (Pratt, 1989).

A well-conceived, well-managed evaluation program can lead to a better education for children, adults and all learners in the school system (AASA, 1980). Regular self-assessment gives a school board and each of its members insights into why it is or is not as effective as it wants to be (IEL, 1986). Effective board members encourage and participate in a system designed to assist each member in assessing their own effectiveness. They realize this is a

starting point for efforts to enhance the effectiveness of their board (Danzberger, 1987). These members solicit input from the superintendent and their communities in developing the assessment instrument. They realize that these self-evaluations may open up serious issues but can help them determine if they are living up to the community's expectations of them (AASA, 1980).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of a board member is measured at election or appointment time, but effective members establish criteria to evaluate his/her effectiveness before that time (AASA, 1980).

School boards are now facing serious challenges to their leadership. More and more questions are being asked about their role and function. As student populations become more diverse and long held tenets of education are questioned, they are forced to grapple with the serious policy and operational issues requiring broad-based consensus and collaboration (Danzberger, 1987).

Effective board members must be cognizant of the fact that they live in a time of unprecedented social change. Schools today are confronted with problems that would have been unimaginable just one generation ago (Shannon, 1990). Board members who are successful in the future will assess the rapid changes that have occurred in this nation,

changes in family, demographics, strengthened teacher's unions, increasing "at-risk" youth and a multitude of societal changes that have occurred as a result of the information age are causing problems that boards are dealing with for the first time.

Successful school board members will realize that appropriate strategies and approaches will have to be developed locally by individual school systems. This is the most likely trend in the future and the most compelling goal that they can seek to achieve. The direction of American education must come from the local level, from the people with the courage to face and make decisions from available choices (Commission on Schooling for the 21st Century, 1984).

If boards of education are to be successful in the future they must see the need for school restructuring, and guide the process carefully. As they retain their traditional preeminence in the development of educational policy, they must come to understand that it is not reasonable or even desirable to expect boards of education to plan the activities for school reform or school restructuring. However, they must realize that those administrators who plan the restructuring effort must understand that it is the past that has given schools their

present structure, and the way they envision the future will shape the new structure that is needed (Schlechty, 1990).

Summary

The review of the literature explored information in books, journals, and studies relevant to school board effectiveness. The purpose was to highlight school boards and school board members' responsibilities and to identify indicators of success as they relate to each responsibility.

The literature traced the governance of education from the time when townspeople handled the business of education, to a group of elected representatives, to the Massachusetts School Ordinance which provided for the appointment of citizens to manage school affairs, to the appointment of a local superintendent to manage the administrative affairs of local schools. While the duties and responsibilities of school boards changed slightly from time to time and are described differently from author to author, one thing remained the same: lay people from local communities are appointed or elected to local boards with the ultimate goal of providing an excellent and equitable education to all the children.

Writers agreed that the major responsibilities of school boards are to develop local educational policy, monitor educational operations and oversee the effective and efficient delivery of educational services. Other responsibilities included: satisfying requirements of state law, planning and goal setting, selecting and evaluating the superintendent, communicating with their constituency, approving budget and allocating resources, curriculum oversight and board and self-evaluation. Given the many responsibilities of boards and their membership, common success indicators were cited in most of the studies. With the exception of references to professional magazines and conferences the literature had little on in-service education for school board members.

Finally, the literature supported the fact that school populations are becoming more diverse and stressed the need for school board members to adjust to social and cultural changes by becoming more professionally competent and more democratic in their decision making, and looking to resolve their problems at the local or district level.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology used in this study. Specifically, it describes the data collection instrument and the administration of the questionnaire, and provides an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research methodology was used in this study.

Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. Its major purposes is to tell what is (Ary, 1972, p. 26).

The purpose of descriptive or survey research is to collect data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject being studied. Descriptive research is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems. Data are usually collected through a questionnaire survey, interviews, or observation. It has no control over what is, and can only measure what already exists (Gay, 1981).

No category of educational research is more widely used than the type variously known as the survey, the narrative 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 (Mouly, 1970, p. 234).

The survey approach is used if the researcher believes that the answer exists somewhere at present. This approach seeks to cast light on current problems by a further description and understanding of current conditions. It seeks to understand the present through a data gathering process which enables the researcher to describe it more fully and adequately than now possible (Fox, 1969).

Survey research refers to a particular type of empirical research. Babbie (1973) has identified three general objectives of survey research.

1. Description. 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. The ability to make explanatory assertions about the population.

3. Exploration. The ability to search for additional possibilities.

This study surveyed a nationwide stratified random sample by means of a mailed questionnaire (Appendix A).

The study was sponsored by The American School Board Journal, published by the National School Board Association, the national professional organization for school board members in the United States.

A survey, according to Fink and Kosecoff (1985), is "a method of collecting information from people about their ideas, feelings, plans, beliefs, and social, educational, and financial background" (p. 13). A survey in the form of a questionnaire has distinct advantages for gathering such data since each respondent receives the same set of questions phrased in exactly the same way. "Questionnaires are, then, supposed to yield more comparable data than do interviews" (Sax, 1979, p. 245).

Among the major advantages of the questionnaire is that it permits wide coverage at a minimum expense both in money and effort. It not only affords wider geographic coverage but it also reaches persons who are difficult to contact. This greater coverage makes for greater validity in the results through promoting the selection of a larger and more representative sample. Particularly when it does not call for a signature or other means of identification, the questionnaire may, because of its greater impersonality, elicit more candid and objective replies (Mouly, 1970, p. 242).

In this study, the researcher chose to use descriptive survey procedures utilizing a questionnaire in order to determine what school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness.

Sample

A nationwide stratified random sample of school board members was identified from the list of subscribers of The American School Board Journal. The technique of stratified random sampling was utilized based on regions of the United States, as identified by The American School Board Journal (Table 1).

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 proportions that they exist in the population (Gay, 1981). The function of stratification is to organize the population into homogeneous subsets and select an appropriate sample from each in order to obtain a greater degree of representativeness and reduce sample error. Stratification by geographical location usually increases representativeness (Babbie, 1973).

The stratified random sample (Table 2) was prepared from the list of subscribers of The American School Board Journal. Superintendents, professors of education, librarians, etc., were deleted from the list of subscribers so that only local school board members were surveyed.

The researcher used 15.5% stratified random sample of the population.

Table 1

Regions of the United States According to National School Board
Association Membership

Region	Subscribers	States
Northeast	5,837	Connecticut Delaware District of Col. Maine Maryland Massachusetts New Hampshire New Jersey New York Pennsylvania Rhode Island Vermont Virgin Is.
Central	7,965	Illinois Indiana Iowa Kentucky Michigan Minnesota Missouri Ohio Wisconsin
Southern	4,113	Alabama Arkansas Florida Georgia Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee Texas Virginia West Virginia
Western	3,106	Colorado Kansas Montana Nebraska New Mexico North Dakota Oklahoma South Dakota Wyoming
Pacific	3,207	Alaska Arizona California Hawaii Idaho Nevada Oregon Utah Washington

Note. N = 24,228

Table 2

Population and Sample by Region

Region	School Board Member Subscribers	15.5% Sample
Northeast	5,837	863
Central	7,965	1,271
Southern	4,113	630
Western	3,106	503
Pacific	3,207	477
Total	24,228	3,744

Instrumentation

The survey form in this study was designed to accomplish two purposes. The first was to collect selected demographic, personal, and opinion information about school board members in this study. The second purpose was to gather data requested by The American School Board Journal but not utilized in this study.

This survey instrument was divided into five parts. Part I (Questions 1-3) gathered demographic information about the school board member's school district. Part II (Questions 4-12) asked for personal information about school board members. Part III (Questions 13-22) sought information about the school board on which the members serve. Part IV (Question 23) asked board members to rank the three most pressing concerns in their school districts. Part V (Questions 24-28) asked board members to rate the importance of several facets of school board responsibilities; rate their knowledge or skills in these facets of school board responsibilities, and to identify methods and sources through which they gain information or training to perform their jobs effectively.

Specifically, Part V of the survey was devised to obtain information to determine what facets of school board

membership do school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness (Research Question 1); what school board members perceived to be their strengths and weaknesses in the essential areas of school board responsibility (Research Question 2) and how school board members gain information or training to become more effective (Research Question 3).

The factors selected for study were derived from a review of the literature and discussions with the members of the researcher's dissertation committee and editors of The American School Board Journal.

Following the development of the questionnaire, chairmen and members of the dissertation committee and editorial staff of The American School Board Journal were asked to review the questionnaire for the following.

1. Were the directions of the questionnaire stated and explained clearly?

2. Were the questions of sufficient interest and appeal to ensure the respondent would be inclined to respond and complete the questionnaire?

3. Were the questions relevant to current educational concerns so as to elicit an accurate and realistic response?

4. Were the questions asked in a way that is not embarrassing to the respondent?

5. Were the questions too restrictive, limited, or narrow in scope?

6. Were the questions designed in a manner which would, when taken as a whole, answer the basic philosophy of the study?

Responses of these reviewing groups were analyzed for possible misinterpretations of any items, and revisions were made where necessary. Particular emphasis was given to clarity of question items and appropriateness of response alternatives to facilitate item analysis.

Collection of Data

A total of 3,744 school board members within the United States was identified and requested to participate in this study. Questionnaires were mailed to each school board member selected for the sample on January 22, 1990. They were accompanied by a cover letter and self-addressed postage-paid return envelopes. They were told that five of the participants who returned the surveys would be eligible to win, by random drawings, several value-packed books. The first returns were received on January 31, 1990 and the

final set on March 16, 1990. No attempt was made to perform a follow-up survey of those who did not respond because of the requirement of The American School Board Journal that anonymity be maintained in studies involving its subscribers.

Responses to mail questionnaire is poor (Fink and Kosecoff, 1985). Previous national studies of school board members reported returns ranging from 23% to 40%. In this study, 25.6% of the surveys were returned.

Method of Analysis

Returned questionnaires were examined for correctness and completeness. Any questionnaires with one or more parts substantially incomplete were discarded. A total of 970 questionnaires was received with two being discarded. The total sample, therefore was 968 surveys.

All data were coded and entered on a computer terminal. The data were analyzed through the use of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) packaged computer routines. All questions from the survey were analyzed using frequency distribution and responses to research question III were analyzed according to cross-tabulation

procedures. Responses to research question IV were analyzed by using binary analysis.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology of this study, the development of the survey instrument, the data collection procedures, and the statistical methods used in analyzing the data.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a description of the response data and the applied statistical techniques. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes characteristics of the respondents to the survey. The second section presents the findings with respect to each research question. The third section presents a summary of the chapter.

Description of the Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 3,774 local school board member subscribers to the American School Board Journal within the United States who were randomly selected and sent a survey. After eight weeks 968 or 25.6% of the surveys were returned.

Demographic Data Relative to the Respondents Region.

The distribution of returned surveys from the sample group by region is reported in Table 3 in relation to data indicating the national distribution of local school districts for the same geographic regions. The responses by region were within 2.0% to 9.7% of the national data.

Table 3

Distribution of Returned Surveys by Region and in Relation
to National Distribution of School Districts

Region	<u>Surveys</u>				<u>School Districts</u>	
	<u>Mailed</u>		<u>Returned</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Northeast	863	21.1	204	23.6	2,968	20.2
Central	1271	37.3	361	28.4	4,475	30.4
Southern	630	17.0	165	26.2	2,547	17.3
Western	503	12.5	121	24.1	2,656	18.1
Pacific	477	11.7	113	23.7	2,051	14.0
No Response			4			
Total	3,774	100.0	968	25.6	14,697	

The greatest differences occurred in the Pacific Region where the responses were 9.7% greater than the national data and in the southern region where the responses were 8.9% greater than the national data. The other three regions varied between 0.6% and 3.4% in the difference between the responses and the actual distribution of school districts in terms of percent by region.

Enrollment. The distribution of returned surveys by enrollment size is reported in Table 4. The enrollment size reported by respondents varied from national data by a range of 3.7% to 33.6% and in inverse relationship to the size of the district. That is, as the size of the district increased, the amount of difference decreased such that the percent of variance between percent of respondents to the survey and the percent of school districts is highest (33.6%) in districts less than 1,000 and the smallest (3.7%) in the districts with enrollments of 25,000 or more. In addition, the direction of the difference is such that there is a greater percent of respondents than percent of school districts for each category of enrollment size exceeding 1,000 and fewer percent respondents than percent school districts in the enrollment size category of less than 1,000.

Table 4

Distribution of Returned Surveys by Enrollment Size and
in Relation to National Distribution of School Districts

Enrollment Size	Surveys		School Districts	
	No. Returned	% Totals	No.	%
Less than 1,000	177	18.3	7,628	51.9
1,000-4,999	493	50.9	5,482	37.3
5,000-9,999	141	14.6	941	6.4
10,000-24,999	97	10.0	470	3.2
25,000 or more	52	5.4	176	1.7
No Response	8	0.8	-	-
Total	968	100.0	14,697	100.0

Community description. The number and percent of responses by community description are reported in Table 5. The largest percent of respondents indicated that their community was best categorized as Suburban with 30.3% of the total. The next largest groups of respondents indicated rural (27.9%) and small town (27.4%) as characterizing their communities. The smallest groups of respondents characterized their communities as Urban (9.3%) and other (3.1%).

Personal Data Relative to Respondents

The distribution of respondents by their reported various personal characteristics are presented in Tables 6 through 10.

Sex of respondents. The number and percent of respondents by sex, as indicated in Table 6, was 584 or 60.3% male and 377 or 38.9% female.

Ethnic designation of respondent. The number and percent of respondents by ethnic designation, as shown in Table 6, indicate that the majority, 905 or 93.5% were White and 28 or 2.9% were Black followed by Hispanic with 13 or 1.3%. Other ethnic groups range from 0.2% to 0.9%.

Table 5

Distribution of Returned Surveys by Community Description

Community Description	Surveys Returned	
	No.	%
Urban	90	9.3
Suburban	293	30.3
Rural	270	27.9
Small Town	265	27.4
Other	30	3.1
No Response	20	2.1
Total	968	100.0

Age of Respondents. As shown in Table 6, the largest group of respondents, 433 or 44.7% of the total, was between 41 and 50 years of age. The second and third largest groups were between 51 and 60 years of age (193 or 19.9%) and between 36 and 40 years of age (154 or 15.9%), 780 or 80.5% of the respondents were between the ages of 36 and 60.

Education level of respondents. As shown in Table 7, the number and percent of respondents by level of education indicated that 887 or 91.6% had completed some education beyond high school graduation with 685 or 70.8% indicating completion of a four year college or an advanced college degree. Only 5 or 0.5% of the board members responding had not completed high school.

Occupations of respondents. The number and percent of respondents by occupation are reported in Table 8 in the same classification used by Hatrick and the American School Board Journal in their 1988 survey of board members. The largest category of respondents, 481 or 49.7%, reported working in professional fields while the fewest 5 or 0.5% reported working in laborer areas. The three categories of professional (481 or 49.7%), homemaker (124 or 12.8%) and business owner (109 or 11.3%) accounted for 73.8% of all respondents while another 9.1% were retired. Seventy-one

Table 6

Distribution of Respondents by Sex, Ethnic Designation and Age

Category	Frequency	Percent
1. Sex		
Male	584	60.3
Female	377	38.9
No Response	7	0.7
Total	968	100.0
2. Ethnic Description		
Black	28	2.9
White	905	93.5
Hispanic	13	1.3
American Indian	9	0.9
Oriental	2	0.2
Other	2	0.2
No Response	9	
Total	968	100.0
3. Age		
25 or less	2	0.2
26-35	59	6.1
36-40	154	15.9
41-50	433	44.7
51-60	193	19.9
Over 60	121	12.5
No Response	6	0.6
Total	968	100.0

Table 7

Distribution of Respondents by Highest Education Attainment

Category	Frequency	Percent
Less than high school graduate	5	0.5
High school graduate	71	7.3
Post-high school training	202	20.9
Four-year college degree	325	33.6
Advanced college degree	360	37.7
Total	968	100.0

Table 8

Distribution of Respondents by Current Occupation

Category	Frequency	Percent
Professional	481	49.7
Business Owner	109	11.3
Clerical	19	2.0
Sales	31	3.2
Skilled Trades	30	3.1
Laborer	5	0.5
Retired	88	9.1
Homemaker	124	12.8
Other	71	7.3
No Response	10	1.0
Total	968	100.0

respondents while another 9.1% were retired. Seventy-one respondents or 7.3% reported "other" for their current occupation.

Family income of respondents. The number and percent of respondents by family income, shown in Table 9, indicates that family income of school board members ranges from less than \$20,000 (18 or 1.9%) to \$150,000 or more (53 or 5.5%). The largest group of respondents, 593 or 61.3%, had family incomes of \$30,000 to \$79,999. Over half of the respondents, 504 or 52.1% reported family incomes of \$59,999 or less while 433 or 44.7% reported family incomes of \$60,000 or more per year.

Marital Status of respondents. The number and percent of school board member who responded re martial are indicated in Table 10. As indicated, 878 or 90.7% were married and 79 or 8.2% were not married.

Status of respondents with regard to having children in public school. As shown in Table 10, the majority of respondents, 568 or 58.7%, had children in public schools. Some 400 or 41.3% indicated that they did not currently have children in public schools.

Status of respondents with regards to whether or not they own or rent their homes. An overwhelming majority of

Table 9

Distribution of Respondents by Family Income

Category	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$20,000	18	1.9
\$20,000-\$29,999	83	8.6
\$30,000-\$39,999	135	13.9
\$40,000-\$49,999	150	15.5
\$50,000-\$59,999	118	12.2
\$60,000-\$69,999	104	10.7
\$70,000-\$79,999	86	8.9
\$80,000-\$89,999	63	6.5
\$90,000-\$99,999	43	4.4
\$100,000-\$149,999	84	8.7
\$150,000 or more	53	5.5
No Response	31	3.2
Total	968	100.0

Table 10

Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status, Whether or Not They Own Their Home, and Whether or Not They Have Children in Public Schools (K-12)

Category	Frequency	Percent
1. Marital Status		
Married	878	90.7
Not Married	79	8.2
No Response	11	1.1
Total	968	100.0
2. Children in Public School		
Have children in public school	568	58.7
Do not have children in public school	400	41.3
Total	968	100.0
3. Own or rent home		
Own Home	902	93.2
Rent Home	52	5.4
No Response	14	1.4
Total	968	100.0

respondents (902 or 93.2%) owned their homes and 52 or 5.4% rented their homes, as indicated in Table 10.

School Board Characteristics Relative to Respondents

Method of selection of school board members. As indicated in Table 11, the overwhelming majority of respondents (904 or 93.4%) were elected to their school boards and 48 or 5.0% were appointed to their school boards.

Size of school board served on by respondents. The size of school boards, as determined by the number of members, ranged from 3 to 15 members, as shown in Table 12. The largest group of school boards were 7 or 8 members (406 or 41.9%) with the second largest group reported as being 5 or 6 members (366 or 37.8%). Thus, 772 or 79.8% of the respondents served on boards that numbered in size from five to eight members with a mean size of 6.6 members.

Length of board service by respondents. As shown in Table 13, respondents indicated that they had served on their boards from less than one year to 34 years. The largest group (682 or 70.5%) had served on their boards for four years or less.

Table 11

Distribution of Respondents by Method of Selection to Board

Category	Frequency	Percent
Elected	904	93.4
Appointed	48	5.0
No Response	16	1.7
Total	968	100.0

Table 12

Size of School Boards on Which Respondents Serve

Size of Board (Number of Members)	Frequency	Percent
3-4	17	1.8
5-6	366	37.8
7-8	406	41.9
9-10	166	17.1
11 or more	13	1.3
Total	968	100.0

Note: n = 968

Range = 3-15 members

Mean = 6.6

SD = 1.7

Table 13

Distribution of Respondents by Length of Board Service

Category	Frequency	Percent
1 year	326	33.7
2 years	144	14.9
3 years	118	12.2
4 years	94	9.7
5+ years	284	29.3
No Response	2	0.2
Total	968	100.0

Note: n = 968

Range = 0-34

Mean = 5.87

SD = 5.17

Findings for Each Research Question

Research Question 1: What facets of school board membership do school members believe to be most essential to their effectiveness?

Board members were asked to rate the importance of each of seventeen facets of school board membership. They were asked to rate facets from 1 to 5 in order of their importance, (1 indicated lowest importance and 5 indicated highest importance.) Item responses were utilized to provide respondents' perceptions of the most important facets of school board membership. In Table 14 those facets as indicated by the respondents are listed in rank-order. Slightly more than one-third, or six of the seventeen facets, received from 84.7% to 91.8% of the highest possible weighted score (i.e., 4840 delineated by multiplying the highest possible score for each response, which is 5 by 968 possible responses). Since the smallest weighted score was 67.1% of the highest possible weighted score, this suggested that board members perceived all of the facets presented for rating to be important. The facet rated highest was that a board member can maintain his or

her focus even amidst criticism and controversy (91.8%). This facet was followed closely by the notion that a board member must abide by a board-established code of ethics (91.1%), and the view that a board member must clearly differentiate between policymaking and administration in statements and actions (90.1%). The other three of the six highest rated facets included: the belief that a board member should encourage citizen involvement and promotion of school-community cooperation (89.3%), the use of established procedures to evaluate the school superintendent (85.3%), and to communicate clearly and regularly with his or her constituency (84.7%).

Only four of the seventeen facets received ratings of less than 80% of the highest possible weighted score. They were: the suggestions that a board member should know state and district graduation requirements (68.2%), have adequate knowledge of school law (67.1%), be able to influence others (73.2%), and be able to understand how to build the school system's annual budget.

Furthermore, board members were asked to suggest any other facets they thought were essential to school board membership. While a number of responses were offered, only three were suggested by more than one

Table 14

Importance of Essential Facets of School Board Membership
in Rank-Order as Indicated by Respondents

Facets	N	% Of Highest Possible Score
1. can maintain his or her focus, even amidst criticism and controversy.	4441	91.8
2. abides by a board-established code of ethics.	4407	91.1
3. clearly differentiates between policymaking and administration in statements and action.	4359	90.1
4. encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community cooperation.	4322	89.3
5. uses established procedures to evaluate the superintendent.	4128	85.3
6. communicates clearly and regularly with his or her constituency.	4100	84.7
7. follows the board's policy for contact with the news media.	4078	84.3
8. has the trust of school district employees.	4077	84.2
9. takes an active part in district-wide planning.	4050	83.7
10. has sufficient knowledge/skills to review and revise policy.	4000	82.6

Table 14 (cont.)

Facets	N	% Of Highest Possible Score
11. evaluates his or her own performance regularly.	3989	82.4
12. understands the school board's role in collective bargaining.	3904	80.7
13. is familiar with district curriculum.	3886	80.3
14. understands how to build the annual budget.	3674	75.9
15. can influence others.	3542	73.2
16. knows state and district graduation requirements.	3299	68.2
17. has adequate knowledge of school law.	3277	67.1

Respondents: n=968

N: Weighted Score

Highest Possible Score: 4840

respondent. These responses included: the ability to work with others (4), the ability to understand the importance of being honest at all times (4), and the willingness to work long hours (7).

Research Question 2: What do school board members believe to be their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets of school board responsibility?

Here, board members were asked to rate each facet of school board membership from 1 to 5 depending on their perceived knowledge or skills in each. (1 indicated lowest amount of knowledge and 5 indicated highest amount of knowledge) Table 15 shows how school board members rated their knowledge or skills in each facet in rank-order. Nine of the seventeen facets received a rating of 80% or more of the highest possible weighted score. Board members rated the notion that members must abide by board-established code of ethics the highest (90.8%). This facet was followed closely by the belief that a board member must clearly differentiate between policymaking and administration in statements and action (87.5%), and the view that a board member should encourage citizen

Table 15

Rank Order of School Board Members Rating of Their Knowledge or Skills in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership

Facets	N	% Of Highest Possible Score
1. abide by board-established code of ethics.	4393	90.8
2. clearly differentiates between policymaking and administration in statements and actions.	4233	87.5
3. encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community cooperation.	4189	86.5
4. can maintain his or her focus, even amidst criticism and controversy.	4049	83.7
5. uses established procedures to evaluate the superintendent.	4045	83.6
6. follows the board's policy for contact with the news media.	4044	83.5
7. has trust of school system employees.	4004	82.7
8. has sufficient knowledge/skills to review and revise policy.	3887	80.3
9. takes an active part in district-wide planning.	3880	80.2
10. is familiar with district curriculum.	3766	77.8

Table 15 (cont.)

Facets	N	% Of Highest Possible Score
11. understands the school board's role in collective bargaining.	3733	77.9
12. can influence others.	3715	76.8
13. communicates clearly and regularly with his or her constituency.	3709	76.6
14. knows state and district graduation requirements.	3620	74.8
15. evaluates his or her own performance regularly.	3608	74.5
16. understands how to build the annual budget.	3559	73.5
17. had adequate knowledge of school law.	3363	69.5

Respondents: n = 968

N: Weighted Score

Highest Possible Score: 4840

involvement and promotion of school-community cooperation (86.5%). The perceptions that a board member must maintain his or her focus, even amidst criticism and controversy (83.7%), use established procedures to evaluate the school superintendent (83.6%), and follow the board's policy for contact with the media (83.5%) were three of the six facets which school board members felt their knowledge and skills were strongest. The four facets that were rated lowest based on school board members' knowledge and skills were: the possession of adequate knowledge of school law (69.5%), the understanding of how to build the school system's annual budget (73.5%), the ability to evaluate a board members own performance regularly (74.5%) and the knowledge of district and state graduation requirements (74.8%).

Table 16 showed a comparison of how school board members rated the importance of the essential facets of school board membership and their perceived knowledge or skills in the essential facets of school board membership. It indicated that nine of the ten facets rated highest for essentiality were also rated highest for school board members' knowledge and skills. The need to communicate clearly and regularly with his or her constituency was the only exception to the first ten highest rated facets. It

Table 16

Comparison of Importance of Essential Facets of School Board Membership and School Board Members' Knowledge or Skills in the Essential Facets

Facets	Importance	Knowledge or Skills
	% of Highest Possible Score	% of Highest Possible Score
1. can maintain his or her focus, even amidst criticism and controversy.	91.8	83.7 (4)
2. abides by a board-established code of ethics.	91.1	90.8 (1)
3. clearly differentiates between policymaking and administration in statements and action.	90.1	87.5 (2)
4. encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community cooperation.	89.3	86.5 (3)
5. uses established procedures to evaluate the Superintendent	85.3	83.6 (5)
6. communicates clearly and regularly with his or her constituency.	84.7	76.6 (13)
7. follows the board's policy for contact with the news media.	84.3	83.5 (6)

Table 16 (cont.)

Facets	Importance	Knowledge or Skills
	% of Highest Possible Score	% of Highest Possible Score
8. has the trust of school district employees.	84.2	82.7 (7)
9. takes an active part in district-wide planning.	83.7	80.2 (9)
10. has sufficient knowledge/skills to review and revise policy.	82.6	80.3 (8)
11. evaluates his or her own performance regularly.	82.4	74.5 (15)
12. understands the school board's role in collective bargaining.	80.7	77.9 (10)
13. is familiar with district curriculum.	80.3	77.8 (11)
14. understands how to build the annual budget	75.9	73.5 (16)
15. can influence others.	73.2	76.8 (12)
16. knows state and district graduation requirements.	68.2	74.8 (14)
17. has adequate knowledge of school law.	67.1	69.5 (17)

Respondents: n = 968

() Rank-order of knowledge or skills

was rated sixth under essentiality (84.7%) and thirteenth under knowledge and skills (76.6%). The importance of each facet was rated higher than what school board members believed their knowledge or skills to be in fourteen of seventeen facets.

Research Question 3: Do these perceptions vary as a consequence of (a) size of school district; (b) type of school district; (c) education of board members or (d) region of country?

The previous two research questions addressed school board members' perceptions of the essentiality of seventeen facets of school board membership. Board members were then asked to rate their knowledge or skills in the same seventeen facets. This research question asked how those perceptions varied when considered in the context of various demographic and personal characteristics. Responses to questions part I and part II of the survey were used to classify the respondents by various demographic and personal characteristics. Cross-tabulation procedures were performed to analyze responses to each of seventeen opinion questions. One-third or six of the facets that received the highest rating from school board

members were compared for variability relative to size of school district, type of school district, and education of board members, and region of country.

The same process was used to determine how respondents perceptions varied in relationship to their knowledge or skills in the six areas rated highest. The six weakest areas that were reported by board members were also analyzed for variability relative to the same demographic and personal characteristics. Calculations for the chi-square statistic and its attendant level of significance at .05 were performed, but because from 55% to 63% of the cells had expected counts less than 5, chi-square was considered an invalid test for this purpose.

Size of school district. The data showed that respondents from different size school districts varied on their opinions of the essential facets of school board membership. As indicated in Table 17, school board members perceptions varied most on the need to establish procedures to evaluate the superintendent (5%). Board members from school systems of 25,000 or more rated this facet lowest (82%), and respondents from 1,000 to 4,999 and 5,000 to 9,999 rated it the highest (87%). Perceptions differed on other individual facets from 1% to 3%.

Table 17

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Size of School District

Category	Essential Facets in Percentages					
Size	MFOCU	MABI	MACT	MCOOP	MPROC	MCOMM
Less than 1,000	92	91	89	90	86	87
1,000-4,999	92	93	92	90	87	85
5,000-9,999	94	92	91	90	87	85
10,000-24,999	93	92	92	91	86	85
25,000 or more	92	90	92	91	82	87

n = 968

Where:

MFOCU = Can maintain focus amidst criticism and controversy

MABI = Abides by board-established code of ethics

MACT = Clearly differentiates between policy and administration

MCOOP = Encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community cooperation

MPROC = Uses established procedures to evaluate Superintendent

MCOMM = Communicates clearly and regularly with constituency

Some differences among different size districts also existed in school board members' perceptions of their knowledge in the essential areas of school board responsibility. Their opinions varied from 1% to 6%. They varied most on their ability to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism and least on their ability to follow board's policy for media contacts (Table 18).

Type of school district. The data showed that respondents from different types of school districts varied on their opinions of the essential facets of school board membership. The responses varied from 2% to 8% (Table 19). The largest difference was noted under the need to use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent. Urban respondents rated this facet highest (90%), and rural respondents rated it the lowest (84%). There were small variations among the other facets.

Some differences by type of district were evident in school board members perceptions of their knowledge in the essential areas identified. Their perceptions varied most on their ability to use established policy to evaluate the superintendent, and their ability to promote citizen involvement (5%). They varied least on their ability to follow board's policy for media contacts (3%). Suburban

Table 18

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by System Size) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Size	KABI	KACT	KCOOP	KFOCU	KPROC	KMEDI
Less than 1,000	92	87	85	84	84	85
1,000-4,999	93	88	88	85	85	86
5,000-9,999	94	91	89	87	88	86
10,000-24,999	93	90	88	88	86	85
25,000 or more	91	90	88	82	88	85

n = 968

Where:

KABI = Abides by board-established code of ethics

KACT = Clearly differentiates between policy and administration

KCOOP = Encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community relations

KFOCU = Can maintain focus amidst criticism and controversy

KMEDI = Follows board's policy for media contacts

MPROC = Uses established procedures to evaluate Superintendent

Table 19

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Type of School District

Category	Essential Facets in Percentages					
District	MFOCU	MABI	MACT	MCOOP	MPROC	MCOMM
Urban	95	91	94	92	90	87
Suburban	93	91	92	89	87	84
Rural	92	92	92	90	84	85
Small Town	93	93	92	90	87	86
Other	91	91	89	91	92	85

n = 968

Table 20

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by District Type) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
District	KABI	KACT	KCOOP	KFOCU	KPROC	KMEDI
Urban	92	90	88	86	88	88
Suburban	94	91	89	87	87	86
Rural	92	88	86	85	86	87
Small Town	93	87	88	83	85	85
Other	90	88	91	86	80	86

n = 968

respondents rated their ability to clearly differentiate between Policy and administration highest (91%), and small towns perceived their knowledge or skills lowest in this area (87%). Suburban respondents also rated their knowledge or skills in their ability to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism highest (87%), and small town rated their knowledge or skills lowest (83%) in this area (Table 20).

Education level. The data revealed that respondents from different educational levels varied in their opinions of the essential facets of school board membership. Responses varied from a low of 3% in the need to differentiate policy from administration to a high of 13% in the need to follow established procedures to evaluate the superintendent. The need to follow established procedures to evaluate the superintendent was rated highest by college graduates and advanced college students (87%), and lowest by respondents with less than high school education (74%). Large differences in opinions were also noted under the necessity to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism (8%), and the need to communicate clearly and regularly with his or her constituency (8%). Respondents at all educational levels thought that the need

Table 21

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Education Level

Category	Essential Facets in Percentages					
Education	MFOCU	MABI	MACT	MCOOP	MPROC	MCOMM
Less than high school	100	93	93	93	74	92
High school graduate	93	92	90	91	84	88
Post high school graduate	93	93	91	91	86	87
Four year graduate	92	92	92	89	87	85
Advanced college	94	90	92	88	87	84

n = 968

to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism was important. Data showed that 100% of respondents with less than high school education gave this facet the highest possible rating (100%). Four year college graduate gave it the lowest (92%). Respondents with less than high school education, also rated the need to communicate clearly and regularly with his or her constituency highest (92%), and respondents with advanced college education rated it the lowest with (84%), (Table 21).

Large differences also were noted in respondents' perceptions of their knowledge or skills by education level (Table 22). The variation in responses to these facets varied from a low of 2% to a high of 14%. The largest variations were noted under board members' perceived ability to use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent. Respondents with less than high school education rated their ability in this area lowest (73%) and post high school graduates rated theirs highest (87%). Large differences in opinions were rated under respondents' ability to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism (9%). Board members with less than high school education rated their ability in this area highest

Table 22

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by Education) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Education	KABI	KACT	KCOOP	KFOCU	KPROC	KMEDI
Less than high school	93	87	87	93	73	84
High school graduate	90	86	86	86	82	88
Post high school graduate	95	89	88	85	87	84
Four year college	93	88	88	84	85	86
Advanced college	92	90	88	86	86	85

n = 968

(93%) and respondents with four year college rated their ability lowest (84%).

Region of Country. Table 23 showed that respondents varied on their opinions of the essential facets of school board membership. The responses varied from 2% in the need to maintain focus amidst criticism and controversy to 9% in the need to abide by board-established code of ethics. Respondents from the Northeast Region rated the latter lowest at 84%, and respondents from the Southern Region rated it highest at 93%.

Larger variations were evident in respondents' perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets of school board membership. Table 24 showed that responses varied from 2% in their ability to abide by board-established policy to 33% under their ability to maintain focus amidst controversy and criticism. Large differences in opinion (31%) were also noted under respondents' ability to differentiate between policy and administration. Respondents from the Northeast Region rated their ability to clearly differentiate between policy and administration lowest at 59%, and respondents from the Pacific Region rated their ability highest at 90%. Respondents from the Central Region rated their ability to

Table 23

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Highest
Rated Facets of School Board Membership by Region of Country

Category	Essential Facets in Percentages					
Region	MFOCU	MABI	MACT	MCOOP	MPROC	MCOMM
Northeast	92	84	91	88	85	83
Central	93	92	92	90	87	84
Southern	93	93	91	93	85	87
Western	91	92	91	89	88	86
Pacific	94	91	91	91	87	84

n = 968

Table 24

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Their Knowledge or Skills (by Region) in the Essential Facets of School Board Membership

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Region	KABI	KACT	KCOOP	KFOCU	KPROC	KMEDI
Northeast	93	59	86	85	89	87
Central	93	88	88	52	85	84
Southern	92	89	89	84	85	86
Western	92	87	86	82	85	85
Pacific	94	90	90	84	88	87

n = 968

focus amidst criticism and controversy lowest at 52%, and respondents from the Northeast Region rated their ability highest at 85%.

Board members' perceived weaknesses in the essential facets of school board responsibility. School board members were asked to rate their knowledge or skills in the seventeen facets of school board responsibility (Table 15). The bottom third or six facets where respondents considered themselves weakest were analyzed for variation across demographic and personal characteristics. Tables 25, 26, 27 and 28 show how respondents' perceptions of their weaknesses varied according to district size, district type, education level of board members, and region of country.

Size of school district. Board Members from school systems from 10,000 or more rated their understanding of how to build the annual budget highest (78%), and board members in school districts less than 1,000 rated it lowest (69%). Board Members knowledge of state and district graduation requirements was lowest in school districts of 1,000 or less and in school districts of 25,000 or more (Table 25).

Type of school district. Large variations were indicated by respondents from different types of school

Table 25

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by District Size

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Size	KOTH	KCOMM	KSTA	KEVA	KBUD	KLAW
Less than 1,000	77	77	73	74	69	68
1,000-4,999	78	77	76	76	75	70
5,000-9,999	78	79	74	78	77	73
10,000-24,999	81	81	78	79	78	71
25,000 or more	78	78	81	74	78	70

n = 968

Where:

KOTH = Can influence others

KCOMM = Communicates clearly and regularly with constituency

KSTA = Knows state and district graduation requirements

KEVA = Evaluates own performance regularly

KBUD = Understands how to build the annual budget

KLAW = Has adequate knowledge of school law

districts relative to their knowledge or skills in the areas that they felt themselves deficient. Perceptions of their knowledge in these lowest rated facets varied from 4% to 10%. Largest differences were noted in board members' knowledge of state and district graduation requirements (10%), and their ability to evaluate their own performance (7%). The largest variation was in board members' ability to evaluate their own performance. Respondents from rural school districts rated themselves lowest (72%), and suburban respondents rated themselves highest (79%) in this area (Table 26).

Education of board members. Extremely large differences were noted in respondents' opinions relative to their knowledge or skills in these lowest rated facets. When data were disaggregated by education level, Board members' perceptions of their ability in these areas varied as much as 28%. Variation was greatest in board members' perception of their knowledge of school law (28%). Perceptions varied by 13% in their ability to communicate clearly and regularly with their constituency, and their ability to evaluate their own performance (Table 27).

Region of Country. Some differences of opinions were noted in respondents' perception of their knowledge and

Table 26

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by District Type

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
District	KOTH	KCOMM	KSTA	KEVA	KBUD	KLAW
Urban	79	82	74	75	75	68
Suburban	80	77	77	79	78	74
Rural	76	77	75	72	73	69
Small Town	77	78	75	77	73	69
Other	76	81	84	78	77	70

n = 968

Table 27

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by Education Level

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Education	KOTH	KCOMM	KSTA	KEVA	KBUD	KLAW
Less than high school	80	89	75	87	67	73
High school graduate	76	85	74	74	71	46
Post high school graduate	75	80	76	78	74	69
Four year college	78	77	76	76	75	68
Advanced college	80	76	76	75	76	74

n = 968

skills in the lowest rated facets. Ratings varied from 3% to 8%. Knowledge of school law received the lowest ratings of 65% from respondents in the Western Region and 69% from respondents from the Southern Region (Table 28).

Research question 4: How do school board members gain information and training to improve their effectiveness?

Respondents were given a list of methods and sources through which school board members gain information and training and asked to indicate whether they were available to them, whether they make use of them, and whether they were helpful to them.

Available. Table 29 is a summary of school board members' responses to methods and sources available to them. Of the sixteen methods and sources presented, 56% were available to at least 50% of the respondents. Sources and methods available in the largest percentage were State School Board Association workshops (92.4%), The American School Board Journal (92.3%), National School Board Association workshops or conventions (87.7%), and new board members orientation sessions (81.8%). The sources and methods available to the fewest number of respondents were

Table 28

Cross Tabulation of Board Members' Responses to Where They Perceive Themselves as Being Weakest in the Essential Facets of School Board Responsibility by Region of Country

Category	Knowledge or Skills in Percentages					
Region	KOTH	KCOMM	KSTA	KEVA	KBUD	KLAW
Northeast	78	76	74	77	79	73
Central	77	78	77	76	71	70
Southern	80	80	77	77	77	69
Western	76	79	76	74	71	65
Pacific	73	84	77	74	79	70

n = 968

Table 29

Respondents Indication of Methods and Sources Available to School Board Members to Gain Information and Training

Source	Available		Not Available		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Local school board workshops or retreats	753	77.8	173	17.9	42	4.3	968	100
State Department of Education workshops	624	64.5	245	25.3	99	10.2	968	100
State School Board Association workshops	894	92.4	21	2.2	53	5.5	968	100
University-sponsored workshops or conferences	406	41.9	442	45.7	120	12.4	968	100
National School Board Association workshops or conventions	849	87.7	61	6.3	58	6.0	968	100
American Association of School Administrators workshops or conventions	557	57.5	270	27.9	141	14.6	968	100
<u>The American School Board Journal</u>	893	92.3	27	2.8	48	5.1	968	100
<u>The Executive Educator</u>	239	24.7	544	56.2	185	19.1	968	100

Table 29 (cont.)

Sources	Available		Not Available		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>School Board News</u>	478	49.4	344	35.5	146	15.1	968	100
<u>Phi Delta Kappan</u>	214	22.1	562	58.1	192	19.8	968	100
<u>Education Week</u>	277	28.6	493	50.9	198	20.5	968	100
State School Board Association Journal	755	78.0	124	12.8	89	9.2	968	100
Training materials developed by your district	485	50.1	357	36.9	126	13.0	968	100
New board member orientation sessions	792	81.8	117	12.1	59	6.1	968	100
Commercially developed materials	413	42.7	368	38.0	187	19.3	968	100
Other	47	4.9	50	5.2	871	90.0	968	100

n = 968

Phi Delta Kappa (22.1%), The Executive Educator (24.7%), and Education Week (28.6%). "Others" had the lowest number of responses. Respondents presented continued formal schooling, consultants, Effective Schools literature and training, and the public library as other training sources.

Make Use. When asked whether they make use of the sources and methods available, they gave responses as summarized in Table 30. The data indicated that respondents did not take full advantage of the materials or sources available to them. Only 31% or 5 of the sources were used by more than 50% of the respondents. Respondents indicated that they used The American School Board Journal (83.9%), State School Board Association workshops (78.3%), State School Board Journal (73.2%), and new board member orientation sessions (71.7%) in the greatest percentages. The lowest used methods and sources indicated were Phi Delta Kappa (11.2%), The Executive Educator (12.3%), American Association of School Administrators workshops or conventions (16.9%) and university sponsored workshops or conferences (16.0%). Combined items in the "others" category were represented by 4.3% of the respondents.

Helpful. Respondents were asked if the methods and sources presented were helpful. Table 31 is a summary of

Table 30

Respondents Indication of Whether They Make Use of the Sources Available to School Board Members

Sources	Make Use		Not Used		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Local school board workshops or retreats	690	71.3	87	9.0	191	19.7	968	100
State Department of Education workshops	392	40.5	310	32.0	266	27.5	968	100
State School Board Association workshops	758	78.3	123	12.7	87	9.0	968	100
University sponsored workshops or conferences	155	16.0	386	39.9	427	44.1	968	100
National School Board Association workshops or conventions	450	46.5	404	41.7	114	11.8	968	100
American Association of School Administrators workshops or conventions	164	16.9	486	50.2	318	32.9	968	100
<u>The American School Board Journal</u>	812	83.9	64	6.6	92	9.5	968	100
<u>The Executive Educator</u>	119	12.3	264	27.3	585	60.4	968	100
<u>School Board News</u>	386	39.9	161	16.6	421	43.5	968	100
<u>Phi Delta Kappan</u>	108	11.2	259	26.8	601	62.1	968	100

Table 30 (cont.)

Sources	Make Use		Not Used		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Education Week</u>	171	17.1	225	23.2	572	59.1	968	100
State School Board Association Journal	709	73.2	68	7.0	191	19.7	968	100
Training materials developed by your district	444	45.9	119	12.3	405	41.8	968	100
New board member orientation session	694	71.7	103	10.6	171	17.7	968	100
Commercially de- veloped materials	302	31.2	212	21.9	454	46.9	968	100
Other	42	4.3	13	1.3	913	94.3	968	100

n = 968

Table 31

Respondents Indication of Whether Sources and Information Available to School Board Members are Helpful

Sources	Helpful		Not Helpful		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Local school board workshops or retreats	697	72.0	33	3.4	238	24.6	968	100
State department of education workshops	393	40.6	118	12.2	457	47.2	968	100
State school board association workshops	725	74.9	44	4.5	199	20.6	968	100
University-sponsored workshops or conferences	177	18.3	137	14.2	654	67.6	968	100
National School Board Association workshops or conferences	444	45.9	104	10.7	420	43.4	968	100
American Association of School Administrators workshops or conferences	183	18.9	135	13.9	650	67.1	968	100
<u>The American School Board Journal</u>	777	80.3	22	2.3	169	17.5	968	100
The Executive Educator	123	12.7	121	12.5	724	74.8	968	100
<u>School Board News</u>	340	35.1	93	9.6	535	55.3	968	100

Table 31 (cont.)

Sources	Helpful		Not Helpful		No Response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Phi Delta Kappan</u>	113	11.7	118	12.2	737	76.1	968	100
<u>Education Week</u>	162	16.7	102	10.5	704	72.7	968	100
State school board association journal	643	66.4	54	5.6	271	28.0	968	100
Training materials developed by your district	437	45.1	62	6.4	469	48.5	968	100
New board members orientation sessions	677	69.9	53	5.5	238	24.6	968	100
Commercially developed materials	280	28.9	108	11.2	580	59.9	968	100
Other	35	3.6	7	0.7	926	95.7	968	100

n = 968

the responses. Respondents who used the sources and methods found most of them helpful. The data indicated that the most helpful sources and methods for training were, The American School Board Journal (80.3%), State School Board Association workshops (74.9%), local school board workshop or retreats (72.0%), and new board member orientation session (69.9%).

American School Board Journal, state school board association workshops, and new board member orientation were cited for high availability, high use, and being most helpful to respondents.

Additionally, school board members were asked if their state required in-service training for board members. The responses indicated that 311 or 32% of the respondents had required state in-service training, 605 or 63% had no required in-service training at state level, and 52 or 5% gave no responses.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present a description of the responses received from school board members who were participants in a national survey. The first section describes the sample, including demographic data relative to the respondents (enrollment of school

systems and community description), personal data relative to respondents (sex, ethnic designation, age, education level, occupation, marital status, and whether children were in public school), and school board characteristics relative to respondents (length of board service, size of school board, and method of selection).

The second section describes the findings for each of the four research questions, which are: "What facets of school board membership do school board members believe to be most essential to their effectiveness?" "What do school board members believe to be their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets of school board responsibility?" "Do these perceptions differ significantly as a consequence of (a) size of school district; (b) type of school district; or (c) education of board member?" "How do school board members gain information and training to improve their effectiveness?"

The third section summarizes the contents of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study that was conducted. The summary includes a review of the purpose of the study, the research questions, a summary of the related literature, the research methodology employed, and conclusions derived from the analysis of the data. Recommendations for further study also are included.

Summary

The primary role of state government is to provide an environment in which its citizens and its economy can flourish. This is a never-ending challenge because of a constantly changing society. The need for a vigorous educational system to a society's health never changes (Governor's Commission on School Performance, 1989). Because the foundation of school governance rests with the local board, it is essential that it rethinks the knowledge that is basic to effectiveness.

Everyone seems to agree that in-service training for school board members is needed, but the essential training that is needed or how it should be undertaken is not clear

(Bryant, 1987). It is clear that much remains to be done on appropriate in-service training for school board members.

This study provided current data on what school board members believe to be essential to their effectiveness, their perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets of a school board member's responsibility, and the training and resources that are available to them. This study also provided organizations with useful information and knowledge necessary to plan in-service activities that could improve school board effectiveness. In order to accomplish these tasks the following major questions were investigated.

Research Questions Restated

1. What facets of school board membership do school board members believe to be most essential to their effectiveness?

2. What do school board members believe to be their strengths and weaknesses in the essential areas of school responsibility?

3. Do these perceptions vary as a consequence of (a) size of school district; (b) type of school district; (c) education of board member; or (d) region of the country?

4. How do school board members gain information and training to improve their effectiveness?

The immediate question that emerged at this juncture, was, how were these major questions to be investigated, or what methodology was plausible for delineating answers to these questions?

Research Methodology

This study utilized descriptive research methodology and survey techniques to gather data from a stratified random sample of school board subscribers regarding their perceptions of the most essential facets of school board membership and their strengths and weaknesses in identified areas of school board responsibility.

A stratified random sample of school board subscribers by state was drawn by American School Board Journal. The list of subscribers was provided the Journal by The National School Board Association. A sample of 3,744 or 15.5% board members were sent surveys. A 25.6% return rate was realized. Return rates by region went from a high of

30% in the Central Region to a low of 14% in the Pacific Region.

The survey instrument used to collect the data was divided into five parts. The first part gathered demographic information about the school board member's school district. The second part asked for personal information about school board member subscribers to The American School Board Journal. The third part sought information about the school board on which the members served. The fourth part asked board members to rank the three most pressing concerns in their school districts. The fifth part asked board members to rate the importance of several facets of school board responsibilities, to rate their knowledge or skills in these facets of school board responsibilities, and to identify methods and sources through which they gain information or training to perform their jobs effectively.

The method of analysis and statistical treatments applied to the data were identified, and all questions from the survey were analyzed. The major findings from this effort are recapitulated below.

Results

The respondents were described by region of the United States, enrollment size of the district, community description, ethnic designation, sex, educational level, occupation, family income, marital status, whether or not they have children in public school, length of board service, size of school board, and method of selection of school board members.

The data produced by the study were organized around the factors describing school board members' perception of the essential facets of school board membership, their strengths and weaknesses in the essential facets and sources of training they receive to improve their effectiveness. These data were analyzed to provide a descriptive summary and to determine differences between the perceptions of board members from various school districts according to size, who were from different type school districts, and from different educational levels.

Board members perceived all the facets of school board membership as being important. One-third of the facets presented to them received from 85% to 92% of the highest possible score of 100%. Only four of the seventeen facets received ratings less than 80% of the highest possible

weighted score. Even though all facets were reported to be of high essentiality to board members, some were thought to be more essential. The six thought to be most essential were: the need for a board member to maintain his or her focus amidst criticism and controversy, the need to abide by a board-established code of ethics, the need to clearly differentiate between policymaking and administration, the need to encourage citizen involvement and promotion of school-community cooperation, the need to use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent, and the need to communicate clearly with their constituency. Respondents rated knowledge of state and district graduation requirements, knowledge of school law, the ability to influence others, and the knowledge to build the annual budget lowest of the seventeen facets presented.

School Board members perceived themselves quite knowledgeable in five of the six areas of school board membership that they selected as most essential. Even though the need to be able to communicate clearly and regularly with their constituency was rated sixth highest in essentiality for school board membership, it ranked thirteenth in respondents' perceived knowledge or skills in this area. Board members believed their knowledge or

skills to be lowest in having adequate knowledge of school law, their understanding of how to build the annual budget, their ability to evaluate their own performance regularly and their knowledge of district and state graduation requirements.

Again, the facets that board members considered to be least essential to their job effectiveness paralleled their notions of their areas of weakness. They believed themselves to be weakest in the areas they reported to be least essential to a school board members' effectiveness.

Board members from small school districts believed that it was more important to follow established board procedures to evaluate the superintendent than those from large districts. Board members from urban school districts felt a more pressing need to follow established board procedures to evaluate the superintendent. Those from districts of 25,000 or more believed it to be of the least importance to follow these established procedures.

Responses from respondents from the various educational levels varied on the need to have established procedures to evaluate the superintendent. This facet was felt to be most essential by college and advanced college respondents and lowest by respondents with less than high school

education. Though some variation by educational level existed in respondents' perceived need to be able to function amidst criticism and controversy, all felt it to be extremely important.

Larger variations in board members' opinions relative to their knowledge or skills in the essential areas of school board membership were noted by region of the country than the other demographic and personal characteristics studied.

Board members reported that more than half of the sources and methods presented in this study were available for their use. They made use of fewer resources than were available to them and found still fewer helpful. They reported The American School Board Journal, state school board association workshops, and new member orientation workshop as being the most available, most used and most helpful in-service sources. A majority of board members reported that their state had no required in-service training.

Conclusion

The findings in this study did generally support the opinions of practitioners and the many studies that were

cited in the literature relative to essential facets of school board membership. However, this study went far beyond a mere statement of the essential facets of school board membership. It provided essentiality of these facets from the school board member's viewpoint. This study also provided information on board members' perceived strengths and weaknesses in these essential areas. Additionally, this study surveyed the resources and in-service training available to board members to improve their effectiveness.

All seventeen facets of school board leadership that were cited in the literature were believed to be essential by at least two-thirds of the board members surveyed. The high overall rating that the facets received suggested that board members believed all facets presented were important to their effectiveness. Therefore, as comparisons are made between this study and studies cited in the literature, it is important to understand that the importance of the facets are discussed in their relationship to each other.

The study done by the Institute of Educational Leadership (1986) described the diversity of our nation's schools in terms of enrollments, budgets, staffs, school plants, etc. While this study supported the description

presented in the IEL report, it went further to provide information on how the various board members' perceptions differed based on demographic characteristics of school districts and personal characteristics of board members.

AASA Report (1984) indicated that the evaluation of the superintendent is essential. AASA data were supported by the data gathered in this report. In this study, the necessity to use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent was ranked fifth of seventeen facets.

Wikindred (1984) and Board Effectiveness Profile (1986) pointed out the obligation and responsibility of board members to communicate with their various constituencies regularly. While this study rated communication with constituency among the top one-third of the facets presented in terms of essentiality, it was ranked among the bottom third of the facets in terms of board members' knowledge or skills to perform this responsibility effectively. This should provide direction for future in-service training.

This study lends support to the findings by IEL (1986) and Bagin (1976) on the importance of maintaining good public relations with the media, and the development and adherence to board policy on media contacts. The

results from this study clearly put media contacts among the most essential facets (84.3 percent). They also felt that they possessed sufficient knowledge and skills to perform this responsibility in an effective manner.

Underwood et al. (1985) reported that money, or the lack of it, is consistently school boards' biggest worry relative to school operation. Bacal (1986) reported that budget responsibility is a critical task that board members must carry out, and Hartley (1990) said that nothing says more about what a local school board considers important than its annual budget. The respondents did not indicate that their understanding of the annual budget was a priority when considered with the other facets presented. In fact, they ranked the need to understand how to build the annual budget fourteenth of the seventeen facets, and ranked their present knowledge in this area sixteenth of seventeen.

IEL (1986) reported that since teaching and learning are ultimate reasons for the existence of boards, curriculum and curricular items must be and must remain a major focus of board members. Ross (1986) reported that board members have the responsibility to make curriculum judgements based on rulings and recommendations of state

governments. Board members in this study, however, did not feel that the need to be familiar with their districts' curriculum was as important as these studies reported. They considered it among the middle third of the facets presented.

Bacal (1988) and IEL (1986) gave strong reasons why board members have the responsibility for developing or having developed an appropriate self-assessment instrument. It was interesting to note that while respondents rated the need to use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent extremely high, they did not feel a similar need to evaluate their own performance regularly.

In the review of the literature, several sources reported that board members should not confuse policy with administration, and that effective boards did not. Ross (1987) said that if they are confused, the results will be poor administration, and Carpenter (1989) said that effective board members do not attempt to administer the policies they establish. Board members in this study gave strong support to those views. Relative to the other essential facets presented, they ranked the need to separate policy from administration among the top third in

terms of essentiality and second in their perceived knowledge or skills to perform the job.

This study added several important dimensions to the topic of effective school board membership. Because it presented what the literature and researchers considered the most important facets of school board membership, it is not surprising that respondents considered all seventeen essential. First, this study asked board members to rank the essential facets of school board membership in priority order based on their perceived notions of essentiality. Then it went further to assess their perceptions of their knowledge and skills on each facet. A comparison of their responses revealed that they perceived themselves to be most knowledgeable on the facets they considered most essential.

While the literature on the availability and usefulness of in-service training for board members is limited, this study surveyed board members for resources available in their school districts and how useful they had been in providing training to improve their effectiveness. The findings indicated that while a number of resources are available, board members made use of a small percentage of

them. An even smaller percent reported that the resources were helpful in improving their skills.

This study surveyed board members' perceptions of school board effectiveness from a national viewpoint. It asked respondents to rate a group of factors relative to school board effectiveness and then asked them to rate their knowledge or skills in those same areas. It indicated that the areas that board members rated highest were the areas where they had adequate knowledge or skills. The areas of school law, budget, curriculum, graduation requirements and collective bargaining were among the lowest rated facets of school board membership. It is interesting to note that these areas appear to be the areas where many local boards hire experts or rely on professionals in the school district to advise or assist them when necessary. There were differences in opinion relative to the essential facets of school board membership and school board members' perceived knowledge or skills in the essential areas. Differences were also noted in relations to the varying personal and demographic characteristics studied. Additionally, this study reported resources available to school board members and information on how useful these resources have been.

In summary, this study provided valuable information on school board effectiveness in terms of facets that are necessary in carrying out board responsibilities, school board members' knowledge or skills in the essential facts of school board membership, and training and resources available to school board members to assist them in performing their jobs effectively.

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are presented to assist organizations and districts in developing more effective ways to strengthen the effectiveness of individual board members and total school board organizations:

(1) The results of this study should be made available to local and state boards to give them an opportunity to view board members' perceptions of school board effectiveness from a national perspective.

(2) Districts could use these findings as a guide to developing board inservice activities in areas where the findings were particularly relevant to their districts (i.e. regions, size, educational level, type of school district).

(3) The process used in this study could be used by school districts as a guide to assist in evaluating or

assessing the methods and sources presently available for training in their districts.

(4) These findings could also be used by state school boards to assist them in determining inservice needs and resources in the various districts in their states.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further study:

Since voters are the individuals who, in most districts, determine who will serve on their school boards, a study might be conducted that surveys voters' perceptions of the essential facets of effective school board membership. The study might be first attempted by region and later expanded nationally. Such a study would provide school districts with vital information necessary to deal more effectively with issues related to public perceptions of school districts and open up communication channels between board members and their constituencies.

All questions in this study were related to what school board members believed to be the essential facets of school board membership. A study might be conducted to assess board members' perceived strengths and weaknesses in

more detail with its specific aim to provide insights on relevant in-service training.

A national study should be done to determine what school superintendents believe to be most essential to school board members' effectiveness. This study should collect data on areas that superintendents consider most important to school board members' effectiveness and superintendents' perceptions of their school board members' knowledge or skills in these areas.

References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razauch, A. (1972). Introduction to research in education. New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston, Inc.
- American Association of School Administrators. (1980). Roles and relationships. Arlington, Va. pp. 3-4.
- American Association of School Administrators: National School Board Association. (1984). Holding effective school board meetings. Arlington, Va. and Alexandria, Va. p. 104.
- Bagin, Don. (1976). PR for school board members. AASA Executive Handbook. p. 5.
- Babbie, E. R. (1973). Survey research methods. California: Wadsworth, Inc.
- Bacal, Eva K. (1987). American school boards: The Positive Power. On Being a School Board Member. National School Board Association. Alexandria, Va.
- Banach, William J. (1989). These eleven traits are the hallmarks of winning school board team. American School Board Journal, p. 23.
- Callahan, R. E. (1975). The american board of education. Mass: Lexington Book, Inc.
- Campbell, Michele. (1990). The board's role in curriculum: 45th Annual ASCD Conference. American School Board Journal, p. 46.
- Campbell, Michele. (1989). Board members needn't be experts to play a vital role in curriculum. American School Board Journal, pp. 30-32.
- Cameron, B., Fortune, J., & Underwood, K. (1988). Politics and power: How you're selected and elected to lead this nation's schools. American School Board Journal, p. 17.
- Carpenter, Don A. (1989). Exemplary board member are made, not born, and here are the makings. American School Board Journal, p. 24.

- Commission on Schooling. (1984). Phi delta kappa commission on school for the 21st century. Phi Delta Kappa. Indiana. p. 2.
- Danzberger, Jacqueline. (1986). Project of local improvement programs, study of local boards of education. Institute of Educational Research, Washington, D.C. p. 6.
- Danzberger, Jacqueline. (1987). The forgotten players on the education change. Phi Delta Kappa, p. 57-59.
- Dexler, Edwin G. (1922). History of education in the United States. New York: The MacMillan Co.
- Dykes, A. R. (1965). School board and the superintendent. Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc.
- Edwards, Marvin. (1988). Setting school board goals: a model for accountability. Educational Horizons, p. 117.
- Fox, David J. (1969). The research process. New York: Holt Rhinehart & Winston, Inc.
- Fink, A., & Rosecoff, J. (1985). How to conduct surveys. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- Freitas, David J. (1989). What to do when scruples are at stake. American School Board Journal, p. 32.
- Gay, R. J. (1981). Educational research. Ohio: Bell & Howell, Co.
- Herman, Jerry J. (1987). Self-evaluation. American School Board Journal, p. 32.
- Hartley, Harry. (1990). Board room bottom line. American School Board Journal, p. 29.

- Herman, Jerry J. (1987). Self-evaluation. American School Board Journal, p. 32.
- Hartley, Harry. (1990). Board room bottom line. American School Board Journal, p. 29.
- Kaywell, Joan P. (1988). Education in the year 2000. Clearing House.
- Knezevich, S. B. (1984). Administration of public education. New York: R. R. Donnelly & Son.
- Lewis, James R. (1987). Re-creating our schools for the 21st century. New York: Wilkerson Publishing Company.
- Lewis, Phyllis. (1989). Your wishes are commands no more. American School Board Journal, p. 27.
- Lueke, Bill. (1989). Fine-tuning keeps board/superintendent relations on track and running smoothly. American School Board Journal, p. 33.
- McGinnis, Iris. (1989). Board members should give the bargaining table a wide berth. American School Board Journal, pp. 22-25.
- McGinnis, Iris. (1989). Query: limit the board's bargaining role. American School Board Journal, p. 44.
- Mouly, C. J. (1970). The science of educational research. New York: Litton.
- National School Board Association. (1986). American school boards: The positive war. Alexandria, Virginia: Author.
- Nolte, Chester M. (1984). How to survive as a school board member? Teach 'em, Inc. & National School Board Association. Alexandria, Va.
- Pratt, Sally B. (1989). School improvement steps for boards. American School Board Journal, pp. 21-23.

- Reecer, Marcia. (1989). Yes boards are under fire, but reports of death are greatly exaggerated. American School Board Journal, pp. 33-34.
- Reecer, Marcia. (1989). If you want to lead the way, its nice to know where you are going. American School Board Journal, pp. 33-34.
- Ross, Robert S. (1987). The role of the local school board. American School Board: the Positive Power. National School Board Association. Alexandria, Va.
- Sax, G. (1979). Foundation of educational research. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Schlechty, P.C. (1990). Schools for the 21st century. San Francisco, California: The Jassey-Bass Education Series.
- Shanker, Al. (1989). Al Shanker wants a hard look at whats befallen schools. American School Board Journal, p. 31.
- Shannon, Thomas. (1990). Local school boards: More vital than ever. National School Board Association, Alexandria, Va.
- Shannon, Thomas & Bavinger, Margaret. (1979). The new board members: a portrait: NSBA Research Project. National School Board Association, Alexandria, Va.
- Shannon, Thomas. (1990). Local school boards: The best form of school governance. School Board News, p. 2-5.
- Smith, Winfield R. (1985). American school boards: The positive power. National School Board Association. Alexandria, Va.
- Underwood, K. E., Fortune, J. C., Cameron, B. H. (1983). Money is your biggest burden. American School Board Journal, p. 21.
- Weil, Nellie C. (1986). The significance of being a school board member. American school board: the positive power. National School Board Association. Alexandria, Va.
- Winkindred, L. & Bagin, D. (1984). The school and the community. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

APPENDIX

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD
JOURNAL

1680 DUKE STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314/(703) 636-6722

Dear Subscriber,

Please take a minute to help your magazine, The American School Board Journal, promote a greater understanding and deeper appreciation of school board service. Help us by completing the enclosed survey. At the same time, you'll be making your views count among other school leaders across North America.

For the last 13 years, The American School Board Journal and Virginia Tech have questioned school board members about their concerns and the special challenges they face.

Now's your chance to stand up and be counted, too.


The survey results, which will be featured in our January 1991 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.

But 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 important 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

P.S. To be eligible to win a five-book treasury of ideas and advice, affix your mailing label to the postage-paid envelope when you mail your survey back. After the surveys are removed, we'll pick 5 envelopes at random. The lucky winners will receive the following value-packed books: Becoming A Better Board Member, School Boards and the Ballot Box, Board Member Planner, Time For Curriculum, and How to Survive as a School Board Member: The Legal Dimension.

1990 NATIONAL SURVEY OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION*Directions:* Please respond with the following information.

- In what state is your school system located? _____
- Describe the approximate size of your school system's enrollment by checking one of the following:
 - _____ Fewer than 1,000
 - _____ 1,000 to 4,999
 - _____ 5,000 to 9,999
 - _____ 10,000 to 24,999
 - _____ 25,000 or more
- Describe the community your school district serves by checking one of the following:
 - _____ Urban
 - _____ Suburban
 - _____ Rural
 - _____ Small town
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
- What is your highest education attainment?
 - _____ Less than high school graduate
 - _____ High school graduate
 - _____ Post high school training
 - _____ Four-year college degree
 - _____ Advanced college degree
- What is your family income?
 - _____ Less than \$20,000
 - _____ \$20,000 to \$29,999
 - _____ \$30,000 to \$39,999
 - _____ \$40,000 to \$49,999
 - _____ \$50,000 to \$59,999
 - _____ \$60,000 to \$69,999
 - _____ \$70,000 to \$79,999
 - _____ \$80,000 to \$89,999
 - _____ \$90,000 to \$99,999
 - _____ \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - _____ \$150,000 or more
- Are you married? _____ Yes _____ No
- How many children do you have in public school (K-12) at this time? _____
- Do you own or rent your home?
 - _____ Own _____ Rent

PERSONAL INFORMATION*Directions:* Please respond with the following information.

- Are you _____ male? _____ female?
- Are you
 - _____ Black
 - _____ White
 - _____ Hispanic
 - _____ Native American
 - _____ Oriental
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
- Age

_____ 25 or less	_____ 41-50
_____ 26-35	_____ 51-60
_____ 36-40	_____ Over 60
- What is your current occupation?
 - _____ Professional/managerial
 - _____ Business owner
 - _____ Clerical
 - _____ Sales
 - _____ Skilled trades
 - _____ Laborer
 - _____ Retired
 - _____ Homemaker
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____

SCHOOL BOARD INFORMATION*Directions:* Please respond with the following information.

- How many years have you served on the school board? _____
- How many terms have you served on the school board?
 - _____ Less than one term
 - _____ One term
 - _____ Two terms
 - _____ Three terms
 - _____ More than three terms
- How many members of your school board are _____ men? _____ women?
- How many members of your school board are
 - _____ Black
 - _____ White
 - _____ Hispanic
 - _____ Native American
 - _____ Oriental
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____

17. In what month is a draft budget first submitted to your board? _____
18. In what month does your board vote to approve or disapprove the final budget? _____
19. Are members of your school board
 _____ elected, _____ appointed?
20. Has your board made final purchasing decisions in any of the following categories in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply.)
- _____ Athletic, gym, playground equipment
 - _____ Audiovisual equipment
 - _____ Building products/services
 - _____ Classroom equipment
 - _____ Communication signal and alarm systems
 - _____ Computer hardware or software
 - _____ Curriculum materials
 - _____ Flooring and floor covering
 - _____ Food service
 - _____ Heating/air conditioning/ventilation
 - _____ Insurance
 - _____ Maintenance
 - _____ Music
 - _____ Transportation
21. Which of the following publications are mailed to you personally? Which ones are passed on to you? Which do you read regularly? (Check all that apply.)

Mailed to me personally	Passed on to me	I read regularly	
_____	_____	_____	NASSP Bulletin
_____	_____	_____	Executive Educator
_____	_____	_____	School Administrator
_____	_____	_____	American School Board Journal
_____	_____	_____	Phi Delta Kappan
_____	_____	_____	Educational Leadership
_____	_____	_____	Principal
_____	_____	_____	American School & University
_____	_____	_____	School and College
_____	_____	_____	School Board News

22. Is a major construction or renovation project planned for your school system during the next 12 months?
 _____ Yes _____ No
- If yes, what is the estimated cost of this construction?
 \$ _____

ISSUES

Directions: Please respond to the following.

23. From the following list, please rank the top three most pressing concerns in your school district. (Place 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
 - _____ Use of drugs
 - _____ Declining enrollment
 - _____ Crime/vandalism
 - _____ Management/leadership
 - _____ Facilities
 - _____ Personnel relations
 - _____ State mandates
 - _____ Curriculum development
 - _____ Largeschools/overcrowding
 - _____ Pupils' lack of interest/truancy
 - _____ Poor curriculum/poor standards
 - _____ Difficulty of getting good teachers
 - _____ Parents' lack of interest
 - _____ Lack of respect for other students/teachers
 - _____ Collective bargaining
 - _____ Other (please specify) _____
-

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER EFFECTIVENESS

Directions: Please respond to the following.

24. Please rate the importance of each of the following facets of school board membership. Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 suggests low importance and 5 suggests high importance. (Circle one.)

<u>An effective school board member:</u>	(low importance)					(high importance)
a. knows state and district graduation requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	
b. is familiar with district curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	
c. communicates clearly and regularly with his or her constituency.	1	2	3	4	5	
d. can influence others.	1	2	3	4	5	
e. uses established procedures to evaluate the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	
f. clearly differentiates between policymaking and administration in statements and actions.	1	2	3	4	5	
g. has adequate knowledge of school law.	1	2	3	4	5	
h. has sufficient knowledge / skills to review and revise policy.	1	2	3	4	5	
i. abides by a board-established code of ethics.	1	2	3	4	5	
j. encourages citizen involvement and promotes school-community cooperation.	1	2	3	4	5	
k. has the trust of school district employees.	1	2	3	4	5	
l. understands the school board's role in collective bargaining.	1	2	3	4	5	
m. can maintain his or her focus, even amidst criticism and controversy.	1	2	3	4	5	
n. takes an active part in districtwide planning.	1	2	3	4	5	
o. understands how to build the annual budget.	1	2	3	4	5	
p. evaluates his or her own performance regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	
q. follows the board's policy for contact with the news media.	1	2	3	4	5	

25. Do you think there are any other important facets of school board membership? If so, what are they?

26. How do you rate your knowledge or skill in the following areas? Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 suggests low and 5 suggests high. (Circle one)

<u>As a board member, I:</u>	(low)					(high)
a. know state and district graduation requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	
b. am familiar with district curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	
c. communicate clearly and regularly with my constituency.	1	2	3	4	5	
d. can influence others.	1	2	3	4	5	
e. use established procedures to evaluate the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	
f. clearly differentiate between policymaking and administration in my statements and actions.	1	2	3	4	5	
g. have adequate knowledge of school law.	1	2	3	4	5	
h. have sufficient knowledge / skills to review and revise policy.	1	2	3	4	5	

	(Low)					(High)				
i. abide by a board-established code of ethics.	1	2	3	4	5					
j. encourage citizen involvement in schools and promote school-community cooperation.	1	2	3	4	5					
k. have the trust of school district employees.	1	2	3	4	5					
l. understand the school board's role in collective bargaining.	1	2	3	4	5					
m. maintain my focus, even amidst criticism and controversy.	1	2	3	4	5					
n. take an active part in districtwide planning.	1	2	3	4	5					
o. understand how to build the annual budget.	1	2	3	4	5					
p. evaluate my own performance regularly.	1	2	3	4	5					
q. follow the board's policy for contact with the news media.	1	2	3	4	5					

27. Here are several methods and sources through which school board members gain information and training. For each entry, circle whether it is available to you, whether you make use of it, and whether it is helpful.

	Available		Make Use		Help	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Local school board workshops or retreats	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
b. State department of education workshops	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
c. State school boards association workshops	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
d. University-sponsored workshops or conferences	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
e. National School Boards Association workshops or conventions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
f. American Association of School Administrators workshops or conventions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
g. <u>The American School Board Journal</u>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
h. <u>The Executive Educator</u>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
i. <u>School Board News</u>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
j. <u>Phi Delta Kappan</u>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
k. <u>Education Week</u>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
l. State school boards association journal	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
m. Training materials developed by your school district	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
n. New board member orientation sessions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
o. Commercially developed materials	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
p. Other (please specify)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

28. Does your state offer required in-serving training for school board members? _____ Yes _____ No

Thank you for your help.

Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to return the survey.

Or mail it to:

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

Vita

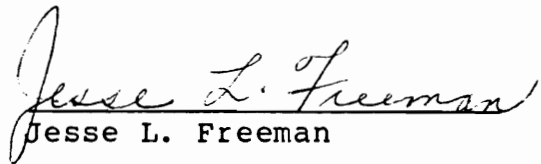
Jesse L. Freeman is currently Assistant Superintendent of schools in Prince Georges County (Maryland) Public Schools. He has the responsibility of giving support and providing supervision to 31 elementary, middle and high school principals.

Mr. Freeman earned his B.A. degree from Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, and his Masters degree from The American University in Washington, D.C. He has done advanced graduate work at the University of Maryland, Howard University, Bradley University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Previously, Mr. Freeman taught biology, earth and physical science in high school and junior high schools.

He also served as vice principal and principal in junior high schools and a middle school in Prince Georges County, Maryland.

Mr. Freeman is a member of many professional, fraternal and social organizations.


Jesse L. Freeman