AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING AND
EVALUATION AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND
SUPERINTENDENTS

by

Patrick Rice

A.A., Southwestern Illinois College, 1997
B. A., Eastern Illinois University, 1999
M.S. Ed., Eastern Illinois University, 2001
Ed. S., Eastern Illinois University, 2003

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree

Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May, 2010

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING AND
EVALUATION AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND
SUPERINTENDENTS

By

Patrick Rice

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Educational Administration and Higher Education

Approved by:

Dr. Kathy Hytten, Chair

Dr. Saran Donahoo

Dr. Judith Green

Dr. Elizabeth Lewin

Dr. John T. Warren

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
February 24, 2010

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

PATRICK L. RICE for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration, presented on February 24, 2010, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING AND EVALUATION AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: DR. KATHY HYTTEN

The majority of school board members and superintendents agree that school board training and evaluation is needed to increase school board effectiveness. Although, most board members and superintendents agree, there is not a consensus regarding the form and scope of board training and evaluation. The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of school board superintendents and school board members regarding school board training and evaluation.

Interviews were conducted from board members and superintendents of two similar sized K-8 school districts located in Southern Illinois. Two focus groups were conducted, once composed of school board members and the other of superintendents from various school districts in Southern Illinois. Board members and superintendents agreed that training and evaluation are important components to the success of school boards. Specifically, many board members--especially newly elected members--fail to properly understand their roles and duties, which often lead to role confusion, challenging board/superintendent collaboration issues, and an increased number of board members with personal agendas. Although training and evaluation were seen as important, there was not a clear consensus regarding the form and scope of board member training and evaluation. Board members were especially concerned about issues related to local

control, time commitment, and training expenses, as well as how trainings will be

conducted.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Freddie A. Banks Jr. Without his support, understanding, patience, and vision for African-Americans such as me to become teachers and administrators, the completion of this work would have been burdensome.

ACKOWLEGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for enabling me to complete my dissertation and my determination to continue to make a difference in the life of someone else. Special thanks to my family who assisted in building me up spiritually and contributing to the person I am today. To the love of my life, my wife Crystal, for her understanding, long suffering and motivation in assisting me with this project and our children Diamond and Emerald. My parents, Wilkie and Laverne Rice and siblings: Wilkie, Tyrone, Daryl, William and Sheila for all of their spiritual, emotional and physical support. To my grandparents: William and Evelyna Rice, and Sterling (RIP) and Millie Sanders for their support and instilling in their offspring to keep God at the center of our life. To my great uncle and aunt: Pastor Eddie and Alma Heard for their support and being a pillow of support for our family. I am appreciative of the entire Rice and Sanders families for their commitment to Christ and their unconditional love and support for each other. Although I may not be able to recall all of my family members who have played an important role in my life, please charge it to my head and not my heart. Nevertheless, I would like to thank the following members of the Sanders family: Johnny Sr. and Jr., Harold (A.K.A., Wee-Dee), Henry (A.K.A., Boo), Winfred, James (A.K.A., Pee-Wee), Vashti, Orlando (RIP), Evelyn, Dwayne, Darlene (Pumpkin), Dana, Vashell, Leslie, Ladonna, Frances, Lamar, Marla, Winfred Jr. (A.K.A. Winky), and Lenora (A.K.A., Nukie). Thanks to the Rice family members: Daryl Jr. (nephew), Andrea and Sameerah (nieces), Clara, Fred, Leeford, Theodore, Larry, Ray, Treta, Trisha, Reba, Rhoda, Sardius, Christopher, Daphne, Rumney, Brittany, Thomas-Ray, Kearston, Sherry, Shonta, Kristie, Regis, Ricky and BreeAnna.

Tonya Jackson, Emeka Jackson, Leo Smith, Danielle Smith, Julie Schneider, Kamia Randolph, Freddie Mosley, Ronnie Hosey, Travionne Nave, Jerome McDonald, Quinn Scott, and Kendrick Perkins (RIP). Special thanks to my two men-tees, Isaiah Stevenson and Justin Joslin. Also, special thanks to Daimon Jones who provided me with guidance and support since McHenry Elementary School. I appreciate you very much!

I wish to express gratitude to those organizations that have assisted me in my career and my development as a public servant: To all of my brothers of the oldest and coldest fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Incorporated, Illinois Principals' Association, Southern Cross Masonic Lodge, Mt. Vernon Rotary and Mt. Vernon Young Professionals. Special thanks to my Alpha mentors Earl Winfrey, Reginald Riddle Young and Minister Phoenix Barnes and my ship of Alpha Phi Alpha: Craig Glover and Nick Powell.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School boards have been under scrutiny due to increased frustration over public schools by teacher unions, superintendents, state boards of education, various legislatures (state and federal) and courts. Problems associated with school boards surfaced in the 1980's with the publication of "A Nation at Risk" which highlighted concerns with public education (Danzberger, 1994; Sewall, 1996). Charter schools, educational benchmarks, testing and state takeovers are proof that frustration with public schools is mounting. Despite these various reforms, reform of school boards has been largely overlooked (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; *U. S. News & World Report*, 1994). Danzberger (1994) pointed out specific problems often associated with school boards, which include:

- School boards fail to provide leadership needed for reform

- School boards micromanage district administrators and other personnel

- School boards fail to work with other social agencies

- School boards lack accountability

- School boards fail to maintain a working relationship with the superintendent

- School boards lack motivation for professional growth

- School boards fail to assess their performance

- School boards fail to obtain ongoing professional training

- School boards fail to effectively govern (p.3)

Anderson and Snyder (1980) and Castallo (2000) suggested that problems exist with school boards due to confusion about the board's role in the areas of goal setting,

community relationship and complaints, personnel matters, negotiations, finance, state and federal expectations, and analyzing their own unique needs. A crucial problem facing school boards is that many micromanage the superintendent, which often leads to superintendent turnover (Glass, 2000). Normally, this occurs when school board members spend a small amount of time on their primary function of implementing policy, but the majority of their time is spent on administrative concerns, which could possibly indicate that the board is unclear about its role and duties (Land, 2002; Todras, 1993). Wagner (1992) reported that school boards should solely operate through policies. As policy boards, the board should implement policies to express their expectations in areas such as curriculum and instruction and allow the superintendent to carry out the day to day operation of those policies (primary role of the superintendent) which may reduce role-confusion between the school board and superintendent. Additionally, school boards hire the superintendent and all other staff members, control the budget, and set policies that often lead to the micromanagement of the superintendent (Hill, 2003).

Due to concerns about school board effectiveness by stakeholders such as teacher unions, superintendents, state boards of education, various legislatures (state and federal) and courts, should board members undergo training and evaluations in order to understand their role and improve the overall effectiveness of the school board? Effective school boards should focus on policy, goals, board assessments, effective budget allocations, and, if freed from political distractions can concentrate on student achievement (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Anderson and Snyder (1980) contended that it is imperative to train board members because the school board provides the overall oversight of the school district by setting the vision, mission and policies. School boards

are ultimately responsible to local, state, and federal governments concerning the overall

oversight of the school districts in which they serve. Some critics acknowledge that more

research is needed to identify effective leadership traits for school board members in

public schools, although most educators agree that utilizing untrained board members is

not a good idea (Jane, 2003). For instance, states such as Illinois have few requirements

for becoming a school board member and these requirements do not include training.

Prospective members must be a U. S. citizen, resident of Illinois, including one year in

the school district prior to the election, a registered voter, at least 18 years of age, and

cannot be either a school trustee or treasurer. If a vacancy occurs on the school board, the

remaining board members must notify the regional superintendent within five days and

fill the vacancy by appointment until the next election. If the school board fails to appoint

a successor within 45 days, the regional superintendent must fill the vacancy by

appointment within 30 days. Nevertheless, if the vacancy occurs with less than 868 days

remaining in the term or less than 88 days prior to the next election, the appointed person

serves the remainder of the term and no election shall be held to fill the vacancy. All

appointed individuals must meet the requirements to become a board member under

Illinois School Code (Braun, 1998).

   Notably, the requirements in Illinois to become a board member do not

necessarily render ineffective board members because skilled citizens who are

knowledgeable about board operations are not prohibited from seeking office. However,

citizens can meet the criteria to become a school board member in Illinois, but lack

knowledge about basic board operations. It may be advantageous for states such as

Illinois to add addendums to the school code mandating training requirements so that it

would be less likely to have any untrained board members governing school districts as noted by Jane (2003).

Primary problems associated with school boards are the lack of training for professional growth, inadequate or non-existent measurement tools to assess their personal performance, and the lack of accountability for board performance (Danzberger, 1994). Could some of these problems be eradicated through the use of school board training and evaluation? Anderson and Snyder (1980) contended that school board members must know what is expected of them and have a means to obtain feedback regarding their function as a school board. School boards will be ineffective if their members do not understand their roles, what is expected of them, and how they can assess their effectiveness. In part, due to the confusion over board roles, universities, research centers, and other organizations have responded to this problem by offering training in areas such as role responsibilities, decision making, problem solving, communication, and planning (Anderson & Snyder, 1980). In addition to training, school boards should conduct honest assessment reviews about their performance to determine if they have achieved their goals (Castallo, 2000).

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

Current research discusses the potential need for school board member training, but the push for mandatory school board member training and compliance measures by states is relatively new. For instance, several legislative house bills (HB) that target mandatory school board training and oversight (HB 4194, HB 1680, HB 1466, and HB 5769) have been introduced in the 95TH Illinois General Assembly during the fiscal years of 2006-07 and 2007-08. I provide a brief summary of these bills below.

HB 4194- establishes the Chicago Casino Development Authority Act and addresses areas such as casino operators, horse racing and river boat gambling. In regard to school boards, the bill incorporates language that would mandate districts who have mismanaged district funds to prepare long term financial plans, requires the removal of board members for not fulfilling their duties, and requires mandatory board member training in the areas of finance, accountability and fiduciary responsibilities (Illinois General Assembly, n.d.). The current status of this bill is session sine die which means that the bill failed to pass during the adjournment of the General Assembly.

HB 5769- amends the school code. This bill authorizes changes in the following areas: require the removal of board members for not fulfilling their role, consider the district's interest in contracts, requires the creation of an educator inspector general, requires a long term financial plan and capital improvement plan submitted in the district's annual budget, and requires mandatory board member training in the areas of finance, accountability and fiduciary responsibilities (Illinois General Assembly, n.d.). **Status-session sine die**

HB 1466- amends the school code. The state board can determine if a district is in academic difficulty if the following apply to a school or district: placed on the early academic warning list, did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three consecutive years, placed on the academic watch list, failed to produce an acceptable school improvement plan following placement on the academic watch or warning list, insufficient number of highly qualified teachers for two consecutive years, and noted concerns of mismanagement in regard to hiring practices. In some instances, the state

board can establish a governing oversight panel which may also control the district's expenditures (Illinois General Assembly, n.d.). **Status-session sine die**

HB 1680- amends the school code. The regional superintendent will have the power to employ a regional educational inspector for school districts who will educate board members concerning their role, conduct audits, and investigate complaints of misconduct. The bill also allows for the following: removing board members for not fulfilling assigned duties; prohibiting a board member from holding other public offices; mandating that districts create and maintain a database of vendors who have contracts with the district; prohibiting a school board member, employee of a district, or general counsel from seeking to do business with the districts, including sales of any articles or purchase of property; and mandating that district contracts over $10,000 must be awarded to the lowest bidder (Illinois General Assembly, n.d). **Status-session sine die**

HB's 4194 and 5769 call for a minimum amount of training for all school board members and HB's 1466 and 1680 require conditional board member training contingent upon the recommendation of an inspector general or state appointed panel. These bills target school board training in the areas of financial oversight, accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities. General Assembly HB's 5769 and 1680 authorize the creation of a regional inspector general who will investigate wrong doings of school board members and their possible removal. General Assembly Bill 1466 calls for the creation of a management oversight panel for districts that have mis-utilized district resources, have engaged in questionable hiring practices, and are in academic difficulty. Presently, none of these bills has passed. However, these bills illustrate the fact that the General Assembly is moving in a direction that requires much more oversight of school boards

than in years past and similar bills may be reintroduced. If future bills similar to those above materialize, what impact, if any, will this have on school board governance? For instance, will there be a decline in citizens electing to serve as school board members? Are these house bills addressing areas of importance cited by school board members and superintendents? Regarding school board evaluation, the scant literature that exists primarily focuses on whether or not school boards engage in evaluations of their performance. Boards that engage in evaluation seldom compare the evaluation to areas in which boards received training. As mentioned, the General Assembly bills in Illinois will require the removal of board members for not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Historically, board members have been removed in other states for not fulfilling their roles. For instance, the governor of the state of Georgia removed four school board members from Clayton County for violating their duties under Georgia state law (Office Portal for the State of Georgia, n.d.). Ultimately, the problem I address in this dissertation is the degree to which school board training and evaluation should be mandatory.

Positionality Statement

Based upon my experiences as an elementary principal and former teacher, I have my suspicions that some school boards which I am knowledgeable of governed primarily to suit the political wishes of their own interests, with student achievement being a secondary concern. Also, I had my suspicions about individuals hired for political reasons and other board decisions that may have been politically driven as well. As stated earlier, there are few requirements to become a board member in Illinois and Illinois board members lack accountability measures compared to teachers, principals and superintendents (Braun, 1998; Petronis et al., 1996; SouthEastern Regional Vision for

Education [SERVE], 1997). Yet at the same time I applaud the many board members who are elected to serve their constituents and seek to govern with the intent of placing students first. However, limited requirements to become a school board member and the lack of accountability measures of school boards result in few safeguards to ensure that board members will have the necessary skills to govern a district especially during this age of accountability such as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Response to Intervention (RTI). Research has shown that some school boards govern more effectively than other school boards. School boards that are more effective typically engage in professional development (Malinksy, 1999). Based upon my experiences as a principal, former teacher and reviewing relevant research, I feel that there is tremendous value in board training and evaluation in regard to school board effectiveness. Nevertheless, I am open minded and interested in learning about what other practitioners think about school board training and evaluation. Based upon these new insights, I am open to the possibility that my viewpoints may change.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of public school superintendents and school board members regarding school board training and evaluation.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of public school superintendents about school board member training and evaluation?

Research Question 2. What are the perceptions of public school board members about school board member training and evaluation?

Research Question 3. To what extent are there meaningful differences in the perceptions of school board members and superintendents concerning school board member training and evaluation?

Significance of the Study

This study will identify the perceptions of board members and superintendents as they relate to board training and evaluation as tools to increase school board effectiveness. Results of this study could provide insights concerning the need for training and evaluation from board members themselves and the superintendents who oversee the day-to-day operations of the district. Agencies such as the Illinois General Assembly, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), National School Boards Association (NSBA), Education Commission of the States (ECS), Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) and individual school board members and administrators can utilize the data generated by the study. These various agencies or individuals can take this data into consideration in determining the need for training and evaluation of board members.

Background

To understand the need for board training, I begin by discussing how school boards have evolved. To understand the background of school boards, I review the past and current governance system of school boards, the legislative influences that impact the school board and the demographics of current school board members. To set the context for my study, I also look at the school board's role and duties, problems facing school boards and issues in school board training and evaluation.

History of School Boards

The current system of school board governance dates back 200 years ago to Massachusetts when local citizens decided that the administration of towns and schools should be separate (Danzberger, 1994). Most state constitutions prior to 1837 made provisions for local education, but the first state board of education and state superintendent were established in Massachusetts in 1837 (Danzberger, 1994). As population increased, districts were supported by local taxes (Land, 2002).

The design of school districts with small school boards and a superintendent to oversee their day to day operations originated in the twentieth century; a model based upon corporate structure at the time (Land, 2002). Local influential citizens led a successful movement in the late 19th century to break ties between school districts, political parties, and officials from local and state government (Kirst, 1994). Federal involvement in public schools surfaced when the Soviets launched Sputnik and there was concern over students' academic achievements (Land, 2002). In more recent years, President George W. Bush's NCLB greatly increased the federal role in education in an effort to boost academic achievement among various populations such as minority and special education subgroups (Land, 2002). As suggested with NCLB, the current governance structure of schools includes oversight from federal and state courts, U. S. Congress, governors and legislatures, with special interest groups and business leaders also providing a strong influence on the governance process (Danzberger, 1994).

School Board Member Demographics

According to Malinsky (1999), the typical school board member is a white male with an age range of 41-50 who is married and has children in public school. In addition,

the typical board member has a college degree and lives in a suburban community.

However, Malinsky (1999) suggested that the demographics of school board members are

slowly changing to reflect the diversity in which we live. Land (2002) reported that 87%

of board members are white, five percent are black, one percent Hispanic and 44% are

female.

School Board Role and Duties

School boards play a key role in an educational organization. According to Speer

(1998), school boards are accountable for providing a learning environment aimed at

maximizing student success and achievement. The National School Boards Association

(NSBA, n.d.) describes four roles of school boards: vision setting, establishing and

maintaining a successful learning atmosphere, demonstrating accountability for student

achievement, and building advocacy for student support. The Washington State School

Directors' Association (2001) listed the following as part of the board's role and

responsibility: planning and policy making, evaluating and hiring the superintendent,

managing financial resources, staffing, evaluating the instructional program, maintaining

school facilities, and advocating for the district. Sell (2006) listed even more school

board roles and responsibilities: administering the schools' budget, forming district

policies, negotiating contracts, purchasing real estate, accepting federal and state lands

and funds, and levying taxes. School boards have many roles but a primary role is

maintaining a learning atmosphere for students.

Problems Facing School Boards

There are a range of issues that confront school boards. Issues include: loss of

power to other organizations, challenging superintendent relationships, lack of

community and media communication, lack of voter and candidate interest, and failure to explain to dissenters why local citizens should belong on the school board (Sell, 2006). Danzberger (1994) explained that school boards commonly appear as dysfunctional because of internal conflicts among school board members, an inability for school boards to set a vision or direction for the school district, and a lack of understanding concerning the board's role. Land (2002) mentioned increased state and federal involvement including involvement from courts, which has led to a confused role about what is expected of school board members. Training programs that teach board members their roles and demonstrate to the community that school board members are trained to do their jobs and are interested in their own performance can significantly reduce problems that normally confront school boards. I will explore the question of whether the training should be mandatory as part of this study.

School board training. Generally, board members are initially unprepared to deal with issues and sometimes lack understanding about what is best for the districts in which they serve. Many board members reported training is a major factor in distinguishing between the most and least productive school boards (Malinsky, 1999). Most school board members and educators overwhelmingly agree, based upon a review of the research literature by Land (2002), that school board training is vital, but there is not a consensus regarding the form and scope of the training. As suggested earlier, my study will be beneficial in addressing not only the need for training, but will incorporate Illinois superintendents and board members thoughts about the form and scope of board trainings in light of legislation recently introduced in the Illinois General Assembly. Information

obtained can be utilized to shape future trainings and assist in building a consensus

between board members and superintendents concerning the need for board training.

 School board evaluation. The school board is involved in many aspects of the

school district. An evaluation tool can be useful to determine the extent to which school

boards are involved in key areas of the National School Boards Association (NSBA)

framework concerning their role. Additionally, evaluation is an important aspect of

assessing the board's accountability to the overall academic achievement of students in a

given community (NSBA, 1998). According to Speer (1998), all stakeholders must be

involved in promoting student achievement and school leaders must develop programs to

hold all stakeholders accountable. Since the community holds the school board

accountable for student achievement, it is logical to assume that school boards should

utilize some form of an assessment tool to monitor whether or not the board is meeting its

goals. Yet, school board evaluation is not consistently undertaken. Without the use of an

assessment tool, I am doubtful that boards can legitimately illustrate that they are

monitoring their progress in promoting student achievement and other areas.

 As stated earlier, there are many reasons why board members should undergo

training and evaluation. For instance, Fridley (2006) reported reasons why school board

members should undergo training and evaluation. He stated the following pertaining to

school boards:

- School boards often micromanage school personnel
- School boards are not participating in professional development
- School boards have not worked well with other inter-agencies
- School boards lack policy oversight

- School boards tend to have poor relationships with the superintendent

- School boards tend to not monitor their effectiveness

- School boards consistently experience problems with their role and duties (Fridley, 2006).

Fridley (2006) stated that school boards need training and evaluation in order to increase their effectiveness as board members. He argues that school boards need to be adequately trained and monitored to determine if they are governing effectively and are role modeling good educational practices.

Common sense thinking suggests that an individual needs training to do his/her job properly. Also, continuous professional development should help to ensure that the individual will expand his/her knowledge base and skills to be more productive at his/her job. Assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of training and performance make obvious sense. Researchers such as Calvert (1999) noted that school board member training will enable board members to understand their roles and duties.

My study will be helpful in providing insights from Illinois school board members concerning how they should be evaluated. This is important because the Illinois General Assembly is contemplating HB 1680 and may reconsider other bills that will authorize the removal of school board members for not fulfilling their duties. However, I wonder what factors would be considered in removing a board member and whether they will be based on some type of evaluation tool. My study can provide a voice for school board members that lawmakers and other educational organizations can take under consideration.

Theoretical Framework

Educational administrators have long understood the correlation that exists between politics and the operation of public schools such as board member elections and their impact on the operation of public schools. For instance, school board turnover often results in administrative changes. For example, these dilemmas are experienced in Washington State. On average, there is a 30% board turnover during each election, with 25% due to political reasons and retirement (Alsbury, 2004). These changes can inhibit the goal setting that shapes the district's improvement plan and damage morale of district administrators and staff. This, in turn, negatively impacts student achievement. Researchers such as Alsbury (2002) conducted a study to determine the impact of community dissatisfaction on board governance using Dissatisfaction Theory. Dissatisfaction Theory entails citizens who have the right to vote, but primarily choose not to except when they are dissatisfied with local events. My premise is that it is important for board members to understand Dissatisfaction Theory to assist in preventing board member turnover, as with the example of Washington State. Board members are citizens from the community elected to govern the affairs of the school on behalf of the community. However, if board members are negligent in their responsibilities, fail to communicate with their constituents, and are perceived as not representing the interests of the community, the likely result is board member turnover. Frequently, the target of community dissatisfaction is school boards, particularly regarding issues such as role confusion between the school board and superintendent (Alsbury, 2002). Board members who are trained and evaluated to fulfill their obligations and monitor their performance may help to limit both dissatisfaction and turnover. School board training and evaluation

can assist the board members in understanding their roles and responsibilities and in knowing how to solicit stakeholder support. Training in these vital areas may alleviate problems associated with community dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction Theory is perhaps the most cited theory in describing school board governance (Alsbury, 2002 & 2004). It is important for school board members to understand Dissatisfaction Theory and take necessary actions such as engaging in school board member training and evaluation to promote effective school board governance. Boards that do not practice good governance can have negative consequences such as board member and superintendent turnover, which hampers the ability of the board to establish and sustain goals to increase student achievement. According to Dissatisfaction Theory, the political cycle of school boards is a long period of political inaction with changes to the governance cycle being the result of a negative event of great magnitude such as local school tax issues. The usual result is that school board members are not re-elected, followed by the dismissal of the superintendent as well (Alsbury, 2002 & 2004). Alsbury (2004) stated that,

> The Dissatisfaction Theory presumes that democracy is a measure of whether citizens have a relatively unencumbered opportunity to participate. Using this definition, a system could be described as democratic and have neither vast participation by citizens nor responsiveness by the school board (p. 359).

As Alsbury (2004) alludes, many citizens do not vote for school board members even though they have the opportunity to participate in a democratic election. Dissatisfaction Theory describes board turnover as yearly school board member membership lists compared to all changes of board membership defeat connected to local

negative events such as tax referendums (Alsbury, 2004). In a nutshell, voters can choose

at any given time to be involved in school board governance (democracy), but many

voters choose not to, except when they become dissatisfied with the school board. When

citizens become dissatisfied, citizens take actions that lead to board defeat and board

member resignations, which in some instances leads to superintendent turnover. This

instability of school boards negatively impacts student achievement (Alsbury, 2002;

Glass, 2000). According to Dissatisfaction Theory, there are many areas in which

citizens can become dissatisfied with the school board. For instance, if the board

approves hiring/firing of certain staff, eliminates sports programs, or closes schools, these

actions can potentially create havoc for a school board. However, if board members were

trained and evaluated in areas of key governance such as how to solicit stakeholder

support, this may alleviate potential problems by being proactive. School board member

turnover may be impacted by a community's perception of limited managerial expertise

exhibited by the school board (Alsbury, 2002).

Fridley (2006) and Alsbury (2002) noted various studies key components that

correlate with school boards and the Dissatisfaction Theory, which include:

1. Defeat of board members, which symbolizes a change in community participation
   in the election process

2. Dismissal and replacement of the superintendent, which reflects a change in the
   values and beliefs of new or current board members and policy changes

3. Succession by an outside superintendent candidate

4. School policy changes

5. Resignations

6. Public Pressure

7. Dissatisfaction with school programs

8. Conflict with other board members

9. Teacher Union disputes

Components such as these that correlate with the Dissatisfaction Theory are signs that the community is unhappy with some aspect of board governance. If boards knew the signs of community dissatisfaction associated with school board governance, school boards will have an opportunity to be proactive in generating community support.

The Illinois General Assembly has proposed various bills related to school boards that would mandate school board member training in areas such as financial oversight, accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities. If board member training and evaluation were mandated in key areas such as these, will it make a difference in decreasing public dissatisfaction due to the fact that the school board should have more expertise in how to solicit stakeholder support? If stakeholders feel a part of the decision making process, will local citizens be more satisfied than dissatisfied with the local school board? To assist in answering these questions and to determine the significance of the Dissatisfaction Theory in my study, I will structure my interview questions to address the key components noted above. Also, in analyzing my data, I will categorize the data into themes to determine any correlations with key components of the Dissatisfaction Theory.

School board training and evaluation may be beneficial in ensuring that the school board listens to and actively involves its stakeholders. School board members must realize that they are serving as board members to represent their constituents' interests. Although many school board members may have good intentions to serve their

constituents, board member training may provide board members with specialized

training in the diplomatic areas such as school board and community relations. Board

evaluations can assist school boards in determining how they are doing and any political

expectations (Fridley, 2006).

According to Alsbury (2004), understanding school board dynamics through the lens of

Dissatisfaction Theory can help school boards to understand the importance of school

board effectiveness and how the community views school boards.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to superintendents and school board members in school

districts in Illinois and perhaps may not be generalizable beyond those districts. Also, I

recognize that a variety of variables may affect effective school board governance.

Training and evaluation are just two of those variables.

Overview of the Study

In chapter 2, I review literature concerning research conducted about school board

training, evaluation, and school board effectiveness in order to provide the background

context for my study. In chapter 3, I describe the methods I used in this study, including

the sample and the collection and treatment of data. In chapter 4, I report my findings

from the study. In chapter 5, I answer my research questions and offer conclusions from

the study and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), in its brochure entitled, "Your School Board + You," (2006) claims that the basic purpose of school boards is to provide local control over education. Most of the state's responsibility over education is delegated to local school boards with state oversight through state laws and regulations. In addition, the IASB (2006) describes a number of characteristics of effective school boards. Characteristics of effective school boards include understanding and respecting their role, keeping the community involved in the educational process, enacting carefully studied polices and efficiently making decisions based upon student and community needs. Good school board members work as team players, engage in professional development, desire to serve children and the community, respect other people's ideas and ensure that skilled professionals administer the schools (IASB, 2006). However, educational critics charge that school board members lack knowledge about student achievement, fail to understand their role, tend to be reactive instead of proactive, lack teamwork, are deficient in communications with constituents, lack effective superintendent relations, lack training and are not accountable for growth (Land, 2002; Rallis & Criscoe, 1993; Sell, 2006;). Also, critics are concerned that training is not typically required to become a board member. According to Braun (1998), the qualifications to be elected as board members are that individuals must be a U.S. citizen, resident of the school district for one year, a registered voter, at least 18 years of age and cannot be a school trustee or treasurer. Most states do not require special preparation to serve in these roles.

Various issues concerning the effective functioning of school boards are addressed by examining research. The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to school boards and school board effectiveness. This research provides the context for my study of the perceptions of school board presidents and superintendents about issues surrounding school boards. This chapter contains three interconnected sections: school board training, school board evaluation and school board effectiveness. There are many components to discuss that are related to school board training, evaluation and effectiveness. Thus, each of these sections also includes several subsections related to issues addressing school board training and performance.

School Board Training

According to Anderson and Snyder (1980), school districts are becoming more and more complex as school officials struggle with role expectations and a vague relationship between local, state, and federal needs. What it takes for school districts to lead, as well as the areas in which leadership needs improvement, are recurring questions in the literature. Some common areas of leadership needed to improve student achievement include: engaging in professional development in the area of community relations; attracting and retaining quality board members; attracting, preparing and retaining quality educators to be superintendents; engaging in superintendent/school board professional development opportunities; and motivating students and teachers to appreciate diversity (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). In light of these issues, in this section of literature review, I look at school board members who represent the largest body of elected "school" officials in the United States who many may be leaders of their communities, but many lack training to prepare them for the complex responsibilities of

school board service (Anderson & Snyder, 1980; Institute for Educational Leadership,

[IEL], 2001).

Need for Training

School board members are often unclear about their roles. IEL (2001) provided a

detailed account of the ambiguity that exists surrounding the role of the school board and

superintendents, which leads to micromanagement and superintendent turnover. The IEL

(2001) reported that the average tenure of superintendents in urban districts fell from 2.7

years in 1997 to 2.3 years in 1999. Jazzar (2005) discussed how micromanagement

erodes the quality of educational programs and increases staff turnovers. Glass (2001)

also reported that the superintendency is in a state of crisis after conducting a study of

superintendents who were judged by their peers to be effective. Glass (2001) reported

that board governance in particular, micromanagement troubled most superintendents.

Todras (1993) reported that school board-superintendents suffered strained relationships

and typically superintendents resign in less than three years (particularly in large cities)

due to role confusion, which leads to micromanagement. To alleviate micromanagement,

Jazzar (2005) suggested that the role of school boards should be clearly defined and that

districts should invest in continuous professional development opportunities. If board

members understood their roles and practiced good governance, school boards could

become more productive (Jazzar, 2005). There are many examples of role confusion. For

instance, there are situations when board members would like to evaluate a teacher if they

have to approve that person for tenure. However, board members are not certified to

conduct evaluations, but administrators are. Role conflicts are likely to occur because

board members are authorized to make important decisions but are not expected to be directly involved in the logistics of their decisions (Castallo, 2000).

School board members acknowledge that they can benefit from a training program. The IASB strongly supports professional development for its members. The IASB writes in its news bulletin entitled the "Illinois School Board" (Dec. 2008) that Illinois school board officials receive more professional development than all other elected officials in the state. According to IASB records, 4,064 board members attended workshop trainings during the fiscal year of 2008. 726 of these members attended three or more events, 327 who are becoming Master Board members and 462 who are Leadership Academy members both of these designations involving advanced training. Although the IASB supports professional development, members at the 2008 Delegate Assembly in Chicago voted to ban any legislation from the Illinois General Assembly requiring mandatory training for board members. The IASB argument against mandatory training is not based upon the value associated with board training, but delegates believe that they should not be singled out for training when it is not imposed on other elected officials. Nevertheless, IASB delegates would like for the IASB to provide board member trainings in the event it is mandated (Illinois School Board, 2008). It is interesting that the IASB does not object to training based upon its value, rather, the IASB's argument is a matter of fairness concerning other elected officials. The IASB have an opportunity to take advantage of training and become pioneers for other elected officials. Nevertheless, is the IASB concerned about more trivial matters than what is best for its constituents?

IEL (2001) reported that superintendents and board members both acknowledged that they lack training to effectively deal with issues that are increasingly being placed on

them. The IEL gathered data based upon four focus groups. The task force was chaired by Rod Paige (former Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education) and Becky Montgomery (Board Chair, St. Paul Public Schools) and members included superintendents, business leaders, and other educators. However, in its study, the IEL (2001) reported that board training is not a pressing issue for school boards, although other fields such as business, technology, military, and the federal civil service consistently keep their senior officials engaged in professional development. In addition, the IEL (2001) suggested professional standards in areas such as instructional leadership and qualifications for leadership positions. It is ironic that many other fields such as the military are consistently undergoing professional development, but not education. How much do we value the educational process if we are not requiring professional development opportunities to the overseers of the educational process?

Nature and Scope of Board Trainings

Most research supports the need for school board training, however, there is not a clear consensus regarding the nature and scope of board trainings. Are there any specific areas that board trainings should primarily focus on? Grissom (2005) discussed key concerns of mandatory training related to the extent of board member training and potential areas the trainings should address. Thomas (1993) suggested that school boards may consider utilizing consultants who can plan and organize trainings centered on the unique learning needs of the school board. Land (2002) contended that training should focus on every aspect of the board member's role, which many board members agree; however, some critics have placed a greater need on team training due to the fact of increased criticisms of the inability to function as a team and to work productivity with

the superintendent. The Capital Area School Development Association School of Education [CASDA], 1990) recommended the following topics be mandatory in a training program for board members: mission and vision of the school district; relationship with the superintendent; contents and use of policy manual and administration regulations; board operations; legal responsibilities; staff, student and community relationships; knowledge of the instructional program; knowledge of business and finance; conflict management; major state and federal educational issues; and board and superintendent evaluation.

Benefits of Board Training

Some educators and legislators believe that school board training should be mandatory in order to increase school board effectiveness. State mandated training could ensure that board members are prepared to serve as board members and are dedicated to increasing student achievement (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Because many educators and legislators are convinced that board training will increase school board effectiveness, many states throughout the U. S. have enacted laws mandating school board member training. States that mandate school board training include Arkansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee and Kentucky. These various states all require training, but each has different requirements. For instance, Arkansas requires board members to annually engage in six hours of professional development concerning the duties of school boards and laws governing the state schools. Providers include the Arkansas School Boards Association, institutions of higher education and the Arkansas Department of Education. In comparison, Kentucky requires twelve hours of training for members who have served 0-3 years, eight hours for members who have served 4-7

years, and four hours for anyone who has served 8 or more years. The content of the

training curriculum consists of basic roles and responsibilities, instructional programs,

district finances, superintendent/staff relations, school law and community relations

(Petronis, Hall, & Pierson, 1996). In Illinois, the Illinois Association of School Boards

[IASB] acknowledges and strongly encourages the need for school board member

training especially in key areas of law, finance and governance. However, despite this

encouragement, there are no existing training requirements for new or current school

board members in Illinois (IASB, n.d.).

In similar research, Calvert (2004) conducted a qualitative study to examine

mandatory training mandates in the U. S. She reviewed 16 states that had training

mandates and reported how their representatives from the state School Boards

Associations in the 16 states perceived the necessity and effectiveness of such statutes.

Calvert (2004) utilized the internet to identify and review states that had such

mandates. Representatives from School Board Associations where states had mandates

were interviewed (open-ended questions) by telephone to analyze their perceptions of the

impact of mandatory training on school board members. Representatives were chosen

from the following states: Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota,

Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South

Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Calvert (2004) interviewed

these representatives based upon their relationships with school board members,

knowledge of school boards and their expertise in providing training to school board

members. Representatives were asked to discuss the positives and negatives of the

statutes, benefits of school board member training, potential changes in the statutes and advice to others who are considering legislation in their states (Calvert, 2004).

Calvert (2004) found that training is essential in order for school board members to understand their role and duties. However, Calvert (2004) also reported that a majority of board members would participate in school board member training even if board member training was not mandatory, but expressed concern with mandatory board member training due to concerns about local control and past unfunded mandates. On the other hand, through required board training, school boards would better understand the scope of their role, increase their skills for school board governance and maximize student achievement (Calvert, 2004). Ultimately, Calvert (2004) argued that there was a significant value associated with school board member training. Anderson and Snyder (1980) also reported findings concerning the benefits of school board member training in Texas. Anderson and Snyder (1980) noted when school board members were trained, they understood their roles better, worked more effectively as a team and engaged in problem solving strategies. At the same time, according to Goodman & Zimmerman (2000), when board members and superintendents are unclear about their roles, frustration occurs. If Calvert's (2004) finding is correct in its premise that it is essential for board members to undergo training to understand their role and duties, should board training be mandatory?

Due to the fact that school board training could have a significant impact on school board members and superintendents, researchers have sought to understand their perspectives regarding training, especially as it relates to daily administration. Grissom (2005) conducted research to determine the perceptions of school board members and

superintendents in Tennessee regarding the effectiveness of the mandatory school board training in which board members participated. Grissom (2005) primarily wanted to determine how the overall training of board members affected their role and duties for future board service. Grissom (2005) wanted to know where there were differences between the perceptions of school board members and superintendents in regard to the potential impact of mandatory training and future board service.

Grissom (2005) utilized a cross-sectional survey that was mailed to the participants. Participants for this survey included 952 school board members overseeing 136 public schools grades K-12 and the superintendents of those districts in Tennessee. School board members who had not received training did not participate. Data for this study were obtained by the Tennessee School Board Association. Grissom (2005) utilized stratified sampling to identify which boards and superintendents to participate in the study. Out of the sample, she chose 20 boards from each of the three grand divisions of the state (East, Middle and West). They were represented proportionately based upon county, city, and size of the district (Grissom, 2005).

Superintendents and school board members favored mandatory school board member training and felt that training had a significant positive impact on their job as board members. Results from this study indicated superintendents and school board members had a positive outlook on mandatory training and saw training as beneficial in their role as board members. Grissom (2005) indicated that additional research is still needed to assess the amount of school board training that should be required and its impact on future board actions.

Grissom reported similar findings of Calvert's (2004) research in that they both found school board member training to be beneficial. Perhaps if more board members experienced a meaningful training program, more and more board members would support board training as suggested by Anderson and Snyder (2001). A key difference between Grissom (2005) and Calvert's (2004) research is that board members in Calvert's (2004) research indicated that if board training was mandated, it could deter board members from engaging in professional development due to issues regarding local control and a fear of unfunded mandates. Personally, I am aware of many school districts that complain that they are asked to do more, but with little or no resources. If Calvert is correct, some board members may choose not to participate simply because they equate board training with unwanted and unreimbursed training expenses.

As mentioned, school board member training is mandated in certain states in the U.S. and board members are required to attend specific training programs. But, how effective are these training programs? Simpson-Lakoskie (2003) conducted a study in regard to training effectiveness, specifically to determine the effectiveness of the mandatory "Team of Eight" training on school board governance. The superintendent and school board members comprise the Team of Eight. According to the Texas Code, the superintendent and school board have to engage in professional development. To collect data from superintendents and school board members, Simpson-Laksoskie (2003) utilized a survey questionnaire. In order that each region of Texas was represented in the study, the author divided the number of school districts in Texas into three groups based upon region and size (small, medium and large). Next, based upon enrollments, Simpson-Laksoskie (2003) randomly mailed the survey to superintendents and board members

from small (<700), medium (700-2,499) and large districts (>2,500) throughout Texas. One hundred forty-eight small districts participated in the study compared to 72 from medium districts and 81 from large districts. Survey questions involved such topics as school district programs, strategic planning, board/superintendent roles, school board effectiveness, the "Team of Eight" training, school board administration and public relations (Simpson-Lakoskie, 2003).

Simpson-Lakoskie (2003) reported that non-participating school districts of the Team of Eight training did not work effectively as a governance team; however, there was only a marginal difference in the performance of districts that received training. Specifically, all school districts scored low in laying aside personal feelings and acting as a unit in reaching board goals. Also, administrative teams that received training were not an indicator of improved superintendent/board relations. A majority of superintendents and board members reported that they had a good working relationship between the school board and the superintendent. However, districts that underwent training were more prepared in strategic planning, curriculum, assessment and staff development.

In similar research, Wilson (2004) reported the value of a variety of board member trainings. Specifically, Wilson examined the effectiveness of board member trainings in Indiana and their impact on school board administration. Wilson surveyed superintendents and school board presidents from each school district throughout Indiana. The survey analyzed board effectiveness based upon six areas: decision making, effective team work, exercising authority, community relations, overall board improvement and strategic planning. According to Wilson, school boards were shown to be more effective when boards were trained by a mixture of ISBE [Indiana State Board of Education] and

local trainings in each surveyed area compared to those boards that received no training or offered separate trainings. School board presidents also considered their boards more effective when dual trainings were completed by their respective boards (Wilson, 2004).

In regards to Simpson-Lakoskie's (2003) research, could the slight differences in superintendent/board relations among the districts that received training be attributed to the quality of the instructional program as noted in research by Lupardus (2006)? Training clearly had some significant positive implications due to the fact that boards were more prepared in planning and assessment for the district. Also, as Wilson (2004) reported, there may be value when board training is coupled with an additional local training session. This may alleviate some of the concerns with who should provide board training and issues of local control as noted by Calvert (2004).

Issues Connected With Mandatory Board Training

Many school board members acknowledge that there is a need for school board training, but there are some concerns with making training mandatory. CASDA (1990) recommended that training is essential, but should not be solely state mandated, but state regulated, citing local control as a major issue. CASDA's (1990) research entailed discussions from nine school board members, ten school administrators and eight teachers over a course of five days. CASDA's panel discussed the roles and responsibilities of school board members and drafted a report concerning their thoughts, observations and suggestions. As an alternative to state mandates, CASDA (1990) recommended that the state, through regulatory guidelines, require each district to develop their own training program that focus on the unique needs of each district. This would ensure local control of board trainings. Additionally, CASDA's panel noted that

districts do not have to create their own training materials as there are effective training materials already available such as Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership. Additionally, to promote professional growth board members can attend and participate in local, state, and national workshops, read educational journals and other professional literature, participate in annual assessments and participate in annual retreats with other board members and the superintendent to address school issues and ways to promote student achievement.

 Yet, the question remains, if each school district develops its own training program, will school boards be up to the task to ensure that their board training will be a meaningful experience? Based on the findings of Calvert's (2004) research, is it contradictory for board members to acknowledge that they may be more apt to pursue board training if such training was not mandatory? Also, to what extent do board members themselves feel there is a need for training? Ultimately most research literature supports the notion that school board training is important, but board members are concerned about professional development expenses and how trainings will be conducted.

There are some potential advantages and disadvantages associated with mandatory training. CASDA's (1990) panel noted that mandatory board training will be beneficial in the following ways: board members will be better informed about the educational process so that they can make knowledgeable decisions, the board will be more organized allowing for effective meetings, the board will be focused on major concerns rather than minor issues, the board will understand their role as policy makers and overseers, there will be increased collaboration between board members and the

superintendent, and consequently, increased effectiveness of new board members. Negative concerns associated with mandatory training included: citizens may be discouraged to seek board positions, required to pay additional costs to pursue professional development, and provided with a cookie cutter approach from different organizations to training which may erode local control (CASDA, 1990). A key question concerning mandatory training is whether it will discourage citizens from seeking board positions. According to CASDA (1990), there has been an increase in attendance from board members participating in professional development workshops and seminars. Also, many districts have in place a training program for board members. For instance, according to research by Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997) effective districts offered orientation workshops for both individuals seeking board service and newly elected members. Trainings were conducted by the superintendent and other board members. On the other hand, the tenure and time commitment required for board members are not motivators for continued service.

If many districts already have in place training programs, should training be consistent among districts? There is increasing evidence that effective districts participate in professional development (Goodman et al., 1997; Land, 2000). Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) noted that citizens actually will be more motivated to serve on the school board if state laws and local policies clarify their roles and responsibilities. Perhaps school board members will more than likely continue to serve as board members if the majority of their time was spent on developing goals and policies rather than dealing with day to day operations of the district such as personnel issues and textbook adoptions, which some state laws require board members to participate in. To alleviate

this problem, Goodman and Zimmerman (1997) recommend that state law should mandate that the role of board members is to hire and oversee the superintendent who in turn is responsible for personnel and other administrative matters.

Quality of the Training Content and Agency

In exploring the quality of school board training, Lupardus (2006) examined how Missouri school board members perceived mandatory school board member training and its impact upon daily school board administration. School board governance areas studied included board operations, board relationships, school law, goal setting and school policy.

Lupardus (2006) utilized a mixed method approach to this study (qualitative and quantitative) to compare responses from newly elected Missouri school board members in 2002 who underwent 16 mandated hours of instruction compared to those board members who did not. Likert-type scaled surveys were sent to all beginning school board members elected in 2002. The survey had five sets of questions and each set contained four questions related to the areas of board operations, board relationships, school law, goal setting and student achievement and policy. Three hundred twenty-one (54%) school board members participated in the survey. Data from participants who received the training were reviewed utilizing descriptive statistics and a series of one-way analyses of variance. Qualitative data involved interviews and short responses from the surveys (Lupardus, 2006).

Lupardus's (2006) data revealed a significant difference between the perceptions of school board members who had received training compared to those who had not received training regarding school board administration in the areas of board operations,

board relationships and policy. There were no significant findings in the areas of school law and goal setting. Lupardus reported differences between board members who received training from the Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE) and the Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA). Perceptions of board members trained by MARE were similar to board members who had not received training. Nevertheless, based upon the her interviews, she discovered that board members who received training believed in proper protocol, effective superintendent relations, and setting the vision and mission for the school in terms of student achievement and team-work (Lupardus, 2006).

As stated, Lupardus (2006) reported that there was a significant difference in the two training programs to the extent that one was statistically similar to not receiving training at all. If Lupardus findings are correct, the quality of the training program should be explored more fully. For instance, in a study by the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE,1997) researchers reported how a well-planned basic course for board members in Mississippi had positive impacts in helping the board understand their role and duties, increasing teamwork, and increasing desire for evaluation of their performance. Who should be responsible for providing training and what factors will determine the quality of the training program? The IEL (2001) suggested that school boards work closely with colleges, universities, associations, state departments of education, and businesses who are familiar with professional development. In addition, the IEL (2001) suggested veteran board member provide trainings as well. Concerning the training process, Land (2002) noted that superintendents are usually a primary source, but board members may prefer other approaches such as learning on the job and

independent readings. When training is mandated, state boards of education are utilized most often.

In another study of school board training, Payne (1994) reviewed and compared the responses of school board members and superintendents pertaining to the training content and training agency regarding the impact on board service. Payne (1994) mailed a questionnaire to all school board members and 136 superintendents of K-12 public schools in Tennessee. Board members who did not receive the mandated training did not to participate. Board members and superintendents were asked to rate the content areas, training agencies, applicability, and physical conditions of each training Academy. In this study, "Academy" represented the title of the targeted training areas which are: finance, planning, orientation, law, relations, community and policy. Payne (1994) utilized the *Directory of Public Schools* published by the State Department of Education to identify the selected survey population. Two surveys were utilized for this study; one survey for superintendents and one for board members, although both surveys solicited the same demographic data. There was a return rate of 73.2% (702) for school board members and a return rate for superintendents of 99.3% (135). Payne (1994) revealed a significant difference among board members and superintendents in the areas of orientation, law, relations, community and policy academies. Board member rated trainings in these areas higher than superintendents. Other findings included: board members valued the trainings more so than superintendents and board members generally favored the orientation academy as more valuable compared to superintendents who favored the law academy (Payne, 1994).

As previously stated, for training for board members to be effective, the training program itself must be effective as well (Lupardus, 2006). Should the public waste school board member's time on something that is not effective, especially since some board members cite lack of time for participating in professional development as a challenge (Land, 2002)? As an alternative, IEL (2001) suggested that trainings be conducted by colleges, universities, associations, state departments of education, and businesses who are familiar with professional development and possibly veteran board members who may provide trainings as well. More importantly, training programs should be evaluated to measure their quality and effectiveness (IEL, 2001). Who should evaluate these programs? If different organizations conduct trainings, who should bear ultimate responsibility for overseeing the quality of these programs? The 38th Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll provides some insight concerning this dilemma. According to its poll, there is a public trend that increasingly wants the state to be more involved in educational matters (Rose & Gallup, 2006).

Demographics and Board Training

Another study about mandatory training was conducted by Petronis, J., Hall, R., & Pierson, M., (1996). The researchers analyzed Illinois superintendent's views about mandatory training of school board members. This study replicated a national survey conducted in 1990 when six states—Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas were found to require board training.

In Illinois, school administrators (superintendents and principals) are required to attend an Administrator Academy for training principals how to evaluate teachers and superintendents how to evaluate principals to determine their effectiveness. However,

Petronis et al. (1996) noted that district administrators were becoming more accountable as instructional leaders and wondered what level of accountability existed for school board members. For instance, are school board members offered or required to undergo training of how to evaluate the superintendent? Petronis et al. (1996) suggested that school board officials are instructional leaders as well and should be held to similar standards as superintendents and should be knowledgeable in how to evaluate superintendent effectiveness (Petronis et al., 1996).

Petronis et al. (1996) mailed a Likert survey in the fall of 1990 to all Illinois superintendents. Three questions were asked: is there a need for mandatory school board training, will mandatory training negatively influence citizens from seeking a position on the school board and will board training decrease administrator/board member conflicts, because board members would be more knowledgeable about law, finance, and their role? Four hundred ninety seven surveys were utilized to conduct the analysis out of the 967 surveys sent out (Petronis et al., 1996).

Based upon the survey results, 61.5% of superintendents reported that mandatory school board training was necessary for all districts, but especially for smaller districts. 68.5% of superintendents in small districts (>500), 69.9% in small to medium districts (1,000-2,000 students), and 63.2% in large districts (<5,000 students) indicated the greatest desire for mandatory training. On the other hand, the following districts indicated the least desire for mandatory training: 54.5% (501-1000 students); 47.6% (2001-3000 students); and 43.3% (3001-5000 students). Concerning the second question, 57.3% of superintendents (particularly in smaller districts with less than 2000 students) reported that mandatory training would reduce the number of citizens running for the board

compared to those who disagreed 30.6%. Lastly, 47.6% of superintendents felt that training would reduce administrator/board conflicts compared to 35.0% who did not believe this (Petronis et al., 1996).

Petronis et al. (1996) noted that the majority of superintendents favored board training in contrast to Payne's research (1994) which reported that superintendents were less interested in board trainings compared to board members. Nevertheless, researchers from both studies reported support for school board trainings from board members and superintendents. As stated, Petronis et al. (1996) noted that superintendents in smaller districts believed that if board trainings were mandated, it would deter people for running for the school board (Petronis et al., 1996). However, shouldn't steps be taken to ensure that potential board members understand their job descriptions, especially since they will be in charge of the overall governance process? According to SERVE (1997), most board members lack the necessary skills to be board members. Similarly, the National Association of School Boards (NASB) and IASB strongly support training programs for board members. So, if trainings are deemed necessary from state and national school board associations, it appears that there would not be many issues with making trainings mandatory. Nevertheless, there is not a clear consensus as to how trainings should be structured and there is disagreement regarding mandatory trainings. Comparatively, mandatory training programs have been successful in several states and many districts utilize training programs for their board members (CASDA, 1990; Land, 2002). More importantly, will training programs help to limit superintendent/school board conflicts? As noted by Petronis et al. (1996) demographics may be a factor in the need for school board training. Miller (1994) conducted research to determine the need for school board

training and the perceived value based upon demographics. Miller (1994) surveyed one-third (707) of the 2,118 current elected Kansas school board members. Respondents were asked to rate 12 resources and the importance of knowledge generated based upon a four-point scale. Respondents measured professional development in the areas of school board member networks, state departments of education, university education departments, state school board association, National School Boards Association, consultants, superintendent, school personnel, community/district patrons, U. S. Department of Education, journals, and media.

Miller (1994) indicated a significant difference in the use of school board resources and perceptions of importance based upon the demographics of school board members. The demographics included gender, education, family income and school district enrollment. The researcher reported that training was not meeting the needs of all school board members and that board members preferred knowledge that was condensed and general, rather than too detailed and presented more formally (Miller, 1994).

Board members are diverse in terms of their racial and ethnic background, socio-economic status and professional experience. Logically, individual board members may perceive the board role differently (SERVE, 1997). Although board members are diverse, SERVE (1997) indicated that training is still useful and can have a positive impact especially with new board members. In 1992, 60% of all board members had less than three years of board experience and without pre-training, it could take up to 12 months on the job training for a new board member to function effectively. According to SERVE (1997), an introductory basic course had a significant impact in regard to board members understanding their role and responsibilities. In light of this finding, school board

associations in several states provide on-site consulting and training to individual school boards. Thomas (1993) suggested that consultants can be utilized to address specific training needs of school boards and to make training more meaningful.

According to Miller (1994), board members saw value in training, but preferred trainings to be general. If board member training programs were general and condensed, would the quality of the program be at risk? Based upon Lupardus's (2006) research, the quality of the program matters such as in the case of MARE who conducted trainings but no significant improvements were cited, in contrast to board members trained by MSBA.

Voters' Opinions and Need for Board Training

What are registered voters perceptions regarding professional development of school board members, who in many cases elect school board members? Yackera (1999) conducted research to study the perceptions of registered voters in Pennsylvania as they relate to new school board member training and on-going professional development for board members. Yackera's research focused on the following questions: what were the perceptions of registered voters in regard to school systems including school boards, and what areas were voters knowledgeable about concerning the qualifications and duties of board members? Yackera employed descriptive research to ascertain the perspectives of registered voters in Pennsylvania. Yackera was primarily concerned about having selected registered voters offer descriptions regarding current conditions of the public schools.

Yackera (1999) identified five counties to participate in the study. The counties were identified by randomly selecting five out of the 67 total counties. Registered voters in these counties were sent a survey that ascertained their perceptions concerning new

school board member training, on-going professional development for board members as it related to school board effectiveness, quality of public schools, knowledge of board duties and qualifications. A total of 3,078 surveys were mailed with 616 completed surveys returned and utilized for the study.

Yackera reported that 89% of respondents reported that board members should be required to undergo pre-training prior to becoming a board member. In addition, 79% of participants favored on-going professional development as well. In regard to the need for training and the positive impact upon educational quality and board effectiveness, 78.3% and 84.3% overwhelmingly agreed. Fifteen percent felt confident that board members were prepared for board service. But, only 23.5% reported being familiar with school board duties and 31.8% reported being knowledgeable of school board member qualifications (Yackera, 1999).

Summary

Research indicates that superintendents, board members, voters and state associations generally favored training. Benefits of training included decreased role confusion, increased knowledge and skills for effective governance, increased knowledge related to student achievement, a vision for positive superintendent/board relationships and increased team work (Calvert, 2004; CASDA, 1990; Duran, 1996; Hess, 2002; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Goodman et al., 1997; IASB, 2006*;* Lupardus, 2006; Petronis et al., 1996; Simpson-Lakoskie, 2003; Yackera, 1998). CASDA (1990) suggested that training should be divided into three stages for pre- election, post election and current board members. Pre-election training will give citizens considering board service an overview of the duties and responsibilities of a board member. Post election

training will continue orientating new board members prior to them taking their seats, but will be more detailed such as making sure that new board member(s) fully understand their role as a trustee on a governance team. Existing board members should receive continuous training for professional growth, especially in the areas of leadership skills and methods to promote student achievement. Studies such as Lupardus (2006) also indicated that who conducted the board trainings and how the information was presented are also very important in regard to the success of school board trainings.

Some board members expressed concern with mandatory board member training due to concerns about local control and past unfunded mandates (Lupardus, 2006; Miler, 1996; Payne, 1994; Serve, 1997; Wilson, 2002). Superintendents generally favored school board training due to issues such as micromanagement and role confusion. School board governance appeared related to superintendent turnover, particularly in the area of micromanagement (Duran, 1996; Glass, 2001; Grissom, 2005; IEL, 2001; Jazzar, 2005; Land, 2002; Payne, 1994; Petronis et al., 1996; Todras, 1993; Thomas, 1993; Yackera, 1998). Research has not provided a consensus concerning the nature and scope of board trainings, but it may be risky to have untrained lay people in charge of the overall educational process with its ever changing laws and mandates, especially given the fact that this does not occur in other major professions (Thomas, 1993; IEL, 2001).

School Board Evaluation

If superintendents, principals, teachers and students are expected to be held accountable for improving their performance, should we not also hold school boards accountable as well (Petronis et al., 1996; SERVE, 1997)? Without systematic assessment, how can boards ensure that they are meeting the needs of the district? There

are many ways in which a school board can be held accountable. One method in which

school boards can be held accountable is by utilizing an evaluation tool to measure their

performance, which can lead to improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses

(SERVE, 1997). Evaluations can also assist board members in understanding their roles

(CASDA, 1990). CASDA (1990) noted that all of the research participants in its study

agreed that board evaluations should be required. Evaluations can guide the school board

toward professional improvement in the areas of setting and monitoring goals and as a

tool to take decisive action regarding the implementation of goals. As one participant in

the study remarked, "The evaluation process should serve as a road map serves a driver.

It shows the lay of the land and gives alternatives for the best course (CASDA, 1990,

p.14)." In this section of the literature review I look at school boards and evaluations.

Subsections include the prevalence of evaluations, types of evaluation and evaluation

effectiveness.

Prevalence of Evaluations

Sharp, Malone and Walter (2003) conducted a study concerning superintendent

and school board evaluations. The researchers surveyed superintendents from Indiana,

Illinois and Texas regarding evaluation processes of the superintendent and school board.

One hundred eighty eight surveys were collected from superintendents in these states. To

ensure that superintendents in these states had an equal chance of participating in the

study, the researchers sent surveys to a random sample of 100 superintendents in the

three states. Participants were identified by databases from state departments of education

and professional organizations. Additional surveys were sent to 24 members of a study

council organized by one of the researchers. The data were entered and processed

anonymously and reported in aggregate form so that participants could not be identified. The return rate was as follows: 47% in Illinois, 63% in Indiana and 63% in Texas (overall return rate = 58%).

Sharp et al. (2003) reported that 83.5% of superintendents reported that their boards gave them a written evaluation (75.6% in Indiana, 83.0% in Illinois, and 93.7% in Texas) compared to 13.0% that gave verbal evaluations. Overall, 77.5% of superintendents stated that their evaluation was conducted annually. However, Texas was the only state out of the three where state legislation requires school boards to evaluate their superintendents; board members in their state were knowledgeable of the legislation. The researchers indicated that 13.8% of superintendents reported that their board evaluated itself formally every year compared to 21.3% that reported that their boards evaluated themselves, but did not do so on an annual basis. 22.9% of school boards asked their superintendent to assist in the evaluation process compared to 18.6% that utilized an outside person or agency. Superintendents reported that 4.8% of school boards discussed their evaluations openly. In addition, 25.1% of superintendents felt that board evaluations were on target compared to 13.4% of superintendents who disagreed. Only 21.9% utilized an instrument to evaluate themselves. Twenty-three percent of superintendents encouraged their boards to evaluate their performance, but were unsuccessful (Sharp et al., 2003).

Sharp et al., (2003) identified a huge discrepancy between superintendents and school board evaluations. According to the study, superintendents were more likely to be evaluated than school boards themselves. These results raise the question of how effective school boards will be if boards are not evaluated and possibly lack information

which can help them improve (SERVE, 1997). As Petronis et al. (1996) pointed out, if we are holding other instructional leaders accountable, why are we not doing the same consistently for school board members? Also, why are school boards not participating in evaluations? Perhaps boards do not evaluate themselves due to the fact that they are elected officials. However, the election process fails to provide consistent feedback regarding the board's performance (CASDA, 1990; Glass, 2000). Moreover voters desire board members to be more accountable for professional development (Yackera, 1999). An evaluation process can also help to ensure that boards are meeting standards provided by the National School Boards Association related to vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, learning environment, collaborative partnerships, and on-going professional development (Glass, 2000).

Types of Evaluations

Two types of evaluations of school boards are self-evaluation and external evaluations. Self-evaluations are subjective and are based on board members' perceptions of their own effectiveness, which may or may not accurately reflect reality. The other type of evaluation is conducted by an external person or group and typically utilizes interviews, observations, review of data, focus groups and surveys. Comparatively, boards that utilize external evaluations may be seen as being more accountable then those who only use self-evaluations (Glass, 2000). One of the goals of evaluation is to ensure that goals identified in training are met (Land, 2002). Regarding this goal, evaluations can serve to improve the districts' performance by evaluating goals and the process to implement goals. Due to the fact that school boards are consistently being called into question regarding their performance, evaluations can illustrate the degree of school

board effectiveness. Nevertheless, boards may be apt to evaluate themselves but are reluctant to do so because of sunshine laws, which require all school board sessions to be open to the public with the exception of Illinois (Land, 2002; Goodman and Zimmerman, 2000). In regard to these sunshine laws, board members are primarily concerned about the community's perception of the board. For this reason, some critics contend that safeguards should be in place that protect the speech of board members engaging in board evaluation. Board assessments should be utilized as a tool to enhance board effectiveness and should not be viewed as an opportunity to "get" people (CASDA, 1990). State laws should ensure that school boards have the right to assess their performance in private. Only then can board members be candid about improving their governance and improving student achievement without public scrutiny (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000).

Evaluation Effectiveness

Fridley (2006) conducted a research study to examine possible correlations between school board self evaluation and the Illinois State Department of Education's guide for effectiveness. Specifically, Fridley (2006) wanted to know if Illinois Unit District School Boards completed an annual written evaluation of their effectiveness during the 2003/04 school year. If school boards engaged in self-evaluation, what procedures did boards utilize? Also, what were the differences between school boards that self evaluated and those that did not in regard to the Illinois State Board indicators of effectiveness? Additionally, what were the correlations between school boards that engaged in self-evaluation and the state board of education indicators of effectiveness?

Fridley (2006) identified unit districts in Illinois utilizing the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) website, which totaled 360 districts. Fridley sent surveys to each

district superintendent. Fridley obtained 200 responses out of the 360 sent, which equaled

a 55% return rate. To increase the return rate, Fridley conducted the survey instrument

via phone with superintendents. The total response rate equaled 324 or 90%. The survey

instrument had five items related to board evaluation. The Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to compute the survey data and simple descriptive statistics

were calculated to determine the frequency and percentages of boards that self-evaluate

using *t-tests* set at .05 significance level.

Fridley (2006) reported that most unit districts in Illinois (62%) did not engage in

board evaluations. Out of the remaining districts, one-third engaged in evaluations, but

half did not do so on an annual basis. Thirty nine percent of boards had a policy for board

evaluation, which was similar to other kinds of boards that evaluated their performance.

Larger districts were more apt to self-evaluate compared to smaller districts. But, boards

that self-evaluated had trouble meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). Among the

boards that self-evaluated, their performance focused on areas considered as important by

the Illinois Association of School Boards but not areas considered important by the

Illinois State Board of Education such as dropout rates, truancy rates, graduation rates,

AYP and policy. Lastly, there were no differences in graduation rates between boards

that did or did not evaluate and no differences in regard to districts achieving Bright Star

status (IL schools with high academic performance) or being placed on the Illinois

financial watch list.

Most school boards in Illinois are not engaged in the evaluation process, which

includes school boards that have policies pertaining to board evaluations (Fridley, 2006).

An interesting finding from Fridley's (2006) research is that districts that self-evaluated

were likely not making AYP. This is interesting given the fact that evaluations are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses so that boards can continually improve (SERVE, 1997). One possible reason for the discrepancy was that districts did not focus on areas of effectiveness set by the ISBE. Nevertheless, critics contend that boards must periodically evaluate their performance to be effective and many boards function well as a result of evaluations (Castallo, 2000).

How effective are evaluations utilized by school boards to measure their performance? Martin (1996) conducted a research study to analyze evaluation approaches of Virginia school boards compared to researched based suggestions of effective school board evaluations. The researcher formulated a survey that was composed of two sections. The first section ascertained areas of board evaluations and the second ascertained descriptive information of the areas in which boards practiced board evaluation.

The survey was sent to all 132 superintendents in Virginia. The response rate was 97% or 128 usable surveys to conduct the study. It was reported that most boards in Virginia do not engage in board evaluations and the minority of boards that conduct board evaluations do not utilize researched based best practice (Martin, 1996).

Martin's (1996) research confirmed other research findings in that most boards hold others accountable for their performance, but not their own performance (Petronis et al., 1996; SERVE, 1997). Is this hypocrisy due to the fact that school boards are the ones ultimately responsible for the operations of the district? Should not school boards model what they expect and hold accountable from others? Moreover, boards that self-evaluated were not evaluating themselves regularly nor utilizing research based best practice, which

can have an adverse effect (Land, 2002; Martin; Fridley, 2006). In regard to the few

boards that evaluated their performance, 59% utilized criteria set by the board and the

superintendent, while others utilized criteria from the state or other organizations. But,

how should evaluations be conducted? There is not a clear consensus. Options include

utilizing an outside consultant, evaluating the entire board, and/or evaluating individual

board members. Most importantly, evaluations should be tied to student achievement

(Land, 2002). In research conducted by CASDA (1990), the participants unanimously

agreed that parents, students, teachers, administrators, custodians, secretaries, community

members and others impacted in the educational process should have a voice in board

assessments. Some critics argue, however, that board members should be paid if we want

board members performance to increase. Salaries can also be used as an incentive to hold

board members accountable in areas such as board member training and evaluation (Jane,

2003). Still others contend that board service should be viewed as a reward within itself

(Goodman et al., 1997).

School Board Effectiveness

Many school boards govern differently throughout the country and yield different

results in regard to their performance. Because boards govern differently, it is possible

that some boards govern more effectively than others. Based upon research by the Iowa

Association of School Boards (2000), boards in high achieving districts govern

significantly different than those boards in low performing districts. If this premise is

correct, what are the characteristics/behaviors of these effective school boards and could

some of the characteristics be applied to other school boards? Goodman et al., (1997) list

some of the following characteristics of good school boards: establishing partnerships

with the community to meet the needs of students, ensuring that the budget is fiscally

responsible, ensuring that instructional standards are based on research based proven best

practices, reviewing district policies to make sure that they are aligned to the districts

vision, engaging in on-going professional development, developing a mutual

understanding of the superintendent's job description, operating through board policy and

allowing the superintendent to carry out the day to day operations of the schools,

evaluating (annually) the performance of the school board and superintendent and

abstaining from voting on issues that impact board members either economically or

personally. In this section of the literature review, I explore characteristics of effective

school boards. Subsections of effective school boards include: focus on policy,

superintendent/school board relationships, interagency relationships, fiscal issues,

characteristics of effective/ineffective school boards and the role of politics.

Focus on Policy

School boards should govern primarily through board policies and should not be

involved in the implementation of those policies. Land (2002) contends that effective

school boards focus on policy development and do not engage in the administrative

aspects of implementing policy. Boards that focus on daily administration are usually not

sure about their role and duties (role-confusion). Why do school boards need written

policies? According to Goodman et al. (1997) policies are important in order to inform

the public that the school is running like a business, explain the board's intent, give merit

to board actions, maintain a legal record, establish policies used to evaluate board

performance, foster stability and continuity among new school boards, improve board

efficiency, and assist in clarifying the school board and superintendent role (Goodman et

al., 1997). Lashway (2002) also argued that policies will allow the board to inform the public of its expectations and can be utilized as a tool to improve student achievement in the areas of board governance, academic standards and assessment, learning program, curriculum and instruction, professional benchmarks, and parent/community engagement. According to Goodman et al. (1997) effective school boards shared the following in common: board members and superintendents knew their role and responsibilities, school boards acted as policy makers, the superintendent assisted their school boards in setting goals and developing policy and the superintendent was given support as a CEO to enforce policies.

The relationship between the board and superintendent often is interdependent because the board relies on information from the superintendent to make decisions. This interdependent relationship can create a burden to school boards and administration in trying to separate the board from being overly involved in daily administration (Land, 2002). Wagner (1992) argued that school boards have vague authority and unclear mandates, which inhibits their effectiveness. He suggested states should redefine school boards and make their primary mission to develop, but not implement policy. As policy boards, school boards can set guidelines, establish oversight procedures, define standards of accountability and pre-plan for district needs. On the other hand, school boards are endowed with the authority to develop and implement policy, although research suggests that only 3% focus on policy. Can it be assumed that if 3% are focusing on policy, 97% of school boards are engaged in the administrative aspects of implementing policy, thus they are involved in the administration of the schools? My study will be helpful in

determining if school board training is needed to assist in remedying this potential problem.

Utilizing policies, the board can identify the framework and boundaries that superintendents should administer, which would be the basis of the superintendent's evaluation (Lashway, 2002; Sell, 2006;). Furthermore, to alleviate micromanagement, board policies should provide superintendents with the opportunity to work through a framework of policies and take appropriate steps to meet policy expectations without consent from the school board (Lashway, 2002). This may assist in preventing micromanagement by the school board as reported by Glass (2001). Bracey and Resnick (1988) noted on behalf of the NSBA that one of their missions is to make board members become more effective policy makers. However, it is clear that state involvement may increase if the public perceives that school districts are not improving (Kirst, 1994).

Superintendent/School Board Relationships

Effective school boards have a good relationship with their superintendents. An important task of the school board is to elect the superintendent. However, poor training of board members in regard to understanding their roles can hamper long-term relationships with the superintendent, which leads to superintendent turnover, which impacts student achievement (Land, 2002). Board members cannot be effective if they do not understand their role and duties as board members. Role confusion often leads to superintendent turnover (Glass, 2001). How can we attract new board members if their role is not defined (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000)? Additionally, micromanagement is a key concern of many superintendents. Toch (1994) contended that school boards too often micromanage the superintendent in issues ranging from discipline to bake sales.

According to Goodman et al., (1997) the following areas are frequently micromanaged by school boards either by the entire board or one or two members: personnel issues such as staff appointments, evaluations, promotions and dismissals; board sub-committees; and personal interests of individual members. This micromanagement in turn creates superintendent turnover, such as happens frequently in urban districts where superintendents rotate positions every 2.3 years (Glass, 2001).With chief educational officials rotating every 2.3 years, student achievement is sure to be impacted because superintendent turnover impairs the governing process in districts and inhibits the accomplishment of goals (Danzberger, 1994). Goodman et al., (1997) noted in their study that in districts with a good working relationship between the school board and superintendent, superintendent tenure increased. Superintendents served at least ten or more years, with one district reported having only eight superintendents in the past 114 years. Long tenure was perceived as providing stability and an opportunity to have a positive long term educational improvements. On the other hand, in districts where trust was an issue between the superintendent and school board, superintendent turnover was rapid. For instance, one district reported having eleven superintendents and interim superintendents over the course of 23 years (Goodman et al., 1997).

How can superintendents and school boards work together to increase student achievement? To answer this question, Goodman et al., (1997) suggested that school districts, state legislators and governors, state and national association of school boards and superintendents, colleges and universities, and other organizations focus on three goals: to perform the necessary tasks to provide effective and consistent leadership among school boards and superintendents of schools, to ensure that board members and

superintendents know their respected roles and to ensure that the superintendent and school board members see themselves as members of the same team advocating for high student achievement.

       To enhance superintendent and board relationships, communication is vital. McCloud and McKenzie (1994) noted that board members argue that superintendents sometimes feel that their decisions should not be called into question, yet at the same time, parents expect board members to be problem solvers and hold superintendents personally accountable. Nevertheless, board members and superintendents argue that increased communication, clearly defined roles and responsibilities and trust are essential in building good superintendent/board relationships (McCloud & McKenzie, 1994). To assist in rectifying communication problems, Goodman et al., (1997) noted that in effective districts, the superintendent and school board president conferenced weekly and the school board president in return communicated to other board members regarding key issues. Quality boards in this study focused primarily on establishing district policy, creating an environment where the superintendent could function as the CEO and a community liaison, adopting an annual budget, approving school facilities, evaluating the superintendent on mutually agreed upon criteria, and periodically engaging in board retreats with the superintendent to assess board work and other school issues. Also, effective boards trusted the superintendent and worked collaboratively. Lastly, superintendents in quality districts were perceived as leaders by board members, staff, and the community who provided a common vision to the school board, staff, and community and primarily handled personnel issues and the budget (Goodman et al., 1997).

School boards must function as a group to govern education and not as individuals. Land (2002) noted that when there is a lack of agreement between board members, this leads to frustration and conflict and impacts educational governance. Why are school boards not always working together as a team? Danzberger (1994) pointed out that school boards can be dysfunctional due to personal conflicts between board members, which prevent the board from developing goals for the district. When school boards display good teamwork, board member tenure increases. Goodman et al., (1997) reported in their study that school board members in effective districts served a minimum of two terms (three to four years per term) and many served five terms or more. When these board members decided not to seek re-appointment, board members attempted to encourage someone else who they believed would be a strong replacement. These board members saw their board service solely as a way to provide quality education and did not use their board service as a bridge to other political appointments.

Canciamilla (2000) reported on Land's findings that teamwork had a significant impact on school board effectiveness. Canciamilla examined behaviors and actions of high performing school boards. Canciamilla utilized a case study approach to analyze the effective behaviors of each of three Northern California districts studied. Interviews were conducted to obtain greater depth to the understanding of behaviors of highly effective school boards. Canciamilla (2000) reported that effective school boards were dedicated to a common mission, relied on training to enhance professional growth and skills, displayed teamwork, utilized a team approach to involve others in the decision making process, displayed good communication and listening skills and had a high level of respect for each other (Canciamilla, 2000).

Canciamilla's research supported Land's (2002) findings in that critics argued for a greater need in team training, especially due to issues in regard to poor superintendent and or board relationships. Also, training can identify specific areas of importance per district (Thomas, 1993). Other researchers reported how untrained board members hinder the effectiveness and teamwork of the school board. Another study concerning effective school boards and student achievement was conducted by graduate students Trenta, Cunningham, Printy, Kruse, Griswold, Hunn and Aquila (2002). The study explored how the governance and leadership of Ohio's urban school districts impacted student achievement. Trenta et al., (2002) focused on five issues in regard to the overall educational system and student achievement. However, for the purposes of my research, I focused on issue sets one and three. Issue set one discussed the recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of Ohio urban superintendents of schools and district treasurers and issue set three discussed school board effectiveness.

Trenta et al. (2002) conducted focus groups in three major areas of the state to engage urban district leaders in discussion about the research areas. Specifically, they were interested in how governance issues and spheres of governance impact superintendents, board members and treasurers in their respected districts. Research participation included a representative per district, current or recent board members, superintendents, and district treasurers. Trenta et al. (2002) noted in issue set one (superintendent and treasurers) that focus group members acknowledged that the district's culture impacts their ability to attract and retain leadership positions and impacts student achievement. In addition, with regard to board, superintendent, and treasurer relationships, participants favored board training in choosing the district

superintendent and/or treasurer. Also, board members agreed that on-going education was

necessary because new untrained board members can hinder effective governance.

Concerning issue set three (board effectiveness), participants reported that an effective

board was measured by on-going professional development and collaboration between

the board/superintendent and board member themselves. Ironically, as with

superintendents, board members reported problems of untrained board members.

Interagency Relationships

To increase student achievement by meeting the diverse needs of the learner,

school boards must work with other agencies, local and state governments, and their

respective communities to meet the social and educational needs of today's students. If

these needs are not met, it is doubtful that students academic achievement can increase.

Schools that do not work well with other agencies may risk boards being viewed as

ineffective (Land, 2002). What are the benefits of working with other agencies? Resnick

(1999) noted that if basic human needs such as shelter, nutrition, health care, and safety

are not met, this will more than likely result in students' academic failure. School districts

are ideally suited to integrate services with social agencies because they are held liable to

serve all children. Traditionally, boards were totally separate from general purpose

government and usually were not involved in coordinating activities (WSBA, 2000).

What has triggered the need for school boards to be involved in general government and

the need to work with other agencies? The primary reason is the changing demographics

of children and families. For instance, since 1979, there has been a 33% increase of

children living in poverty, which in 1991 totaled more than 5.6 million children under the

age of six (Usdam, 1994). In part due to this growth in poverty, agencies should work

together to address the educational, health and social needs of children because it is

unlikely that students will learn if social and health needs are unmet. Also, 70% of

mothers of public school students are in the work force, along with 60% of mothers of

pre-school students. It is unclear as to who is taking care of children while they are not in

school (Usdam, 1994). Should school boards work with other agencies to address these

social issues and are school boards up to the task? Land (2002) and Danzberger (1994)

noted that school boards too often lack skills to work together as a team. If some school

boards cannot demonstrate leadership in their current roles; it is unlikely they will be

effective with increased responsibility and in additional collaborative efforts. Critics also

contend that school boards lack personnel and financial resources to deal with such issues

(Usdam, 1994).

School boards originated from the state and are supported by state and local taxes.

Due to the origin of school boards, school boards should maintain a healthy relationship

between state and local governments. Land (2002) argued that local and state

relationships can be beneficial to school boards in regard to political and community

support. But, most boards do not build relationships with local or state governments

unless for financial reasons. School boards that are unwilling to change this behavior

increase the risk of being labeled ineffective. Decreased voter turnout and the lack of

school board candidates are evidence that school boards are losing their influence and

becoming a failed institution (Land, 2002). School boards cannot be successful without

strong public support. They must involve the community to bridge the gap between

schools and the communities they serve. It is also critical that school boards realize the

need to involve the community especially when alternatives to public schooling exist

such as home schooling (Resnick, 1999). Another consequence of poor state and local

relationships includes increased state involvement due to the public's perception that

school districts were ineffective. Additionally, boards that do not promote healthy

relationships with the broader public may find state agencies playing a stronger role in

district affairs (Kirst, 1998; Rose, & Gallup, 2006). For instance, student achievement

increased when state boards of education took over districts in Logan County, W. Va.,

Compton, California and Jersey City (Bushweller, 1998). Nevertheless, Kirst (1994)

suggested a balance between the state and local districts, where the state set broad

outcomes and boards become assertive policy makers. Areas that the state can assist

boards in becoming more effective include: reviewing of mandates to analyze the

potential for dysfunctional impact in regard to school boards' time, micromanagement

and policy making; working with school boards as partners to develop strategies for

improvement; providing legal and financial support; determining duties and

responsibilities to focus on student achievement; providing technical assistance; assisting

in strengthening voter turnout; and providing data to newly elected state policy makers

with information that defines the duties and responsibilities of school boards (Resnick,

1999).

Fiscal Issues

Effective school boards allocate money wisely to increase student achievement.

Working with the superintendent to plan and develop district budgets is an important

responsibility of the local school board. Boards must be knowledgeable regarding the

negotiation of labor contracts and how to pursue the generation of money through bonds

and tax levies (Land, 2002). According to Picus (2000), districts consistently complain

about the lack of finances, while per pupil expenditures have increased with inflation. Picus (2000) argued that school districts have financial resources to do an effective job, but not as much as they want. How can districts ascertain additional ways to generate more money? Picus (2000) contended that districts can save money by reviewing how they spend money in areas such as educational programs, personnel and technology. Regarding programs, school districts implement many new programs without eliminating ineffective programs, which could save money. Concerning personnel, districts often fail to utilize teacher aides and other specialists effectively. All too often aides and specialists are utilized to assist teachers with large class enrollments, thus avoiding the splitting of classrooms into more manageable units, which can positively effect student achievement. Districts should reassess how they utilize and assign their staff. Proper utilization of staff has a major impact on student achievement. More prescriptive professional development should be pursued by school districts. In regard to technology, districts often spend money on technology based upon grants and leave no room in their budget for repairs, which creates problems. Solely relying on grants for technology equipment and no budget for repairs results in broken down computers. Districts may consider leasing computers to save money and resources, which could again impact student achievement (Picus, 2000).

Picus (2000) is not alone with his assessment of reallocating resources to bolster student achievement. According to research conducted by Odden and Archibald (2000), many public schools significantly improved student performance by reallocating resources. Districts that the researchers studied created smaller classrooms, hired personal tutors, allocated additional planning time for teachers and provided more professional

development. To cover costs, school officials reduced or eliminated programs,

reallocated funding in particular areas such as categorical program dollars that allowed

for greater flexibility and terminated or reallocated positions that were seen as

ineffective. These changes led to significant improvements in student achievement.

Effective boards are fiscally responsible and direct financial resources in areas that will

improve student achievement (Odden & Archibald, 2000; Picus, 2000). However, if

school boards wanted to monitor the matter in which they spend their resources, what

resources are available? Boards may consider utilizing an evaluation tool developed by

Standard and Poor's. Using Standard and Poor's School Evaluation Services (SES),

school districts can monitor how they spend their finances by concentrating on the six

sources of data which make up the SES framework: expenditures, student results, return

on resources, finances, taxes and debt, and the learning environment. The SES

recommends that each district monitor its performance against the following benchmarks:

district performance over time, similar districts performance in the county and state and

the state as a whole. A good evaluation system can assist in monitoring the districts

expenditures and identifying district weaknesses and strengths (Cox & Stewart, 2000).

Characteristics of Effective/Ineffective School Boards

School boards govern differently and yield different results, some more effective

and some not. What can we learn from school districts that govern effectively and what

areas could be targeted in a training program? The IASB (2000) conducted a study

concerning school board effectiveness especially in the area of student achievement. The

IASB was one of the few states to study school boards in-depth utilizing a mixed

methods research approach. The IASB was interested in this study due to limited research

concerning the impact of school boards on student achievement. Particularly, researchers explored the possibility that some school boards had more of an impact on student achievement than others. If so, how were these more effective environments supported and encouraged? What role did the board/superintendent play? IASB's (2000) research described differences and similarities among high and low performing school districts.

IASB's five member research team and one consultant conducted more than 159 individual interviews during site visits to six Georgia school districts. They conducted interviews with superintendents, board members and school personnel. Each interview included 25 questions and took about an hour to complete. The research team did not know which districts were low or high performing. After interviewing participants, the research team and consultant analyzed the results to look for patterns and themes in the responses. Districts for the study were selected based upon standardized achievement test data for the academic years of 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98. In addition, districts were selected based upon whether or not districts met or did not meet state goals in order to conduct a comparative study. The districts were relatively similar in enrollment, ranging from 1,395 students to 5,163 students. To determine the board/superintendent teams' ability to encourage positive change, the researchers explored the presence of seven conditions for school renewal. These conditions were derived from extensive reviews of research on productive change in education. The seven conditions for school renewal were: emphasis on building a human organizational system, ability to create and sustain initiatives, supportive workplace for staff, staff development, support for school sites through data and information, community involvement, and integrated leadership. Additionally, the IASB borrowed terms used by researcher Rosenholtz in 1989 to

describe districts in the study as moving or stuck. Moving indicated that student achievement in districts was above the norm compared to stuck districts where student achievement was below average (IASB, 2000).

Among the districts studied, there were similarities and differences. Similarities included: caring about children, peaceable relationships, board approval of the superintendent, tension about roles in a site-based system, students in categorical programs (special education), local backgrounds of board members and staff. Differences included: elevating vs. accepting belief system, lack of focus and understanding on school renewal and action in buildings and classrooms. Comparatively, high achieving school districts consistently sought improvement rather than making excuses and the school board was more in tune with initiatives engaged in to address student achievement. In stuck districts, board members could not mention strategies to enhance student achievement compared to moving districts where board members were knowledgeable about the conditions of the schools and offered solutions to fix problems. Stuck districts incorporated minor strategies to address student achievement compared to moving districts. In stuck districts, school staff blamed administration and described a lack of trust between personnel, whereas in moving districts, staff indicated being a part of the team and working together to address concerns. This feeling of mutuality was similar to administrator responses in moving districts, where the administration viewed staff as co-equals. Staff development in moving districts encompassed everyone compared to stuck districts where training was more individualized and moving districts actively involved the community compared to stuck districts. The key finding of this

study was that among the seven conditions for school renewal, stuck districts differed

significantly compared to moving districts (IASB, 2000).

Similar to IASB's findings, Goodman et al., (1997) noted that several school

districts had a reputation of poor governance. The researchers explored the governance of

school districts in various states. Specifically, they examined why some districts exhibit

poor governance and others do not, reasons why some school boards work well with their

superintendent compared to others that do not and the nature of governance issues that

hinder effective leadership. States that were chosen included Kentucky, Massachusetts,

Michigan, Oregon and Texas. To ensure that districts in these states represented a diverse

population, districts were chosen based upon the following criteria: districts in rural

areas, suburban areas, small to medium sized cities; districts that exhibited low to high

student achievement; districts that varied in terms of graduation and dropout rates;

districts that exhibited poor and strong superintendent-board relationships; and districts

that varied by racial and economic factors. Superintendents, school board members,

principals, teacher union officials, parent leaders, business leaders, local newspaper

editors/reporters, senior citizens, city officials, foundation/United Way leaders and

student groups were all interviewed (Goodman et al., 1997).

Concerning characteristics of ineffective boards, Goodman et al., (1997) noted the

following: disregarding the agenda process and chain of command, playing to the news

media, lacking an understanding of their role, lacking team work, micromanaging the

superintendent, lacking motivation in improving governance, and lacking communication

and trust. Districts in this study demonstrated their ineffectiveness in a variety of ways.

For instance, pertaining to disregarding the agenda process and chain of command, board

members discussed issues not on the board agenda and without prior notification to the

board chair or superintendent. Often, these issues included complaints from parents, staff

or other citizens. Also, in some poorly governed districts, board meetings are broadcasted

on television. In these districts, some board members played to the camera by trying to

embarrass other members or the superintendent by rallying for programs that the board

would not support solely for publicity purposes. Other examples included arguing over

minor issues such as punctuation in prior board minutes and advocating for spouses (if

employed by the district) during board meetings.

IASB's (2000) study indicated that although both high and low academically

performing districts cared about students there were significant differences in regard to

student achievement. Many school boards are not as effective as they should be and some

boards have failed to establish either a climate of change or a strategy to improve. For

instance, school districts, particularly in urban cities, have low graduation rates and many

students are not reading and learning mathematics at a rate appropriate for their grade

level (McAdams, 2002). Many low performing school boards fail to take responsibility

for student achievement, but instead make excuses such as blaming children and parents

(IASB, 2000; McAdams, 2002). As IASB (2000) noted, it is doubtful that all boards

maintain the initiative to improve. Perhaps one way to assist in rectifying this problem

may be with mandatory board training and evaluation. My study will provide valuable

information as to whether or not proposed Illinois legislation could work and does it

target school board member concerns as well.

McAdams (2002) acknowledged that it is inconclusive as to how to create high-

performing school districts especially in the areas of governance, organization,

management and performance. Effective school districts cannot come into fruition until boards practice good governance which is a key ingredient to increasing student achievement. Boards can also bolster student achievement by: engaging in vision setting, establishing a successful learning environment, exercising accountability for results and using advocacy to build support (Bracey & Resnick, 1988; Kirst, 1994). Additionally, Workman (2003) cited the following to promote student achievement: increasing communication and sharing of information, defining duties and responsibilities, engaging in superintendent and board evaluations and identifying strengths and needs to formulate an action plan coupled with self-evaluation of the plan. Based upon McAdams's (2002) research, two questions arise. One, why should we put so much stock into school boards reforming themselves and two, are boards up to the task? The IASB (2000) noted that school boards in their study cared about students and perhaps wanted to do what was best for students educationally, although there were clearly different results. But, good intentions are never enough to improve board governance.

Ralis et al., (1993) argued that most research studies suggest that boards have the intent to provide good leadership, but often lack vision and the necessary skills to implement the vision to be effective in school restructuring. Additionally, research conducted by Workman (2003) noted that board members and superintendents frequently disagree concerning the school board's performance. Workman surveyed superintendents and board members from rural unit districts in the Illinois School Board Divisions of Blackhawk, Central Valley, Kishwaukee, Northwest, Starved Rock, and Three Rivers. Fifty nine districts out of the Illinois School Board Divisions were sent a survey by way of the superintendent, but the study reflected only the 22 school districts that participated.

The researcher reported that superintendent and board members significantly disagreed on issues related to decision making, team-work, exercising authority and being pro-active toward overall board betterment. However, Workman (2003) reported agreement in areas of community relations and strategic planning. Duran's (1996) research was consistent with Workman's findings that superintendents and board members frequently disagree regarding the school board's effectiveness. Duran utilized an open-ended survey to determine the perspectives of superintendents and school board members in regard to their school board's performance. She examined policy-making, leadership/management techniques, and school operations. Twenty-one superintendents and 57 school board members were interviewed from South Texas.

Duran (1996) noted that school board members and superintendents differ regarding school board performance in the areas of policy-making, leadership/management techniques and school operations. The population of the school district had no bearing regarding the perspectives of superintendents and board members as it related to board performance. Also, board members were more interested in politics than superintendents and superintendents felt that boards should be held accountable for professional development. In light of Duran (1996) and Land's (2002) findings, what role does politics play concerning disagreements between school board members and superintendents in regard to school board effectiveness? Also, can training be beneficial in this area, as suggested by the superintendents in Duran's (1996) study?

Role of Politics

School board members are elected officials and politics may impact the manner in which they govern. Research conducted by Hess (2002) shed light on the role politics

play in board governance. Hess mailed a survey to board members from 2,000 U.S.

school districts in consultation with the National School Boards Association during the

spring of 2001. One board member was randomly selected to represent each studied

district. Eight hundred and twenty seven board members (41%) returned the survey and

participated in the study.

Hess (2002) indicated that large districts (25,000+) were significantly different

than the majority of smaller school districts. Hess reported that large school districts were

usually more politically motivated, spent more money on campaigns and had frequent

ties to special interest groups. Smaller districts with less than 5,000 students were not as

engulfed in politics and their campaigns were not as costly. Villegas (2003) contended

that low voter turn out and unfamiliarity among board member candidates assisted in

allowing special interest groups to have significant power and influence over the

educational process. Thus, in reality, some school boards may be dominated by special

interest groups who may not reflect the public's opinion of how schools should be

governed. In relation to the role of politics, IEL (2001) noted the following issues that

often prohibit boards from reforming themselves: some school board members may see

their role as board members as stepping stones to other political aspirations, board

members are contingent on elections which create instability, and too often board

members are driven by special interests.

There are a growing number of representatives from special interest groups who

are being elected to school boards, particularly in urban districts. The pushing of special

group interests can create tensions among board members and many school boards lack

skills to deal with these internal conflicts. Given the political history of school boards,

boards cannot govern effectively without rigorous dialogue, identification of their purposes, identification of who the board is accountable to and clear directives about how boards should communicate to stakeholders. Without these measures, boards will continue to micromanage and will respond to special interest groups (Danzberger, 1994).

Summary

Research literature reported characteristics of effective school boards such as: governing through policies, displaying a good working relationship with the superintendent and other board members, promoting interagency relationships, allocating money wisely and reducing the role of politics and engaging in on-going professional development and evaluation (Bushweller,1998; Canciamilla, 2000; Cox & Stewart, 2000; Danzberger, 1994; Goodman et al., 1997; IASB, 2000; Kirst, 1994; Land, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Odden & Archibald, 2000; Picus, 2000; Resnick, 1999; Trenta et al, 2002; Wagner, 1992; Workman, 2003; WSBA, 2001; Usdam, 1994). Another finding of the research is that state involvement has increased due to the perception that school districts are ineffective especially in educating subgroups and there are some promising results from state involvement in districts around the country (Bushweller, 1988; Resnick, 1999; Kirst, 1994). This is important because school boards that are viewed as ineffective may risk more state involvement. Perhaps currently less effective boards can model characteristics demonstrated by effective school boards to enhance their image if board training was mandatory. Also, pertaining to politics, special interest groups are a growing concern for school board members and could lead to school board tensions. Special interest groups have expanded due to low voter turnout and lack of familiarity with board candidates. Politically motivated decisions are often influenced by special

interest groups which may not be good for all constituents of the educational process (Danzberger, 1994; Hess, 2002; Land, 2002).

The research pointed out how school districts allocate money is very important. The research suggests that districts should review educational programs, staffing, and use of technology and suggested that an evaluation assessment could save money (Cox and Stewart, 2000; Land, 2002; Odden and Archibald, 2000; Picus, 2000). This is a key finding because it is also a concern for the Illinois General Assembly. General Assembly house bills discussed earlier called for the creation of an Inspector General and/or oversight panel that will be responsible for conducting fiscal audits of school districts. If districts fail the audit, the inspector general or panel will enforce penalties such as creating budget improvement plans. As noted, Land (2002) reported that ineffective school boards often micromanage. Rather than focusing on policy, ineffective boards are too involved in every day administration, especially due to role confusion between the school board and the superintendent which creates superintendent turnover which impacts student achievement (Glass, 2000). Some experts believed that boards should be reformed into policy boards. As policy boards, superintendents could work under the framework of these policies without having to get permission from the school board to carry out the policies. Additionally, the superintendent should also be evaluated by board policies (Land, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Wagner, 1992). Because some board members do not understand their role, the Illinois General Assembly is contemplating various bills to provide board training and perhaps evaluation as well. However, can the General Assembly bills that were proposed create an effective school board? My research will provide some meaningful insights to this question.

Educational reform is still a prevalent issue in federal and state governments. There are more demands for accountability being placed on school districts such as NCLB and RTI. School boards are ultimately assigned the task of overseeing the quality of their schools and instructional programs. There is a lack of research to show how board trainings should be structured, who should conduct board trainings and how mandatory trainings may impact the role of the school board. Prior research discusses existing training programs, but did not allow for board members and superintendents to voice their opinions about priority areas of the highest need. Research suggests that there is a decline in citizens running for the school board due in part to role confusion (board members who do not understand their role). More research is needed to determine if mandatory training would assist in the retention of board members, especially if board members were better trained to understand their roles. Concerning evaluations, the scant literature that exists focuses on whether or not school boards engaged in board evaluations. There is a lack of research that connects school board evaluations to researched best practices and little to no research that connects evaluations to various outcomes of board trainings in which boards may be assessed. If current and additional legislation in regard to school board training and evaluation in the Illinois General Assembly materializes, my study can give voice to board members and superintendents about those priority issues associated with board training and evaluation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Lawmakers and educational critics contend that public schools are not meeting adequate yearly progress and frustrations with public schools are steadily increasing (Danzberger, 1994). Due to perceived problems associated with public schools, charter schools, standardized tests, increased state and federal involvement and educational benchmarks are becoming the norm in public schools (*U. S. News & World Report*, 1994). Additionally, some critics such as Danzberger (1994) and Fridley (2006) contend that many of the problems in public schools are associated with the school board. Specifically, they cite that school board members lack the knowledge and skills to be a board member, which often leads to role confusion and superintendent and board member turnover. Some educational researchers believe that perhaps school board training and evaluation could alleviate these concerns (Land, 2002). According to Danzberger (1994), major problems associated with school boards are that school boards have failed to improve their deficiencies, lack accountability and are not scrutinized for their role in the educational process. Due to increasing concerns with school boards, the Illinois General Assembly contemplated several bills during the 2008/2009 fiscal year (HB 4194, HB 1680, HB 1466, HB 5769) that would potentially impact school board members in regard to training and evaluation.

I reviewed the above bills and in this study, I explore the perceptions of Illinois school board members and superintendents regarding school board training and evaluation. This chapter is a description of the methodology I used to obtain insights

from school board members and superintendents regarding school board training and evaluation.

As an elementary principal, I understand that it is primarily the principal's responsibility in his/her building to ensure the improved performance of all students. In order to increase student performance, principals need to assist in setting a climate where staff as well as students sees themselves as life long learners. To foster this culture, it is vital that the superintendent and board of education support principals by providing necessary resources such as professional development opportunities and allowing principals to have a voice in the selection of their staff. Additionally, it is important that the board of education ensure the selection of only qualified, professional individuals for educational vacancies. Board governance impacts student achievement and the resources that I need to do my job as principal. Unfortunately, based upon personal experiences and a review of research, I suspect that not all school boards operate in the manner needed to promote student achievement, but serve other interests, including political interests. By conducting this study, I am open to the possibility that my perceptions may change based upon new insights from practitioners.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of public school superintendents and school board members regarding school board training and evaluation. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of public school superintendents about school board member training and evaluation?

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of public school board members about school board member training and evaluation?

Research Question 3

To what extent are there meaningful differences in the perceptions of school board members and superintendents concerning school board member training and evaluation?

<div align="center">

Design of the Study

</div>

This study is structured in a traditional format with five chapters that include: an introduction to the research topic and questions, a literature review covering empirical studies related to the topic, a clear delineation of research method, findings, and conclusions that result from the research (Emmanuel & Gray, 2002).

In this study, I qualitatively explored the perceptions of school board presidents and superintendents about school board training and evaluation. The nature and purpose of my research made it well suited for a qualitative study. Qualitative research techniques allowed me to explore my topic in depth and to formulate new questions and themes about my topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Most of the existing research on school board training and evaluation utilized closed-ended quantitative research methods, most commonly surveys. One limitation of survey research is that designers pre-select categories and issues, which can inhibit new themes from emerging. Past quantitative studies have primarily sought to emphasize the measurement and analysis of pre-determined variables and sought to establish a "value free" approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). To explore issues beyond the typical pre-determined categories and issues, and to

formulate new themes, it was vital that I understood my participants' perspectives in depth, thus qualitative research made the most sense.

Consistent with the purpose of this study, a qualitative study allowed me an opportunity to collect data about my research topic from the viewpoint of the participants in the study. According to Krefting (1990), qualitative research uses an interpretive model. Furthermore, it is an approach that allowed me to develop an understanding of the research topic through a variety of perspectives. Understanding the unique perspectives of school board members and superintendents is vital if any of the General Assembly bills regarding board training and evaluation come to fruition. For instance, components of HB 1680 will authorize the creation of an inspector general who may release board members for not fulfilling their duties. However, the bill does not state how the inspector general will assess this competency. Superintendent and school board member perspectives may be a valuable asset to lawmakers. To probe in depth regarding school board member and superintendent's perceptions, I conducted a qualitative, interview and focus group based study. In the following sections, I discuss how the participants were selected for this study and how data was collected and analyzed.

Pilot Study

Prior to conducting this research, I did a pilot study to assess my interview questions and my research focus. This study helped me to refine my questions. The pilot study also assisted me in becoming more tactful in how I asked interview questions and how to effectively probe for further detail concerning participant conversations.

I selected seven board members and one superintendent to pilot test my initial interview questions. Two board members and one superintendent engaged in one-on-one

interviews, while others engaged in a focus group. Participants received a copy of the preliminary interview guide (Appendix A) and a consent form (Appendix B) which detailed the nature of the study. I asked participants to offer any suggestions for my study, including whether interview questions needed clarifying. Participants' suggestions led me to make changes in two interview questions prior to the final interview guide (Appendix C).

Selection/Description of Participants/Districts

To collect data for my study, I interviewed board members and the superintendents of two similar sized K-8 school districts located in Southern Illinois, which I refer to as Alpha and Beta District. I also conducted two focus groups, one composed of school board members and the other of superintendents with 9-12 people in each category. I used contacts in my district and through my university to identify participants for this study.

Upon approval from the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Human Subjects Committee to do the research (Appendix D), participants signed an informed consent document (Appendix B) that explained the nature of the research and their rights while participating in the study. To maintain anonymity, I used pseudonyms to identify superintendents, board members and the school districts that participated in this study.

Alpha district is a K-8 school district located in downstate Illinois. According to census data and the Illinois District Report Card, the community has approximately 14, 000 residents, 6,000 households and 4,000 families residing in the city. The district is approximately 87% white, 10% African-American and 3% all other races including Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino. The median income per

household is between $30,000 and $40,000. The district serves 1,300 students in 5 buildings. The low income rate is approximately 73% and has a mobility rate of 20.4%. The districts' racial makeup is a bit more diverse than the community with 70% white, 20% African-American and 10% all other ethnic backgrounds including Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and multi-racial. The pupil-teacher rate is 18.1 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009).

The board members of Alpha district have served a combined total of 63 years. Five of the board members were elected and two appointed. Out of the seven board members, there were four males and 3 females. Occupations of the board members included: pastor, real estate manager, school psychologist, para-professional, policeman, teacher and real estate appraiser/auctioneer. All of the board members worked in the city. Six of the board members have children currently in the district and/or graduated from the district.

The superintendent of Alpha district held the position for the past 31 years. Prior to becoming the district's superintendent, he served for twenty-one years in the district in various positions including as a teacher and principal. While conducting this research, this superintendent, who had served the district for over 52 years, indicated to me that he is planning to retire soon.

According to census data and the Illinois District Report Card, Beta district is another K-8 school district located in downstate Illinois. The community has approximately 8,000 residents, 4,500 households and 3,000 families residing in the city. The cultural demographics are 97% white, 1% African-American, 1% Asian and 1% all other races including Native American, Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino. The district

serves 1,000 students in its 5 buildings. The low income rate is approximately 56% and has a mobility rate of 13%. The districts' racial make up is 95% white, 1% African-American, 2% Asian and 2% all other ethnic backgrounds including Hispanic, multi-racial and Native-American. The pupil-teacher rate is 18.3 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

The board members of Beta District have served a combined total of 82 years. Out of the 82 years, one board member has served for 40 years. Beta district has seven elected school board members. However, only five board members participated in this study including 3 males and 2 females. I contacted the other two board members several times but they were not interested in participating in the study. Occupations of the board members included: retiree, dentist, nurse, banker and community volunteer. All of the board members have children currently enrolled in the district and/or graduated from the district.

The superintendent of Beta District has served as superintendent for the past six years. The superintendent's children graduated from Beta district. Prior to becoming the superintendent, he held other teaching and administrative positions in the area.

The superintendent focus group was conducted at a Regional Office of Education located in Southern Illinois during a monthly regional superintendent meeting. Participants were superintendents from Jefferson and Hamilton counties. The board member focus group was comprised of board members from Franklin and Jefferson County and was conducted at a monthly special education district meeting.

Jefferson County is located in downstate Illinois. According to census data, the following represent the demographics of Jefferson County: 40,045 people, 15,374 households and 10, 561 families. The racial makeup is: 89.87% White, 7.83% Black,

0.21% Native American, 0.47% Asian, 0.01% Pacific Islander, and 1.61% from other races. The average income per family is $41.141 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Franklin County is another county located in downstate Illinois. Census data describe the following demographics of Franklin County: 39, 018 people, 16,408 households and 10, 976 families. The diversity profile is: 98.65% White, 0.15% Black, 0.22% Native American, 0.18% Asian, 0.01% Pacific Islander and 0.80% from all other races. The average family income is $36,294 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Hamilton County is also located in Southern Illinois. According to census data, the following are the demographics of Hamilton County: 8,621 people, 3,462 households and 2,437 families. The racial makeup is as follows: 98.25% White, 0.67% Black, 0.26% Native American, 0.13% Asian, 0.01% Pacific Islander and 0.69 from all other races. The average family income is $37,651 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Collection of Data

For this study, I collected data from three sources: documents, interviews and focus groups. Concerning documents, I reviewed the proposed Illinois General Assembly house bills HB 4194, HB 1680, HB 1466 and HB 5769 and a board member orientation book from Alpha district. Interviews enabled me to explore the research topic in depth (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I utilized open-ended questions during the interviews, which allowed participants an opportunity to think more critically about questions posed rather than simply answering "yes" or "no." For instance, I asked superintendents and board members to describe their thoughts on school board training rather than simply asking "Should board members be trained?" My interview guide included the following questions:

1. How are board members trained?

2. How are board members evaluated (eg. self-evaluations or external)?

3. How does your school board measure board member effectiveness?

4. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of requiring all school board members to obtain formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. If you were asked to give input concerning the structure of an evaluation tool, what are some of the components you would recommend?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure?

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, response to intervention (RTI), closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. What impact do you think board member training and evaluation might have on limiting community dissatisfaction?

In addition to individual interviews, I conducted two focus groups. Focus group interviews allowed me to study my topic in depth from multiple perspectives in order to learn more about the range of issues that related to my study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Focus groups also allowed me to see how participants responded to each others' ideas. Focus groups are organized group discussions that investigate problems, concerns or

perceptions (Barnett, n.d.). While researchers disagree concerning the group size, many

recommend 4-12 for a homogeneous group and 6-12 for a heterogeneous group (Barnett,

n.d.). There were 9 participants in my superintendent focus group and 8 in the board

member focus group. Focus group questions were open-ended so that participants could

have an opportunity to fully engage the topic being discussed. In my role as facilitator of

the group, I encouraged discussion and allowed for full participation, but did not

dominate the discussion (U. S. Army Family Advocacy, 1996). Focus group questions

were as follows:

1. What have you heard about training programs for board members?

2. What have you heard about evaluation programs for board members?

3. How do school boards measure their effectiveness?

4. What, if any, are the advantages or disadvantages associated with requiring board members to undergo formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. Could you describe some key components of an effective board evaluation tool?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure?

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, RTI, closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. Overall, what are your thoughts concerning the relationship between training, evaluation, and community satisfaction or dissatisfaction with school boards.

Treatment of Data

Individual interview sessions and focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed. I coded the data by looking for recurring themes and patterns. This enabled me to assign various "tags" based upon key themes and concepts. In essence, through coding, I took an enormous amount of data and simplified that data into smaller units that related to key themes of the study (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding allowed me to not only categorize themes, but I was able to formulate new questions and other interpretations as well. This is essential because a key component of qualitative research is an attempt to grasp the complexity of the phenomena being studied.

In order to protect the research data, I kept the audio-tapes and transcriptions in a locked place. Access to this research information such as tapes, transcripts and other research documents was limited to my advisor and me. I will destroy research data such as transcripts, field notes and audio-tapes approximately six months after the final report. This will allow ample time for revisions and to ensure confidentiality.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In this study, I used qualitative exploratory approaches, primarily through the use of interviewing and facilitating focus groups (Roberts & Priest, 2006). To ensure that my study was trustworthy and credible, I followed Guba's criteria (Krefting, 1990; Shenton, 2003).

Credibility means that the study is analyzing what it was intended to analyze and the researcher has established merit in his/her research findings (Krefting, 1990; Shenton,

2003). To ensure that my research is credible, I engaged the research in such a way so that I could identify and verify recurrent themes (Krefting, 1990). For example, I restructured my focus group/interview questions after my pilot study to ensure I asked about important issues. To further ensure that my research is credible, I triangulated the data and involved my advisor as a sounding board regarding data analysis (Krefting, 1990; Shenton, 2003).

Triangulation is the central strategy I used to establish trustworthiness. This entailed several steps. I relied on a variety of data sources, corroborated evidence from different participants, utilized different types of data relevant to the study and alternative types of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Roberts & Priest, 2006; Shenton, 2003). Triangulation helped to provide greater depth to my research because I did not rely on only one single research strategy, such as interviews (Tuckett, 2005). According to Shenton (2003), utilizing a variety of data sources helps me to establish background and meaningful insights about the attitudes of the research population. For instance, I examined focus groups in comparison to individual interviews. Next, I compared this data to existing literature and the documents I analyzed. By comparing these data sources, I gained adequate knowledge of the attitudes and viewpoints of all participants to formulate a more revealing picture about the studied phenomenon.

To ensure credibility of the transcripts, coding was confirmed by periodically re-checking the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Roberts & Priest, 2003; Shenton, 2003). My advisor also assisted by providing direction regarding the evolution of my study. My advisor's guidance enabled me to think much more critically about the overall study and pointed out potential flaws (Krefting, 1990; Shenton, 2003).

Presentation of the Data

I organize research data collected during the interviews, focus groups and through the examination of documents into categories and themes in the next chapter. I also discuss my personal reflections based upon my research findings. In the final chapter, I offer conclusions, recommendations for further research, and final reflections on the study.

Limitations. This study was limited to superintendents and school board members from school districts located in Southern Illinois. My research findings were based upon a small sample of superintendents and board members from one geographical region with similar sized districts within the state. Thus, my research is based upon a relatively homogenous study group and may not be generalizable to other districts. Also, this research study focuses on training and evaluation, although there may be other variables that affect effective school board governance.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of public school superintendents and school board members regarding school board training and evaluation. In this chapter, I examine interview data from school board members and public school superintendents of two similar sized K-8 school districts. Additionally, I explore data from two focus groups, one composed of superintendents and the other of board members from different K-8 school districts. In this study, I had two goals:

1. To identify the perceptions of public school superintendents about school board member training and evaluation.

2. To identify the perceptions of public school board members about school board member training and evaluation.

Overall, there were few surprises in conducting this research. Many of the themes that emerged from the data were similar to the research literature. First, all participants thought that better understanding board and superintendent roles and duties would help to decrease role confusion and increase collaboration and effectiveness. Second, my participants were also concerned with the nature and scope of board member trainings, differentiating training for new and on-going members, the time commitment entailed in training and training expenses. Third, they worried that mandatory training might deter citizens interested in running for school board positions. Fourth, they felt that financial issues played an important role in board governance and community satisfaction. And fifth, they agreed that school boards usually engage in self-evaluations, but that board

evaluation could illustrate the degree of school board effectiveness by helping members to set and monitor goals. Besides these similarities, there were a wide range of topics that were discussed by participants in this research study. Other topics included: board training, board evaluation, board effectiveness, school board and superintendent tenure, board governance and community dissatisfaction, and the role of the superintendent.

I divide the findings in this chapter into three sections: training, board governance and community dissatisfaction, and evaluation. I further divide each of these sections into several subsections. In terms of training, I look at how boards are trained, the most important training areas, concerns and challenges, and offer personal reflections. I divide the topic of board governance and community dissatisfaction into subsections on school board and superintendent collaboration, financial issues, sports, communications, and personal reflections. In the evaluation section, I explore how school boards are evaluated, the most important areas of evaluating school boards, who should evaluate school boards, and close with personal reflections. In these sections, I do not differentiate between data from interviews and focus groups in supporting the topics when there are consistent responses. However, I do note meaningful differences. To assist in the readability of this chapter, I label each participant as follows: BI= board member interview, BF= board member focus group, SI= superintendent interview and SF= superintendent focus group. The following is a discussion of my findings on each of the above mentioned topics.

Training

Public school board members and administrators agree that board member

training is vital in board members understanding their role and duties. However, there is

not a clear consensus regarding the form and scope of school board training (Land, 2002).

CASDA (1990) recommended the following training topics for school boards: mission

and vision of the school district, relationship with the superintendent, contents and use of

policy manual and administrative regulations, knowledge of the instructional program,

knowledge of business and finance, conflict management, major state and federal

educational issues, and board and superintendent evaluation. School board training has

been cited as a key difference between the most and least productive school boards

(Malinsky, 1999). While the recommendations for board training are fairly consistent in

the literature, I explored the issue of school board training in interviews and focus groups.

I describe the perspectives of superintendents and school board members below.

How Boards Are Trained

Participants described a number of ways school boards are trained. These include:

IASB, superintendent training and on the job training/prior experiences.

Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). The majority of the participants

indicated that the IASB primarily provided for board member training and trainings were

viewed favorably. Superintendents and board members emphasized how the IASB assists

in preparing board members for their roles and duties. Specifically, participants

emphasized the importance of new board members obtaining training through the IASB

and many viewed the training as essential. Several participants provided examples of the

kinds of trainings they received. Lori (BF) indicated, "I attended a new candidate

workshop. I attended one last week. It [the IASB sponsored program] focused on new training and the dos and don'ts. Also, we were given a handbook concerning how to become a good board member. The IASB does a lot." Josh (BI) stated, "Well, when you come on the board, the first objective is to get to the IASB training… They have training programs in Chicago that they allow first time members to be a part of, so it is important to be part of that first year training." Jerry (BI) stated, "Most board trainings are held through the IASB. Trainings are held out of Chicago. Everything is provided through the IASB. Those trainings are very helpful. I am in a profession that requires a lot of training and improvement." When asked about training, school board members were quick to point out the IASB as the primary starting point.

Regarding current school board members, the IASB encourages board members to become master board members by attending a number of workshops and professional development opportunities. Master board members are more experienced and trained board members who participate in some of the following activities: participating in the Chicago Schools Tour, serving on IASB committees and focus groups, serving on an ISBE committee, testifying on behalf of the IASB and school boards before various legislative branches, serving as a panelist or moderator at IASB/NSBA division, serving as a voting delegate at the IASB Delegate Assembly and serving as a statewide officer of IASB. The IASB hopes that master board members will be more deeply trained and prepared in board governance.

Superintendent. Besides training through the IASB, many of the research participants mentioned that they received training from their superintendent as well. Participants remarked that superintendent leadership is essential in obtaining board

member training. Ron (BF) indicated, "…the superintendent has the value and encourages the members to get the training. If the superintendent does not care, then it sets a tone, but if he goes with you, then he shows it is important."

Larry (SF) agreed that the superintendent sets the tone for training in the district.

> The key person is the superintendent. That is the main chief responsibility is to inform and educate the very complicated issues of school governance; so that training could be on going and informal, but a lot of it is just communicating. Board members look to the superintendent for that information and recommendations and their understanding of those recommendations and it comes directly from the superintendent.

Clearly, the superintendent is needed to set the tone that training is important. If the superintendent does not endorse training, research participants were pessimistic if board members would embrace training for professional growth.

Superintendent trainings for board members primarily took place during annual board retreats where superintendents covered many education related topics. Participants described how superintendents primarily overviewed board members of their roles and responsibilities, but these trainings did not always provide the depth the desired. Superintendents also conducted separate meetings to discuss board members roles and duties with newer school board members. Jodi and Mike both described this process. Jodi (BI) offered that, "When I first came on the board, we attended a retreat. We had an early meeting with the superintendent to discuss how budgets were set for the year and board member responsibilities." Mike's (SI) experience was similar, although veteran board

members also assisted in trainings. He explained that "two school board members have had meetings with me [superintendent] and I have explained the board packet, financial reports, etc. They were also provided with the past year board minutes and financial statements."

Superintendents and board members both indicated that superintendents relied heavily on orientation manuals for board member training. Superintendents believed that school board trainings were very beneficial in assisting board members in learning their roles. But, due to the fact that board member trainings are not mandated and some members may not attend the trainings, they felt an orientation manual provided board members of an overview of their roles and duties. Typically these manuals were composed by the superintendent and/or other district administrators. Participants viewed superintendents as someone to assist in educating the board, but not in evaluating them. This was a concern because the school board is the superintendent's employer, and interviewees did not want to put the superintendent in a position of being perceived as dictating to the school board.

As stated, board members primarily viewed superintendent trainings as beneficial. However, one participant noted how the superintendent orientation manual provided an overview, but nothing in depth for her to successfully fulfill her obligations. Alicia (BI) stated, "I was given a packet [by the superintendent] that had what I would classify as minimal information on what a board member was. No one asked if I understood the financial aspect of the position, ethical or knowledge wise. It was a good guideline, but did not provide detailed information."

On the job training/prior experiences. Participants mentioned that board members primarily learned their role by learning on the job and from previous life experiences. This included reviewing information from the IASB, attending board meetings, receiving mentoring from fellow board members and reviewing orientation manuals. Some participants also noted that they attended school board meetings before being elected to the board. Describing this training process in more detail, Fred (BI) indicated,

> They learn by sitting in trainings and by utilizing the board orientation book. The book is basically for defining what is and is not allowed by school guidelines. Basically my learning and training came from listening to other more senior members. There is not a prerequisite for a board member to be educated in any particular subject. There is no formal type of training other than what the board member would bring to the table in as much as life experiences.

The general consensus among the interviewees was that successful board members had to take initiative in learning about their role as board members. If board members did not take this initiative, they would be unprepared for board service. Shawn (BI) noted, "As having a detailed outline we really are not prepared like we should. I look at it like it's my job; it takes on the job training." Ladonna (BI) remarked, "I was self-trained when someone left; I was appointed. I never received any professional training. I did go on line and found something from the IASB website. I am an educator, so I had that to my advantage."

Board members valued mentoring by other board members as part of their on the job training. Some felt that current board members could assist not only in the training of new school board members, but could explain how previous decisions were reached as well. However, there were concerns about how to ensure that only responsible board members mentor newly elected members. As a possible remedy, participants in my study indicated that the IASB has a mentoring program that places new school board members with qualified mentors. Regarding who should mentor, Greg (SF) stated, "So, even if it is some type of mentoring program, even then you have to have the right board member to mentor." Effective mentors were seen as those board members who attend development training and learn, understand, and practice effective governance principles. Regarding the IASB's involvement, Paul (BI) stated, "Yes, we started something new. We have mentors right now so that when a new member comes on the school board, we have someone there to assist them." My participants viewed mentoring as very important because of the turnover rate of board members due to elections, resignations and personal reasons. Brad (BF) agreed that mentoring was a critical way in which board members were trained on the job. He stated, "If every board member came in to service at the same time, then maybe there would be a lot more to do. But, rarely does that happen because people are always rotating in and out. So, you have senior people training you and bringing you up to speed."

Most Important Training Areas

Besides reflecting on who conducts board member trainings, participants discussed what they felt were the most important training areas. The two most important areas they noted were new board member orientation and board collaboration.

New board member orientation. The majority of respondents interviewed believed that new board members should be oriented to the school board by learning their roles and duties. Specific reasons that such training is needed include to combat potential personal agendas and to prepare new members for their duties. In some instances, respondents felt that board members who lacked an understanding of their role and duties were more likely to run for the school board with personal agendas such as having children in the district and ensuring that they got specific advantages. Lucy (BI) stated, "My advice would be not run if you have a personal agenda or ax to grind. If you have a child in the school setting, make sure if you run it is for all of the children." Timothy (SF) also discussed the concern of members with agendas. He described how,

> Sometimes board members will get on the board for personal concerns such as sports, PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), and if they do not complete their objectives, they will often get off of the board because they do not have those mandates. Members sometimes will immediately let you know they have this agenda on their plate, and when they do not achieve their objectives, they will not attend board meetings. There should be mandated training so that there are other obligations other than what is in it for me.

To alleviate board members serving for solely to further personal agendas, board members and superintendents favored board member training. Through training, board members can perhaps understand different perspectives regarding school issues and understand their duties and limitations as board members. Mike (SI) stated, "I believe the training component might help decrease board members serving with personal agendas.

Board member training provides the tools a board member (especially newly elected) needs to be successful and to see all sides of the issues." Gary (SF) agreed, stating "I do not think the training will make you a better board member, but I think it will reduce people that do not want to be on the board for the right reasons."

Board members and superintendents commented on many ways in which board members can be in-serviced in learning their duties such as attending prior board meetings and reading orientation manuals. Tad (SI) remarked, "Now at times there may be someone to come on board with an agenda, but overall, the board through the orientation packet can help the new member understand the functions of the board." Greg (SF) offered that, "I think they [board members] should be required to attend some board meetings before even running for office just to see the requirements and structure of a meeting." He further added that, "Exposure before taking office would be an advantage in addition to any types of trainings they may have."

Research participants commented that when board members did not understand their roles, this led to micromanagement of the superintendent and to an increase in personal agendas. Board members and superintendents believed that the primary role of the board is to review, revise, and create policies. Concerning the role that the board should play, Tad (SI) stated, "I also think it is important to let the superintendent be the administrator and let the board look at policies." Fred (BI) agreed, "The superintendent takes care of the day to day function, and the board work on the policies." As stated, participants remarked how a lack of training could lead to an increase in personal agendas. Reflecting on her own experience, Alicia (BI) remarked,

I would like to see more training for board members. I do not think I

received enough training to fully understand my role. If you have

someone that does not understand their role, then you have, through no

fault of their own, board members who can say inappropriate things.

Board members may not understand all of the privacy issues and may

not know how people in the community are connected.

Josh (BI) agreed,

Ok, many times with a new board member, they tend to come on with

their personal agenda. I can recall when I first came on, you have no

clue of what to expect. You have to realize that you are a unit and not

an individual person bringing things to the board. The orientation

helps you understand how teachers are selected, budgets set and what

the contracts mean. When you first come on, it is a new language, a

new adventure. You need to take advantage of this the first couple or

three years. Once you get a true feeling for the structure, you will

understand the importance of staying accustomed to the need for

attending the conferences and board meetings. The bad news is the

time taken; it is not a paid position.

Personal agendas were cited as a reason by board members and superintendents

for new school board member orientation. In fact, the issue of personal agendas came up

frequently in all the interviews and in the superintendent focus group. However, this topic

did not come up often in the board member focus group. Yet, overall a majority of the

superintendents and board members agreed that citizens who run for the school board with personal agendas can disrupt superintendent and/or board collaboration.

Board collaboration. Another important area for training is board collaboration, both with the superintendent and among individual board members. Concerning board collaboration, Lucy (BI) indicated, "It is a concern when we get new board members because we need to get used to the differences in personalities, but ultimately the community votes people in. But, we work to make sure that we are focused on the outcomes of the students versus personal agendas. Ladonna (BI) also felt that training in collaboration was important. She described an incident when this was a concern for her as a board member. She reflected,

> Yes, new board members are a concern. We had a new member join
>
> that we had concerns with, but as she learned she understood that the
>
> board is a group. Many members did not agree with her decision
>
> making and we discussed the issue with the superintendent. She also
>
> pulled a surprise at a meeting and immediately after the meeting we
>
> discussed board procedures and she calmed down after that.

A majority of board members are elected through the voting process. Occasionally, board members are appointed to the board due to resignations, deaths, relocations and personal reasons. Participants indicated that they are cautious in selecting board members because they do not want to appoint someone with personal agendas or someone who is not a team player. Many felt that training mandates could weed out people who are not serious about being a board members or working as a team for the good of the district. Due to the fact that board members are volunteers, training mandates

may weed out potential board members who are not totally committed by requiring early

investments of their time. More importantly, as mentioned in the board member

orientation pamphlet in Alpha district, board members come from all walks of life and

are not determined by race, gender or socio-economic class. Because board members are

diverse, the ability to work together to reach consensus is essential. Concerning board

member appointments, Josh (BI) remarked,

> At that time we do interviews to determine who would be a good mix
>
> our board. Last year, we had to replace positions. One of the
>
> candidates was a previous board member who had experience. He was
>
> able to go through the training process in a relatively short time…We
>
> try to make sure that when someone comes on the school board there
>
> are not personal agendas, they [potential board members] are willing
>
> to work with the district and the overall program. It is important that
>
> they have the same goals as the rest of the board.

Gary (SF) indicated how a training program may be beneficial in assisting in

finding the right mixture in regard to school board collaboration. Gary stated,

> In my case, I have four open slots and twelve people [potential board
>
> members] signed to run. Out of this pool, seven turned in their
>
> application and three did not because they did not want to go to the
>
> court house to file the needed forms. So I know those three did not
>
> really want to be on the school board that bad, so it weeded them
>
> out. So, if you have some type of training program, it would also
>
> weed some out.

Concerning superintendent/board collaboration, all participants felt that it was vital for the superintendent and board members to work together. Although there may be differences in opinions regarding school issues, superintendents and board members must feel a part of the democratic system. Research participants noted how disputes between the board and superintendent could potentially lead to superintendent turnover. Regarding superintendent/school board collaboration, Lucy (BI) commented,

> I have had three superintendents and we have not split as a board, and
> if we discuss it [issues] well, we can take care of it [potential dissent
> among members]. Our superintendents have worked with us well. We
> do not always agree, but we have always resolved issues in a
> professional way. It is important as a board member to know our jobs
> and not to micro-manage. But, know that they [superintendents] have
> their responsibilities and they need to do their part, while we do ours.

Some participants noted how board members resigned and/or refused to re-run, citing a lack of understanding their roles and duties and poor relationships with other board members. When this occurs, the board governing process is negatively affected because board members are not working effectively as a team. For example, Lori (BF) described an experience where "A board member resigned because they were unclear of their job description. They thought they had influence in personnel and they were trying to influence the superintendent in a personnel matter. It was shared that it was not their role to be directly involved in personnel matters." Alpha's district board member orientation pamphlet describes the board member role and the importance of allowing the superintendent to oversee the day to day operations of the district. It also lists suggestions

regarding correct protocol in handling issues such as the one described by Lori. Overall,

most of the participants agreed that the two key training areas needed were a new

member orientation that covered policies, procedures and expectations as well as training

on collaboration and the appropriate nature of school board and superintendent relations.

Concerns and Challenges of Training

During the course of interviews and in the focus groups, participants discussed

what they felt were the most important training areas needed for board members.

However, participants described some concerns and challenges associated with training

as well. Concerns and challenges associated with training include: training expenses and

time commitment, scope and nature of board member trainings, and how other elected

officials are not required to be trained.

Training expenses and time commitment. Many of the research participants

were concerned about training cost expenses and the time commitment associated with

board member training. They felt that board member service is voluntarily and board

members should not have excessive demands placed on them. After all, board members

do not receive pay for their service. Many board members work full time jobs and they

are thus concerned about the time demands and the impact of board service on their

personal lives. For example, Tad (SI) offered, "The down side is that people have busy

lives, so the time restraints could pose a problem. These people are doing this

voluntarily." Kurt (BI) noted, "If it [training] was a requirement for continuing education,

it would take a lot of time uncompensated away from other obligations." Additionally,

interviewees discussed how mandated training programs could prevent people from

seeking election to the board, especially in smaller communities. Logically, smaller

communities are less populated compared to bigger communities in which there is a

bigger pool of potential board members to draw from. This poses a challenge in finding

willing potential members. For example, Greg (SF) talked about favoring training but

was worried about the impact on recruitment for board nominees.

> I feel there is definitely an advantage to having a continuing training
>
> program. But, when you have smaller communities, you have fewer
>
> citizens interested in running for the board. So, if you add more things
>
> on their [potential board members] plate and have more hoops that
>
> they have to jump through, it [training] may prohibit them from
>
> running. I already have four seats and three people running for the
>
> school board. We are looking for an appointment already and having
>
> intense three-four day trainings may leave us without any candidates to
>
> run for the position.

Both superintendents and board members agreed that training costs and time

commitments could hinder potential board members in pursuing positions but agreed that

it is the board member's responsibility to see to it that they understand their role.

Reflecting on challenges to offering more systemic trainings, Donald (BI) maintained

that,

> I do not see any barriers, but one problem would be the cost
>
> associated in attending trainings and the time to go. To me, I do not
>
> see this as a problem because if you want to become a school board
>
> member, you should want to do it right and be prepared to do the
>
> job. I would encourage minimum trainings and even encourage

going into higher levels in training. It is a learning process and you

do not just max out on this. I would want to think that people would

want to enhance themselves, especially with NCLB.

Logically, seasoned board members may not need as much training as newer

school board members. Seasoned board members would have had the opportunity to

essentially learn on the job. One participant commented how board member trainings

could be differentiated in regard to the amount of training one receives. Concerning this

point, Josh (BI) stated, "Again a new board member does not have a good understanding

of what the concepts are about."

Several of the board members in my study felt that if requirements were placed on

board members, including extensive training, board members should be compensated for

their time. The majority of board members interviewed agreed that they were volunteers

and it is unfair to have excessive demands placed on their time without compensation. On

the other hand, while the superintendents' focus group members indicated that time was

an issue that may prevent board members from running for board service; they did not

make a connection with board member compensation. Jodi (BI) described in detail some

of the challenges related to the issue of compensation. She stated,

There is a cost because it is an unpaid expense and you have to figure

the time and travel expense. The state financial situation is terrible, so

I would not know where the funds would come from. I think if you are

going to make it [training] mandatory, they [local school districts]

already have trouble filling these positions; you are going to have

more trouble. I do not know who would supervise or pay for it.

A few participants were blunt in their remarks regarding board members receiving pay if excessive demands were placed on them considering that they are volunteers. As stated earlier, board members are volunteers and they are, not surprisingly, concerned about the potential of board service to take too much away from their personal lives. Ron (BF) remarked, "The IASB does not want a required training monitored by state legislators because you have too much and because of expense and cost. We do this because we want to, not because we have to." Further, "I think it is safe to say what others are thinking but are not saying. But, when I start getting paid for board service, they [legislators] can monitor. There are some states where this is a paid position such as Florida."

Scope and nature of board member training. Another challenge related to school board training is determining the scope of information to be covered. Many believed that board training should primarily address local needs of the district and were concerned about who would conduct these trainings. Specifically, the superintendent focus group members indicated that the superintendent should have a key role in board member trainings. However, they did not make any references to local training needs.

Concerning trainings that address local needs, Lori (BF) stated,

> Up in Chicago they [IASB] have a rural district and an urban district
> session and it is probably one of the better attended sessions and it is
> held at 7:30 on Sunday morning. All we do is sit down together and
> discuss rural issues, our particular needs, concerns of our school and
> other districts share with us. I feel that if the IASB wanted to mandate

anything, they [legislators] should provide training to meet our specific needs.

Shawn (BI) shared some of Lori's concerns. He remarked, "I would be more receptive to it [training] if they [ISBE] sent a package that allowed us to pick the topic we felt we needed. From there, the state board could do a specialized training. Maybe pick three out of twelve subjects." Some interviewees commented how the school board is designed to meet the local needs of the community. They were thus concerned about how some training programs could erode local control. Fred (BI) described this issue, reflecting that,

> There would be concern if training orientation dictated policy. Now if it has to do with conduct, this would be okay. Basically, they [board members] need to have common sense. However, who writes the orientation could infringe on rights of board members concerning what they can and can not do.

The majority of board members felt that if training programs were local, board members may be more motivated to attend due to the convenience of the trainings. Some participants described how there are currently not enough trainings downstate of Illinois, even through the IASB. For instance, Sheila (BF) detailed the training challenges living in the Southern part of the state.

> I think a lot of it has to do with us being down state. We see a lot of things [trainings] happen in Chicago and the Springfield area and not enough [trainings] for us close to home. It is very difficult, when I came on the school board a couple of years ago, they [IASB] had two

planned, but one got cancelled and I could not attend the first one, so I

was out of luck. I think we are at a disadvantage because the powers

that be forget that there is a Southern Illinois.

Other participants believed that the IASB provided for local trainings but they were not well attended. For instance, Ron (BF) noted that, "Well we just had a dinner at a local school put on by the IASB. For members to attend it cost between twelve and fifteen dollars. Out of the division, I bet there were not forty members there total. They [IASB trainings] are poorly attended in the Egyptian area and the cost did not meet the price of a meal." There was no clear consensus among board members or superintendents concerning where trainings should be conducted. But, most felt that trainings should be tied to the local district and conducted by the IASB and/or superintendent.

As illustrated throughout this chapter, both board members and superintendents indicated that the superintendent and the IASB should play key roles in board member trainings. This is currently how most training occurs, through IASB workshops and superintendent led activities. At this point in time, there are no mandatory laws regulating trainings. As described in this section, the scope of the training is an important issue along with the fact that other elected officials are not mandated to attend trainings. Thus, requiring school board members to attend training may be perceived as excessive by some.

Other elected officials are not required to be trained. The majority of board members interviewed in the focus group believed that they are being singled out from other elected officials concerning mandatory training mandates. However, in one-on-one interviews with a different set of board members, only one board member cited this as a

concern. Significantly, this person holds a key position with the IASB. The IASB is not in favor of a mandatory training program for board members. Paul (BI) reiterated this point in our interview. He is on the director's board for the IASB and stated "We have had that opinion already and they [IASB] kind of rejected it [mandatory training] for far." It is important to note that while discussing this topic in the focus group, a board member [Ron] who also holds a position with the IASB, initiated the discussion concerning the IASB's position concerning mandatory training. Ron (BF) argued that, "The IASB does not want a required training program monitored by the state legislative because you have too much. We do this because we want to and not because we have to." This prompt led into a discussion and overall consensus of the board member focus group attendees concerning how school board members are being singled out for training. On the other hand, none of the superintendents interviewed cited singling out school board members as compared to other publicly elected officials for training as a concern.

Board members talked about how they understand some of the rationale for board member training, such as handling state funds. However, board members believed that other elected officials handled state funds as well and it is unfair for board members to be the center of discussion about mandated training in the General Assembly. To illustrate this point, Lori (BF) stated,

> We do handle our share of state funds. That is probably their [legislators] reasoning for wanting to monitor us. Sometimes we wonder where other elected people in the county and city levels receive their training. If they [legislators] are going to monitor board members, I feel they ought to look first at county boards and city government and not make it [training] a

popularity contest for political reasons. They [legislators] need to force them

[county/city trustees] into some sort of educational system, because they deal

with more money then we do. But, I feel that it comes down to that because of

the funding we handle. There is merit, but I think we do an excellent job.

One interviewee felt that it is unconstitutional for elected officials to mandate

other elected officials to receive training. He indicated that because we live in a

democracy, it is the people who decide who sits in office and decide if they are qualified

to represent on their behalf. Elaborating on this point, Ron (BF) stated

I think it [mandatory training] is unconstitutional. How can one

governing body impose on another governing body? What are they

going to do? We are all elected officials, so are they going to take

away our electives? I do not know how that legislative policy could

exist and I would not abide by it. If you are an elected official, you are

an elected official. The only way they [legislators] can remove you is

impeachment or you leave the district.

Summary of Training Issues

Participants in my study agreed that the IASB provides the primary training for

board members, followed by the superintendent. Most participants viewed these trainings

very favorably. Besides the IASB and the superintendent, some board members received

training on the job and from experience. Primarily, this entailed learning from other

fellow board members and attending board meetings prior to being elected. Because there

are no mandatory training mandates, there was a general consensus that it is up to each

board member to take the initiative in learning about their roles and duties.

New board member orientation and school board member and/or superintendent collaboration were identified as two primary training areas for board members. New board member orientation should cover policies, procedures, and expectations as well as training on collaboration. Newly elected board members were viewed by most participants as most likely to not understand their roles and duties, and as a result run for the school board with personal agendas. Many board members and superintendents felt that new board member training could assist newly appointed board members in understanding different perspectives, their duties and limitations as board members.

Regarding school board member and/or superintendent collaboration, a majority of the participants commented on the importance of teamwork and how training mandates could potentially help. Training mandates may deter citizens who hope to run for the school board for personal agendas and it would benefit board members in learning their roles. Board members who do not understand their role can negatively impact board governance and micromanage of the superintendent.

A majority of the participants were concerned about training costs and the time commitment associated with mandatory training mandates. Most board members work full-time jobs and do not receive pay for their service as board members. Thus, training mandates may deter citizen in running for the board especially in smaller communities. However, if excessive demands are placed on board members, compensation should follow.

Research participants voiced concern about the nature and scope of board member trainings. Most suggested that school board trainings address the local needs of the district and often there are differences between districts such as rural and urban school

districts. Additionally, participants indicated that board members may be more motivated to pursue professional development if trainings were tied to the unique needs of the district and that if trainings were local, board members may be more motivated to attend due to the convenience of the meetings.

A majority of board members, especially in the focus group, felt that they were being unfairly targeted for trainings by the legislative mandates when other elected officials are not. Although some board members understood the rationale of why board members should pursue training such as handling state funds, board members felt that they should not be singled out. A few board members questioned the legality of mandating elected officials to require training. On the other hand, board members indicated that most board members already receive training through the IASB and receive more on-going training than other elected officials.

Personal Reflections

A goal of this research was to identify the perceptions of public school superintendents and school board members regarding training and evaluation. Here I want to connect the findings I just described back to the literature and to my personal experience working with superintendents and school boards.

The majority of research participants cited that school board members are primarily trained by the following or a combination of the following: IASB, superintendent, and on-the-job training and/or prior experiences. This information is consistent with research literature, which also shows there is not a clear consensus concerning how trainings should be structured (IEL, 2001; Thomas, 1993). Research literature offers suggestions regarding who should conduct trainings such as utilizing

colleges, universities, associations, state departments of education, businesses and veteran board members (IEL, 2001).

Similar to the research literature, participants indicated that superintendents played a key role in board member trainings along with on-the-job training. Participants noted that the superintendent is an educator and the leader of the board. They felt that the superintendent sets the tone for board member training. Land (2002) also noted that superintendents are a primary source in board trainings, but members may prefer other approaches such as learning on the job and independent readings.

When training is mandated, state boards of education are utilized most often. This may be due to the fact that the public wants the state to play a stronger role in its public schools. According to the 38th Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, there is a public trend where citizens increasingly prefer the state to be more involved in educational matters (Rose & Gallup, 2006). As stated, according to Land (2002) state boards of education are used most frequently in states that have mandatory training statutes in place. I wonder if state boards of education played such a major part of board trainings prior to legislation that made it mandatory in some states. If so, it could have been an easy transition for state boards to continue to offer training courses. On the other hand, most of the participants in this study enjoyed and valued the trainings through the IASB and superintendent of their districts. Thus, if training was made mandatory in states such as Illinois, what would be the role of the IASB and school district superintendents? While training is not currently mandated, many board members voluntarily educate themselves concerning their roles through the IASB and/or superintendent. Hypothetically, if trainings were made mandatory in Illinois and the state board conducted these trainings, would there be

resentment and less interest in board member trainings due to the fact that trainings are not conducted by the IASB?

Most of the participants in this study relied almost equally upon the IASB, superintendent and on the job training/prior experiences for board member training. Participants in this study also noted the importance of having veteran school board members mentor newly elected and/or appointed board members as suggested by IEL (2001). Many of the participants felt that senior board members could bring newly appointed board members up to speed regarding board procedures and why previous board decisions were made. However, participants noted that while it is important to have board member mentoring, it is equally important to make sure that a respected senior board member mentors. This may be due to the fact that most participants noted that some board members serve on the board with personal agendas, and these members could negatively impact newly appointed members.

When a board member does not understand their role and duty, it affects superintendent and/or board collaboration and board member attendance at board meetings. The importance of school board and/or superintendent collaboration was cited in all of the interview settings with the exception of the superintendent focus group. Nevertheless, participants in the superintendent focus group mentioned how new board members can create problems with personal agendas and alluded to group collaboration in some instances, but there were no in depth conversations on this topic. A possible explanation may be that one of the research participants in this setting was also a board member who was known for his personal agendas. For instance, a superintendent in this

research setting informed me how he did not want to make any comments regarding personal agendas with this participant present.

IEL (2001) noted the ambiguity that exists between the school board and superintendents, which leads to micromanagement and superintendent turnover. Glass (2001) discussed how board governance, specifically micromanagement, troubled most superintendents. Participants felt that if board members understood their role and duties, the board could then be more effective in terms of governance by limiting role confusion. This is consistent with findings in the literature (Jazzar 2005; IEL, 2001). Lori (BF) offered an example of role confusion when she stated, "A board member resigned because they were unclear of their job description. They thought they had influence in personnel and they were trying to influence the superintendent in a personnel matter. It was shared that it was not their role to be directly involved in personnel matters." In this scenario, a board member resigned because they were unclear regarding their role and duties.

Perhaps many superintendents resign because they work with boards that do not understand their roles and duties and as a result engage in micromanagement. Todras (1993) reported that school boards and superintendents suffered strained relationships and typically superintendents resign in less than three years (particularly in large cities) due to role confusion, which leads to micromanagement. Alternatively, in my study, the majority of board members interviewed stated the importance of working alongside the superintendent. Participants said that disagreements may occur between the superintendent and the school board, but also said they knew that collaboration was vital. For example, Donald (BI) offered, "I believe that the board governing process correlates

with the longevity of the superintendent. It entails the relationship with the superintendent and the longevity of the school board. We do not try to micromanage what the superintendent is doing; we trust them [administrators] to do their jobs well."

Training costs and time concerns associated with board member training are mentioned often in the research literature. According to research by Calvert (2004), board members would participate in school board member training even if board member training was not mandatory, but they expressed concern with past unfunded mandates. Some participants argued that board members should be compensated for time spent in professional development and questioned who would pay for these trainings. Further, issues such as time and money may prohibit citizens from running for the school board, as was cited by research conducted by CASDA (1990). In my study, Kurt (BI) commented, "If it [training] was a requirement for continuing education, it would take a lot of time uncompensated away from other obligations." Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear whether or not mandatory training would actually deter board members from seeking board member positions. Mike (SI) stated, "Training might cause some people not to seek election to the board because of the training requirement. I think that once requirements begin to be placed upon board members, compensation should follow." Research clearly shows that board members need to be educated concerning their role and duties. Moreover, Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) noted how citizens would be more motivated to serve on the board if state laws and local policies would clarify board member roles.

Board members in this study argued that trainings should be geared to meet local district needs. This view was not held by any of the superintendents. Perhaps this is due

to the fact that school board members feel a greater need to represent local concerns because they are elected officials representing their communities, unlike superintendents who are not elected. CASDA (1990) recommended that the state, through regulatory guidelines, require each district to develop their own training program focused on the unique needs of each district. This would ensure local control of board trainings.

Participants in this study agreed that training is important although there were some concerns associated with a mandatory training program. Due to the fact that board members are elected to represent the community, it is important for board members to communicate their goals and work well with the community. In this next section, I explore the relationship between board governance and community satisfaction.

Board Governance and Community Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction Theory is a popular theory in discussing school board governance. According to Dissatisfaction Theory, the political and governance cycle of school boards rarely changes unless it is the result of a negative event of great magnitude, such as tax referenda. If a negative event occurs, often board members are not re-elected. This is often followed by the dismissal of the superintendent as well (Alsbury, 2002 & 2004). Board members who are trained and evaluated in various topics such as how to solicit stakeholder support may help limit community dissatisfaction. A purpose of this research was to identify specific areas that are mostly associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction. While discussing various topics regarding this issue, the need for better communication was overwhelmingly cited by board members as a tool in reducing community dissatisfaction.

Most Cited Areas Concerning Board Governance and Community Dissatisfaction

Participants discussed several topics associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction. These topics included: superintendent and/or board collaboration, sports, financial issues and the need for better communications.

Superintendent and/or board collaboration. Superintendent and/or board member collaboration was cited by a majority of the school board members as a key factor in promoting community satisfaction. This entailed both board member and superintendents understanding their roles and duties. However, none of the superintendents interviewed cited this as a concern. Alternatively, participants expressed concern with how the school board and superintendent reached decisions. Board members indicated that although the school board and superintendent may not always agree (behind close doors) on the best course of action, it is essential that final decisions are supported by all. Regarding board member/superintendent collaboration, Jodi (BI) agreed on the importance of collaboration. She said,

> I do not believe that it should be the responsibility of an individual
> board member to make [decision for the board]; it is the
> superintendent's job. Now if there is a dilemma between the board and
> superintendent, then that is handled in house. But, when the doors are
> open to the public, then it is the responsibility of the superintendent to
> make a single statement to the public. Although there may be some
> heated discussions behind closed doors, when the session is over, it is
> done and this is the decision even if everyone does not agree with it.
> After the votes are completed, the decision is made and the board

members need to support the decision. It is important not to go

overboard with comments on the decision and we try hard not to make

negative comments about the decision.

Participants expressed concern regarding board member collaboration and the

impact that it has on community satisfaction. Specifically, they viewed teamwork among

board members as essential to successful board functioning. Board members commented

that they are elected officials with equal voices and should confer and share information

with each other often about decisions that impact the school district. When information is

not shared, decisions are less likely to be supported by all board members. Lori (BF)

described how information is not always shared between board members which impact

their decision making.

> Our [board] job is to hire the superintendent. A lot of times in this
>
> particular year, we hired someone without providing the board all the
>
> necessary information about hiring a superintendent. It is important
>
> to remember that when you hire a superintendent, you as a board
>
> need to take that responsibility and not hire someone based upon one
>
> person's particular recommendation. Someone is not bringing
>
> information to the board and you take the recommendation. I do not
>
> like when you slide them [superintendent] in and new members do
>
> not know what is going on. You [board member] hire them
>
> [superintendent] without keeping the whole board aware and she
>
> walks in. The entire board hires the superintendent. The board had
>
> the superintendent come in and she was already hired. I did not vote

for her. It causes controversy. This should not happen without the

board being on board with what is going on. Sometimes this

happens.

Lori's belief concerning the employment of the superintendent is reinforced by

the board member orientation pamphlet from Alpha district. According to Alpha's board

orientation pamphlet, hiring the superintendent is perhaps the most important job of the

school board because it is the superintendent who carries out the day to day operations of

the district and represents the school board. Participants noted that it is important to

realize that no individual board member can speak for the entire board nor have any

powers outside of board meetings unless given consent to act on behalf on the board.

More importantly, participants noted that it is the superintendent's job to be the

spokesperson for the school board, but occasionally some school board members who do

not understand their role attempt to assume this responsibility. Board members noted that

a lack of teamwork and role confusion creates friction between board members. This

friction negatively impacts relations with the community because often ideas and

decisions are often not supported by board members which are necessary for effective

governance. Board member training was cited as a possible remedy to assist board

members in understanding their role and working collaboratively. Ladonna (BI) stated, "I

think that it [training] could help. It helps the board members realize that they

individually are not a spokesperson for the board."

Sports. Research participants from both focus groups frequently cited sports as a

leading factor in community dissatisfaction with board governance. Although there was

not a lot of in-depth discussion about sports and community dissatisfaction, the majority

of the participants from both groups nodded and made other gestures during the focus group meetings indicating that sports was a major concern. This topic was not mentioned in the one-on-one interviews with superintendents or board members, however. Concerning sports and board governance, focus group participants commented that too often many communities appear to be more concerned about sports than academic achievement issues. Common sport issues included the hiring/firing of a coach, a parent's child not playing in a sport or not having enough playing time, and funding issues. Community disputes related to sports are commonly brought to the attention of the school board. Board members and superintendents commented that the majority of board meetings are not well attended unless an issue(s) arises with a sport program(s). Bob (SF) indicated, "The key one is sports. This happens all the time. Academics do not matter as much as sports. Actual governing of the school does not play a big part until sports comes into play." Ronald (BF) stated, "Most recently we had a sports situation with a basketball coach that caused a stir. It is a shame that some situations occur over sports rather than a math program or something. There is a big issue over sport issues such as not hiring a coach." Notably, this issue of the community's overly concern regarding sports compared to student academics is an area where the community can be dissatisfied with board governance according to the school board focus group.

Financial issues. All of the research participants cited financial issues as a major concern for community dissatisfaction in relation to board governance and functioning, with the exception of the superintendent focus group. Various topics included: consolidation and/or restructuring of schools and/or districts, building and grounds issues, reduction in force, contract negotiations, class size and tax referenda.

Participants noted that during contract negotiations, board meetings can become intense. Often, school employees are from the community and have support networks within the community that can impact public relations if employees are unhappy. In regard to contract negotiations, Ron (BF) offered,

> We had a situation in our district about five years ago. We ended all
>
> the contracts with the custodian services and contracted with someone
>
> else. We even had to have security there [board meeting]. It has been a
>
> long time ago when we ended the contract with the custodians, but a
>
> lot of people were there to try to keep those jobs. It ended up that they
>
> still lost their jobs due to financial conflicts. But, we got some people
>
> from human services that are supervised and it is all working out. It
>
> was a win-win for everybody; except for the few that lost their jobs.
>
> They have since moved on to other things.

In regard to consolidation of schools, a majority of the participants noted how many citizens of the community are not aware of costs and other facts associated with building and grounds. As a result, some citizens have a skewed perspective about what is best financially. To remedy this problem, board members and superintendents discussed how they encourage citizens to attend public information hearings conducted at town hall meetings or board meetings to obtain facts associated with building and grounds. Reflecting on prior experience, Jodi (BI) offered,

> We had one incident where the education department was in the red.
>
> This resulted in our closing down the kindergarten program and
>
> moving those children to the older school. There was a transitional

conflict with this. Now we have the issue were the building is above

capacity and we need to add on to the school to meet the need. The

community stated that we have a building, why not just use that one?

But, you have to take into consideration that we have administrative

costs, janitorial fees and such, a lot of different expenses that people

were not aware of. Many parents do not have a true understanding of

what takes place and what the bigger picture is. We encourage them

[parents] to attend the board meetings and such so they [parents] can

obtain factual information. We try to make sure that the parent's

concerns are heard and an understanding is met. The parents were

concerned about class size; so we eliminated several offices to

accommodate the best we could.

Although participants encouraged citizens to attend informational meetings within

the community, most agreed that it is the school board's responsibility to make sure that

the community has all of the facts. Reflecting on prior experience, Shawn (BI) talked

about how the high school board in his community was perceived by some as not being

forthcoming with sharing information about the safety of one of its buildings in order to

obtain support for a newer high school. As a result, this negatively impacted the building

plans of the K-8 district in the community. Shawn (BI) noted,

They [high school board] got a lot of support for a new school, but

they [high school board] sold it to the public by saying the building

was not safe, but it was. Now, we [K-8 board] want to consolidate it

[former high school] again and make three buildings move into the old

high school and keep the west side of the school. That was not

received well. It failed because the public viewed the school as unsafe.

Regarding consolidation of schools, several participants commented how the community was unhappy with the school board when they decided on attendance centers compared to neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools are schools located in the student's neighborhood, while attendance centers are schools where students are assigned a school based on grade levels. Participants specifically noted that many citizens were concerned about students being bussed to appropriate attendance centers. Kurt (BI) described how this situation affected the district,

The city school, prior to my being on the board changed the school

systems to grade level community schools. This meant that we [board]

combined schools from a K-5 to having a Kindergarten through third

grade and a fourth through fifth grade school. The community did not

like having their kids bussed around, but we had to do this because of

our poverty needs and parents having multiple moves for various

reasons. We [board] went to an attendance center process. It was in the

best interest of our children.

Many of the participants discussed challenges in generating enough revenue to pay for school programs. Citizens do not typically like the school board to consider recommendations such as tax referendums, program cuts and sales tax increases to generate money and generally do not support them. On the other hand, citizens fail to provide any alternatives to generate money and as a result school staff often loses. Josh (BI) and Fred (BI) agreed and discussed the problems of tax referendums in their district.

Josh (BI) recalled how citizens in his district were not in favor of a tax referenda, but could not provide any direction as to how to obtain money for the operation of schools. Fortunately, the teachers in his district agreed to concessions which assisted the board financially regarding the operation of its schools.

In regard to tax referendums, Fred (BI) stated, "We have another referendum in April 2009 in our county concerning a one percent sales tax. The sales tax would be used for capital gains and improvements. Now, this has been defeated before and we are trying it again. I am not sure of the possible outcome this time. The voters are hesitant to understand that we are working to make things better."

Communications. The majority of board members interviewed cited a lack of communication as another key problem associated with community dissatisfaction. Most of the participants indicated that the board and/or superintendent have to be forthcoming and explain to their constituents the state of their respective school district. This issue was not addressed among the board member focus group or any of the superintendents interviewed, however.

Concerning the need for better communications with the public, participants noted how school board training and/or evaluation may assist board members in public relations and community outreach. Patricia (BI) said, "Board training would possibly help if board members were given training in regard to handling the press or irate taxpayers and ways to get better communications to the public." Participants agreed that the school board needs to be creative in getting their message out and keeping communications open regarding board business, but specifically creative as it relates to potentially controversial

issues. Josh (BI) described the importance of keeping communication open in his district. He reflected,

> The biggest thing is maintaining communication. Help the community
>
> understand why you [board] are going to do what you are doing. We
>
> [board] are facing a sales tax in our community. Unfortunately, the
>
> average tax payer does not understand the reasons for the tax increase.
>
> We [board] try to keep communications open to the public. We [board]
>
> try to have open forums and speak to our local rotaries and other
>
> community programs. Any decision that is made has to be brought to
>
> the community. Before we [board] make an unpopular decision, it is
>
> important that we get this information out to the people.

Board members discussed negative repercussions associated with failing to communicate with the public. For instance, superintendents are often dismissed if the school board is not willing to frequently communicate with the community specifically regarding controversial issues. This usually happens because the superintendent is the school board's spokesperson and is perceived as a major contributor regarding popular or unpopular decisions from the school board. In other words, usually the superintendent is the person who is out front and is the center of attention. Kurt (BI) explained how a superintendent was released by a school board due to a lack of communication in part by the board. Kurt stated,

> The superintendent of the high school was released and again, this was
>
> due to new building issues. But, I think this could have been handled
>
> better by the board by not doing so many things secretly. They [board]

were very secret about the place for the school and they did not

encourage community connection and trust.

Participants in this study noted how there are a variety of factors that impact

board governance and community dissatisfaction. Among the topics discussed,

participants noted the following: superintendent/board collaboration, sports, financial

issues, and the need for better communications. Although, there were a variety of factors

that influenced board governance and community dissatisfaction, participants agreed that

board/superintendent collaboration and the need for better communications with the

public were both essential in developing community satisfaction.

Overall, the superintendents and board members in my study felt that good

communications among board members, the superintendent, and the public was vital to

effect board functioning. Sometimes this meant that the school board needed to be more

tactful in getting its message out to the community. The community needs to understand

why the board is making certain decisions and how the board is governing on their

behalf. Focused and localized training could assist board members in dealing with the

media, talking to irate citizens, and talking to constituents regarding school board affairs.

Training could also provide public speaking tips to ensure that board members are tactful

and communicate clearly when discussing board affairs with the public.

Personal Reflection

Research participants cited superintendent and school board collaboration as a key

concern in addressing the degree of community satisfaction with board governance.

Particularly, participants noted how a lack of understanding of one's role and duties

contributes to poor board member/superintendent collaboration. According to

dissatisfaction theory, when school boards do not practice good governance, this has negative consequences, such as board member and superintendent turnover. Such turnover can hamper the ability of the board to establish and sustain goals to increase student achievement.

Board members in this study noted how they viewed their superintendent as part of the governing team and they tended to treat each other as equals. Yet none of the superintendents mentioned that they felt as equals or as members of a governing team. This is interesting considering that most superintendents are concerned about issues of micromanagement (Glass, 2001). Perhaps a possible reason why superintendents did not cite this as a concern may be due to the fact that superintendents are employed by the school board. Therefore, superintendents are subordinate to the school board and don't view themselves as equals with board members. Thus, superintendents may see themselves as having a role in the governing process, but not as true members of the governing team. In fact, a potential reason why there was no discussion concerning board/superintendent collaboration among superintendents may be because superintendents see themselves as employees of the school board and not as equal members of the board.

School board/superintendent collaboration is a common theme in research literature regarding community dissatisfaction with school boards. According to Alsbury (2002), school boards are the target of community dissatisfaction particularly regarding the issue of role confusion between the school board and superintendent. The relationship between the board and superintendent is interdependent because the board relies on information from the superintendent to make decisions. This interdependent relationship

can create a burden on school boards and administration in trying to separate the board

from being overly involved in the day to day operations of the district (Land, 2002).

According to dissatisfaction theory, voters can choose at any given time to be involved in

school board governance, but many voters choose not to, except when they become

dissatisfied with the school board. When citizens become dissatisfied, citizens take

actions that lead to board defeat and board member resignations, which in some instances

leads to superintendent turnover (Alsbury, 2002).

Participants in this study noted that too often the community's primary

involvement in school board affairs concerns sports. The primary goal of school should

be to promote and increase student academic achievement. A secondary goal of school

may be to provide sports and other enrichment opportunities, but these secondary

activities should not take precedence over students' academic success. Unfortunately, if

sports are the primary concern among the community, the community may be willing to

vote a citizen into office who foregrounds sports over academics, or might choose not to

reelect a board member based on the issue. According to dissatisfaction theory, citizens

usually get involved in school board affairs in areas with which they are extremely

dissatisfied, such as sports (Alsbury, 2002). Bob (SF) described this concern. "The key

one is sports. This happens all the time. Academics do not matter as much as sports.

Actual governing of the school does not play a big part until sports comes into play."

The majority of the participants, with the exception of members of the

superintendent focus group, mentioned how financial issues can negatively affect the

community's view in regard to board governance. This is a common theme in research

literature, as cited by Alsbury (2002) and Picus (2000). According to Picus (2000), school

districts typically have financial resources to do an effective job, but not as much as they want. Further, districts can save money by reviewing how they spend money. Land (2002) noted how school boards must be knowledgeable regarding the negotiation of labor contracts and how to pursue the generation of money through bonds and tax levies.

If board members do not spend their resources wisely and have to make cuts in either educational or sports programs, the community may become unhappy and choose to replace board member(s) and possibly the superintendent as well (Alsbury, 2002). If board members were trained in areas such as finance, maybe community dissatisfaction could be limited as described by participants in this study. For instance, Ron (BF) indicated that the community reacted negatively when his board attempted to settle a contract with its custodians. Negotiations were so intense that security had to be present.

The final key issue related to board effectiveness and community satisfaction is communication. A lack of effective communication was not mentioned as a concern in the board member focus group or among the superintendents studied, however it was raised as an issue in individual board member interviews. If board members fail to communicate with constituents and are perceived as not representing the interests of the community, this may result in board and/or superintendent turnover as described by Alsbury (2002 & 2004). To assist in remedying this problem, school board training and evaluation may be useful to ensure that the school board listens to, and actively engages, its stakeholders.

Maintaining communication with constituents has other benefits has well. Boards that effectively communicate with the public maintain better relationships with the

public. Also, board members can possibly influence their constituents to be more concerned about priority issues such as student academic success as compared to sports.

Participants in this study were quick to point out that the community primarily shows interest in school board affairs as it relates to superintendent/school board relations, sports, financial issues and a lack of communications compared to being concerned with student academic issues. Board member training could benefit board members by being proactive in the board's approach to major issues and how to effectively communicate with its constituents. At the same time, board evaluations can enhance school board trainings by monitoring the board's progress in identified training areas and specific educational goals. In the next section, I explore how participants described the current evaluation process for boards and the most important evaluation areas to evaluate.

Evaluation

As I have described, the research literature and the interviews with my participants suggest that new school board members can be unclear about their role and duties. An evaluation assessment tool can assist in determining board members' strengths and deficits in fulfilling their duties. Evaluations can also support the school board in setting and monitoring goals that are deemed important by the school board (CASDA, 1990).

Research participants discussed two ways in which school boards are evaluated. These included self-evaluations and implicit evaluation through public perceptions such as elections, surveys, forums and citizen complaints.

How Boards Are Evaluated

      Self-evaluations. Typically school boards engage in informal self-evaluation, sometimes with assistance from the IASB. According to the participants, these informal self-evaluations periodically occurred at board retreats organized by the superintendent. One of the areas typically evaluated is student achievement. However, school board evaluations were not conducted consistently, as is common with teachers and district administrators.

      Regarding self-evaluations, Lori (BF) stated, "We [board] have set goals and we evaluate our goals and assess ourselves to make sure we are on track. Other than that, an evaluation similar to the one we would give our superintendent, no we do not." Ron (BF) stated, "The IASB offer services to schools that ask for it. They will give you [board] a seminar or training where school boards can self evaluate. They give you resources to self-evaluate. I have participated in that in the twelve years I have been on the board."

      Board members noted that board self-evaluations generally occur at board retreats organized by the superintendent. Self-evaluations conducted at board retreats are usually informal and the board discusses many other topics as well, such as financial issues. Regarding retreats and self-evaluations, Tad (SI) stated, "I think boards should self-evaluate. Generally, when we [board and administrators] go to retreats, we have time to look at ourselves and look at areas in which we have been successful or what areas need to be changed. The retreat is less formal and the members are more apt to discussion and evaluation."

Concerning board evaluation, participants mentioned that student achievement should be a factor in board evaluations, among other things. Tad (SI) offered that, "Student achievement is also how they [board] evaluate themselves. Bottom line, if kids are not getting a good education, then something is wrong and we [board and administrators] need to look at it. We push progress." Alternatively, a few board members were unsure if student achievement should reflect the school board as compared to school teachers, and others indicated that it should be a team effort among the school board, administrators and teachers. Role confusion related to evaluation was evident based on the mixture of answers regarding the board's role on the issue of student achievement. Regarding student achievement and teacher effectiveness, Ladonna (BI) remarked, "We [board] are always looking at student achievement data, but I do not know that it is board effectiveness as much as teacher effectiveness." At the same time, other participants commented that the school board should work along with teachers to positively impact student achievement. Jodi (BI) recalled how the school board worked with teachers in her district. In describing the transition between 5th-6th grade in her district, she reflected that,

> There were a lot of students that were in academic failure range at the
>
> first and second semesters because they [students] were not turning in
>
> work. It was done in a much more self organization process, but they
>
> were not turning in work. So a plan was implemented that if those
>
> students got a zero, they were not allowed to attend recess, but went to
>
> a different teacher and completed their assignments. They did not get
>
> full credit because they earned a late grade, but they got some credit

for their work. So the board is able to encourage the superintendent to
look into policies by investigating the problems seen overall.

As pointed out, most board evaluations do not occur consistently, as with teachers and administrators. Nevertheless, board members do periodically discuss various issues at board retreats in which they evaluate their effectiveness. Besides board self-evaluations, board members in this study described how public perceptions can be utilized in evaluating school board effectiveness.

Public perceptions. Research participants offered that besides self-evaluations, school boards are evaluated indirectly through public perceptions such as elections, surveys, forums and citizen complaints. However, the superintendent focus group did not list public perceptions as a vehicle in evaluating the school board. This topic was rarely mentioned in the board focus group either.

Concerning public perceptions and board evaluations, individual interview participants were quick to mention that the public are the true evaluators of board members. Participants noted that the public make their own evaluations by attending board meetings to voice their opinions and through the electoral process. Nevertheless, some participants noted that the school board has a much more formal process to evaluate staff members such as teachers and administrators. Jerry (BI) stated, "We [board] do not have a process as far as self-evaluation. We have not done anything like that. I guess the public is the real evaluators." Further, he stated, "Perhaps one way is more antidotal in regards to the number of complaints we [board] get, but often times if may be something related with money spent and why." Kurt (BI) agreed, "We [board] do not have a formal

process other than the election process and public opinion. We evaluate staff and the

superintendent."

In regard to public perception as an informal board evaluation mechanism, other

participants noted that they occasionally utilize surveys. Surveys assist in gauging

specific areas such as staff morale. Shawn (BI) recalled utilizing surveys in his district.

He offered,

> I do not recall us being evaluated as a board. We have had surveys. I
>
> do not know that we have been evaluated based on our performance…
>
> I think public perception, how your staff reacts and how you are
>
> engaged in the public. I mean if you have a number of grievances at
>
> you, and if you have a lot of upset teachers, this says a lot. I mean the
>
> high school used to always have a lot of negativity in the papers, not
>
> so much now.

As discussed, self-evaluations and public perceptions are two ways in which

school boards commonly measure their effectiveness. But, there are still questions about

which areas concerning school board governance should be evaluated. Participants in this

study identified board member role and duties and board/superintendent collaboration as

two important areas of board evaluation.

Most Important Evaluation Areas

Role and duties. When discussing the topic of evaluation, respondents

interviewed believed that board members should be evaluated based upon their role and

duties. Roles included creating and implementing policies, attending meetings regularly,

participating in board business, and monitoring student achievement. Participants noted

that if board members do not understand their role and duties and/or have poor attendance, this will affect board member and/or superintendent collaboration.

Members of the superintendent focus group agreed on the importance and use of board evaluations, but felt that superintendents should not be directly involved in the assessment of board evaluations and suggested self-evaluations as an alternative. Due to the fact that the school board hires the superintendent, superintendents did not want to appear as dictating to the school board. Moreover, if superintendents were a part of the evaluation of the school board, this could be perceived as a conflict of interest that would call into question the validity of the evaluation process. For example, an issue of retaliation could arise from a negative board evaluation by the superintendent. Regarding this potential conflict, Nick (SF) remarked, "Maybe it could be a self-evaluation, because I would not want to evaluate my boss."

A majority of the participants indicated that school board members should be trained in their role and duties and evaluated based upon these. Regarding evaluating board member role and duties, Tom (SF) commented,

> One of the tools would be to look at governing. You have to look at
>
> duties, powers and responsibilities of a board member and evaluate
>
> based on those. I do not see a need to evaluate the board on things they
>
> are not responsible for. Governments [board] need to be able to
>
> communicate with the citizens and stakeholders. They are not the ones
>
> responsible for the day to day working of the school function so you
>
> would not need to evaluate based upon those.

Concerning the structure of board evaluations, Tad (SI) agreed and gave specific examples of areas that the board could be evaluated in. He reflected, "A self evaluation could be used. I would tailor it to the role of the member, such as governing the board and community involvement, questions about policy, how are we monitoring the superintendent and the follow through on policies."

Board/superintendent collaboration. Board member collaboration was another area of board evaluation cited by some participants. Individual interview participants noted this as a need, though it did not come up in the focus groups. Due to the fact that board governance is a group process, I am unsure why it was not noted in the focus groups. Regarding board member collaboration, Ladonna (BI) offered, "I guess that because I am a psychologist, I would look at the decision making process, group dynamics, how we function as a group and who take leadership roles."

Several participants commented on the importance of board member attendance as a part of the board member roles and duties. Poor board member attendance affects the board governance process. For instance, members can not vote on school board issues if a quorum of the members is not present. Jodi (BI) agreed and recalled experiences in her district.

> I would suggest mandatory attendance. I mean at some local levels,
> they [board] could not have a quorum because they did not have
> enough members to attend and they cancelled the meeting. Month after
> month they [board] did not have the quorum of the members and that
> poses a problem.

Student achievement was also mentioned as an area of board evaluation. However, this topic was not addressed among any of the superintendents interviewed (including focus group) or in the school board focus group. Nevertheless, some of the participants in all interview groups mentioned student achievement data as an area in which their board currently self-evaluates. Pertaining to evaluating student achievement data, participants mentioned soliciting teacher input and reviewing teacher observations. Lucy (BI) and Paul (BI) agreed on the importance of the board monitoring student achievement. Lucy commented, "I would have teacher input on policies they feel are advantageous to the students. I will look at the goals and see how we are achieving these goals." Paul noted, that he is

> …mainly interested in knowing what the students learn. I would like to monitor them [students] from K-8 and see if we are doing our jobs right. Last year, in the 8th grade we had about 115 students with F's. Teachers have been working hard and we are down to 65. We are interested in what the students do; I mean we have after school programs and such. As a board, we are interested in the needs of the students. Right now, we are in the process of hiring 10 more teachers which is not the easiest thing to.

Overall, participants in this study described how their school boards engage in informal self evaluations. The IASB also provides information to superintendents and board members upon request regarding evaluation tools. These tools are commonly used at retreats. During these self-evaluations, student achievement is a key area in which boards monitor their effectiveness.

Personal Reflection

The majority of the research participants indicated that they engage in an informal, inconsistent self-evaluation processes. These informal self-evaluations most commonly occur at board retreats organized by the superintendent where board members discuss board goals and student achievement test data. Some of the participants said they utilize resources prepared by the IASB for evaluation purposes. However, most of the participants noted that they did not have a formal process of evaluation and evaluations were inconsistent and irregular.

Perhaps it is wise that superintendents are not involved in any formal evaluations of the board, as discussed in the superintendent focus group. If superintendents play a key role in evaluating the school board, this causes a potential conflict of interest; the school board is the superintendent's employer.

Evaluations can impact school board success. Evaluations can assist in determining if the school board has met its goals. Yet, similar to the issue of board member training, there is not a consensus as to how evaluations should be conducted. Land (2002) noted that evaluations should be tied to student achievement. CASDA (1990) noted that parents, students, teachers, administrators, custodians, secretaries, community member and others should play a role in board evaluations as well. Board evaluations at the very least should be tied to school district goals and student achievement. If students are not learning, schools should re-examine their mission as learning centers.

Fridley (2006) noted how the majority of unit districts in Illinois did not engage in board evaluations, and those that participated in evaluations, did not evaluate

consistently. How effective are these self-evaluations? Self-evaluations are subjective and are based upon board members analysis concerning their effectiveness. However, reflective self-assessment may or may not reflect reality, as noted by Glass (2000). Board members are responsible for the district policies and oversight of the district. However, it is a contradiction that boards hold others responsible for their performance, but fails to take responsibility for their own performance as noted by Petronis et al., (1996) and SERVE (1997).

Public perceptions are perhaps the most visible means of board evaluation, specifically the voting process. Tad (SI) offered, "It is called election. Basically, we [board and superintendent] do self evaluation. The board is my boss and they answer to the taxpayers, so evaluation is done through election." Other means of assessing public perceptions were surveys, forums and citizen complaints.

Board members are elected officials who are given the task to represent their constituents. It seems logical that if constituents are unhappy, voters can choose not to reelect its board member(s). How informed are voters about board members? Research conducted by Yackera (1999) indicated that a majority of voters in Pennsylvania were unaware of board duties and qualifications. Furthermore, according to Dissatisfaction Theory, citizens may have the right to vote in board elections but typically choose only to vote when they are dissatisfied. According to research participants in my study, sports were a big issue for community involvement. While the election process and public perception tell us something about effectiveness, they should not be the primary means in evaluating boards. Public perceptions are unpredictable and inconsistent. Research

conducted by CASDA (1990) and Glass (2000) indicated that the election process fails to provide consistent feedback regarding the board's performance.

Ultimately, the research participants agreed that board members should be evaluated on fulfilling their role and duties, specifically their role in making policies. Participants noted that the IASB has outlined the roles and duties of board members which could serve as a guide. Most importantly, participants noted that board members should not be evaluated concerning the day-to-day operations of the school, but should govern through policies. To illustrate this point, Nick (SF) stated that,

> I agree that the school board association has outlined roles and responsibility and to me, you evaluate based upon those. I would not want to make it an evaluation that goes beyond that because then you get into a micromanaging thing that the superintendents should be in charge of.

Board members roles and expectations should be clearly defined and board members should be assessed regarding their performance. Research indicates that evaluations can illustrate the degree of school board effectiveness. Further, evaluations can assist board members in understanding their role and serve as a resource to the board concerning setting and monitoring goals as noted by CASDA (1990).

If school boards are not held accountable for their governance, are we jeopardizing the quality of student achievement? Canciamilla (2000) reported how effective schools boards displayed teamwork and utilized a team approach in making decisions that impacted the district. Although board members may disagree, this should not hamper board members ability to work together. Jerry (BI) maintained, "I think that it

is important that there is communication with the board members and respect. You do not want someone with a minority view to feel ganged up on. People can disagree and still work together. I do not know how you would evaluate that."

Attendance could hamper the ability of board members to work together. Should board members commitment and dedication to the district be called into question if they are not an active participant in school board affairs? Board members who miss a majority of school board meetings and other important district events may lack information needed to make an informed decisions about the district. Consequently, this may create strife with other board members.

Board member lack of attendance at meetings creates other problems, such as conducting board meetings if there is not a quorum. Unfortunately, states such as Illinois currently have no repercussions in place if board members are absent from a majority of school board meetings. The need for such a system has been recognized by the Illinois General Assembly, as it proposed HB 5769, which will require the removal of board members who do not fulfill their role and duties.

Student achievement is perhaps the central area that should be assessed in board evaluations. This was noted by the majority of board members during one-on-one interviews. This is common sense. The primary function of schools is to educate students. School boards play an important role in setting the policies necessary for students to achieve. While there is disagreement as to how evaluations should be conducted and what specific areas should be assessed, two essential areas of board assessments are student achievement and collaborative decision making as noted by Land (2002) and Danzberger

(1994). A school's primary mission is to ensure a quality education for all students, which could be accomplished in a democratic collaborative process.

My research findings indicate that training and evaluation could improve school board governance. Training was found to be beneficial especially for newer school board members and trainings should be tied to the unique needs facing school districts. However, there are still concerns in regard to the nature and scope of board trainings. Concerning evaluations, participants noted that board member role and duties and board/superintendent collaboration was two key areas that should be included in a board evaluation. In the next chapter, I discuss these findings further and directly answer my research questions. I also offer recommendations from the research and recommendations for additional research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, I examined the perceptions of public school superintendents and

school board members regarding school board training and evaluation. I undertook this

study because of my personal experiences associated with board governance and my role

as a principal, as well as to better understand the impetus for the recent increase in state

involvement on the issue of mandatory training and evaluation for school board

members. During the fiscal years of 2006-2008, bills HB 4194, HB 1680, HB 1466, and

HB 5769 were introduced in the Illinois General Assembly that addressed school board

training and evaluation. Although the bills failed to pass prior to the adjournment of the

95th Illinois General Assembly (session sine die), the 96th Illinois General Assembly is

currently contemplating bills HB 174 and SB 750 that address school board member

training. The House and Senate bills address new revenue sources for education and hold

educators and board members accountable for student achievement (Illinois General

Assembly, n.d). It appears that the General Assembly is determined to assist board

members to be more accountable regarding school board governance and its impact on

student achievement.

Based upon my review of research literature and an analysis from my study, board

members and superintendents agree that training and evaluation are important

components to the success of school boards. Specifically, many board members--

especially newly elected members--fail to properly understand their roles and duties,

which often lead to role confusion, challenging board/superintendent collaboration issues,

and an increased number of board members with personal agendas. Although training and

evaluation are seen as important, there is not a clear consensus regarding the form and scope of board member training and evaluation. Board members are especially concerned about issues related to local control, time commitment, and training expenses, as well as how trainings will be conducted. In this chapter, I draw conclusions from this study. I include a summary of my findings where I directly answer my research questions. I then offer recommendations for practice, recommendations for further study in this area, conclusions, and some final reflections about this research.

Summary of Findings

My study on the perceptions of school board members and superintendents concerning board member training and evaluation was guided by three research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of public school superintendents about school board member training and evaluation? 2) What are the perceptions of public school board members about school board member training and evaluation? 3) To what extent are there meaningful differences in the perceptions of school board members and superintendents concerning school board member training and evaluation? While conducting this research, I discovered that many of the perceptions concerning the need and concerns for school board training and evaluation were similar among the school board members and superintendents. Nevertheless, there were some meaningful differences. Consequently, I answer research question 1 and 2 together and note differences in research question 3.

Research Question 1 and 2

Participants in this study indicated that the IASB and/or superintendent currently provides basic school board member training and should continue to do so. Participants

said the IASB provided many workshops on a variety of board member training topics and encouraged all of its members to receive systematic training in order to become master board members. School board members particularly valued IASB's workshops regarding new school board member orientation, which is also evident in research findings conducted by Payne (1994). Due to the need for new board members learning their roles and duties, the IASB encourages newer school board members to participate in its mentoring program so that new members can fully understand the dynamics of being a board member.

Participants agreed that the superintendent provides for board member training as well. In comparison to the IASB, superintendents generally provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities for new school board members. Superintendents frequently provided impromptu trainings at board retreats for new school board members and/or relied on orientation manuals that provided an overview of board member roles and responsibilities. During board retreats, superintendents primarily discussed a general overview of board member roles, board packets and financial reports.

The majority of research participants agreed that training is beneficial to orient new members to the school board as well as to enhance possibilities for board/superintendent collaboration. These two areas were shown as vital components to the success of the school board. Participants indicated that new board members are often unclear about their roles and responsibilities which lead to role-confusion, tensions between the superintendent and the board, and board members who push issues because of personal agendas. Training programs can aid board members in understanding different perspectives concerning school board issues as well as understanding the full

scope of their duty. Training programs will also reduce potential board members from running for the school board for personal reasons, especially if they are required. Through a training program, those potential board members who would likely run for personal or political reasons may view board member training as a deterrent, since it would require early investments of time, and therefore would refuse to run.

The absence of a training program that teaches board members their roles and responsibilities often leads to the micromanagement of the superintendent and a breakdown in board/superintendent collaboration. Participants believed that the board's primary role is to review, revise and create policies for the school district, while the superintendent's role is to implement policies and oversee the day-to-day function of the school district. When board members do not understand their roles, it often leads to role-confusion with board members inadvertently taking on duties designated to the superintendent.

On the issue of board/superintendent collaboration, many participants cited conflicts in board governance as a result of board members not understanding their roles and duties or not recognizing the importance of working as a team to solve problems. Unfortunately, this led to superintendent and board member turnover. Further, poor board/superintendent collaboration negatively affected board governance and community dissatisfaction. Participants in this study noted how some board members failed to support final board decisions. As previously stated, participants viewed a preliminary training program as a method of weeding out individuals without a sincere interest in school board membership or individuals unwilling to work collaboratively to solve educational issues.

Board members and superintendents in this study valued board member training, but expressed concerns about training costs and the time associated with board member training. Because board membership is an unpaid voluntary position, participants agreed that it would be unfair to place excessive demands on board member service. Although board member training is important, many board members have full time careers and families. Thus, excessive training demands may become too burdensome for board members to continue service. More specifically, extensive training programs may deter citizens from running for the board altogether, especially in smaller communities where there is also a smaller pool of qualified board member candidates. Study participants indicated that if board member training was mandated, many were unsure who would pay for it. Many participants recalled being frustrated regarding past unfunded mandates from the state and federal government such as NCLB.

Board members and superintendents in this study agreed that most school boards evaluate their effectiveness utilizing informal self-evaluations conducted at board retreats organized and facilitated by the superintendent. Participants indicated that they valued self-evaluations because it was less formal and members are usually more open and honest about board strengths and deficiencies. The topics most commonly evaluated are student achievement and financial issues.

Participants in this study agreed that board member roles and duties and board/superintendent collaboration were two important areas of a board evaluation. In regard to roles and duties, participants acknowledged that if board evaluations went beyond board member roles and duties, it may lead to the micromanagement of the superintendent. Specific roles of board members that should be evaluated include

implementing policies, attending meetings, participating in board activities and monitoring student achievement.

Participants noted the importance of board members working efficiently and effectively as a team in the area of board/superintendent collaboration. Effective governance of the school board requires a team approach and members must see how their actions or inactions affect the entire board. Moreover, participants noted the importance of evaluating school board member attendance and its impact on board governance. Concerning attendance, board members noted how various board meetings could not proceed due to the absence of a quorum.

Research Question 3

To what extent are there meaningful differences in the perceptions of school board members and superintendents concerning school board member training and evaluation? A majority of the school board member participants indicated that board member trainings should be catered to the local needs of the district and conducted locally. The superintendents interviewed did not make any references to local training needs. Board members indicated that a primary purpose of their existence was to meet the local needs of the community and they were concerned about the potential of training programs eroding local control. Also, board members pointed out that there are a lot of school board governance issues that are unique to school districts in different geographical regions (e.g. urban, rural and suburban). Thus, training programs should not follow a standard model. As a remedy to board member trainings becoming a standard model, board members favored programs that allowed the district to choose areas of training that were unique to their districts. Board members also indicated that they may

be more motivated to attend board member trainings if they were conducted locally due to convenience.

Board members were concerned that they are singled out for training programs. Participants indicated that they are singled out because they handle a large amount of state funds. However, participants believed that other elected officials handle state funds as well and it is unfair to single board members out for training. On the other hand, board members indicated that most board members voluntarily receive more training than most elected officials.

The majority of the board members indicated that if excessive demands such as mandatory training were placed on board members, they should be compensated for their time commitment. Board members stressed the fact that they are volunteers and not paid employees. Therefore, they should not be held to the same standards as someone who was receiving pay for their time and work.

A majority of the superintendents in my study indicated that they should have a primary role in board member trainings. Superintendents indicated that it is their job to set the tone for the school district. Thus, if the superintendent does not value board member training, board members may not place value on training and will not attend board trainings. On the other hand, superintendents were quick to point out that although their job is to educate school board members on their roles and duties, they are not in a position to dictate to the school board because the school board is the superintendent's boss. Further, due to this reason, many superintendents in this study indicated that they should not be involved in evaluating the school board and favored alternative types of board evaluations such as self-evaluations. Superintendents were concerned that it could

perhaps be a conflict of interest if they evaluate the board, and may affect the validity of the evaluation. As previously stated, superintendents did not want to appear as dictating the board, and did not want reprisals from a negative evaluation.

The majority of board members acknowledged that besides the use of a self-evaluation, boards can be evaluated indirectly through public perceptions such as elections, surveys, forums and citizen complaints. Most board members reiterated the fact that they are elected from the community to serve the community interests. Thus, if citizens are unhappy, the community can choose not to re-elect certain board members. Further, citizens can also attend board meetings and appropriate forums to express their concerns regarding board governance which the board may use this feedback to measure its effectiveness. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the community can remove board members, board members agreed that the public is the ultimate true evaluator of the school board.

Board members in this study believed student achievement should be an area of board assessment. However, some noted the importance of this being a shared assessment along with teacher quality. To analyze student achievement, board members agreed they should assess student achievement by soliciting teacher input, reviewing teacher observations and reviewing board goals common to student achievement.

Discussion of Findings

The primary goal of this study was to determine the perceptions of school board members and superintendents regarding school board training and evaluation. My research findings indicate there is a need for school board training and evaluation due to the fact that many board members do not understand their roles and duties, specifically

newly elected members. This negatively impacts school board governance in many areas such as board/superintendent collaboration.

The premise that school board members are often unclear about their roles and duties has been established in research literature (Land, 2002). Nevertheless, the existing research indicates the need for school board training in a variety of training areas, but fails to address the specific question of why school board members are often unclear about their roles and duties. Exploring the question of why school board members do not have a clear understanding of their roles and duties was critical to my research study. I reviewed the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS, written for the IASB) in order to gain background knowledge as to why role confusion occurred among my target research group of Illinois superintendents and school board members from the school board policy stage to actual practice of the policies.

The ILCS contains a variety of statutes from the Illinois General Assembly that relate to public school board governance and administration. The ILCS statutes discuss how boards are organized, how meetings are conducted, and describe a variety of school board mandates. Board mandates include how board member vacancies will be filled, statement of affairs, school report card, record retention policy, report of teachers employed, minority recruitment, appointing teachers and fixing salaries and a grade promotion policy (Illinois School Code, 2006). The ILCS contains some information regarding school board structure and the required duties of school boards, but the information is minimal and the ILCS fails to address how school boards will be trained and/or assessed regarding the exact nature of their expected roles and duties. For instance, the board is given the task to appoint teachers. But, does this mean that board

members should interview and evaluate teachers? Based upon the code, the answer is unclear. Due to the fact that the board has mandates to meet and other expected requirements of the job, are there any basic fundamentals of the job that board members need to understand? According to the IASB (2006), the association feels very strongly that board members need to understand law, finance, governance procedures and superintendent/board collaboration to be productive in their role as board members. Although the IASB, which represents Illinois board members, recognizes this, the State code offers no provisions for these key areas.

In addition to board structure and mandates, the ILCS discusses the requirements of becoming a board member and additional powers of the board. Chapter 105, Article 10 of the ILCS lists the eligibility requirements to become a board member as well as the various powers designated to the school board. In terms of the powers of the board, Illinois law provides that the school board can adopt and enforce all necessary rules for the management of schools in its district (Illinois School Code, 2006). In light of this definition, it appears as if the state of Illinois is giving school boards the authority to adopt rules that potentially may go against state and federal statues or may create legal problems. For instance, can boards of education separate boys and girls for instructional purposes if boards believed that boys and girls learn better separately? If boards adopted this rule, it may create legal concerns as with Brown versus the Board of Education when the Supreme Court pondered concerns over separate but equal teaching facilities concerning minority and non-minorities.

After reviewing the ILCS and conducting this study, it seems to me that the State has failed to provide leadership regarding how board members will be trained and

assessed to understand the exact nature of their roles and duties. The state has also not

provided sufficient direction concerning additional powers of the school board. Some

board members take the initiative to learn their roles and duties while others do not. This

creates uneven and often inadequate board governance in Illinois. In order to achieve

effective and sustainable board governance, the most viable solution is to establish a

clearly written policy in the ILCS establishing a training program and a system of

evaluation based upon key duties of the board. An effective policy will ultimately serve

the worthy goal of creating accountability among school boards in the State of Illinois.

Unfortunately, this lack of direction from the State of Illinois explains to some degree

why board members are often unclear about their roles and duties; a practice that can lead

to problems in school governance.

There are many states throughout the United States that have written policies

mandating board member training so that school board members may understand their

roles and duties. The following states mandate board member training: Arkansas,

Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi,

Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota,

Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia (NSBA, 2008). Although these states have

written training policies for board members, the nature and scope of the trainings, and

who is responsible for conducting them is not uniform per state. States such as North

Dakota requires training that occurs over the course of a day. Two trainings are offered,

one training for new board members and the other for more experienced board members.

Topics include the role of a school board member, duties of the school board and

education finance. On the other hand, some states such as Kentucky do not require any

mandated topics to be taught, boards may receive training from whomever they choose (with the exception of new school board members) and training requirements are disaggregated based upon experience on the board (NSBA, 2008). Although, states have different training requirements, these states are in agreement that school boards need some form of training to understand their roles and duties.

My research shows the powers of the board are vague and open to different interpretations, which then can create problems associated with board governance, especially role confusion. In addition to a vague policy regarding additional powers of the school board, the ILCS is not clear on the specific grounds and conditions for which a school board member may be removed from office. According to the ILCS (2006), a regional superintendent of schools may remove a board member from office for failure to perform official duties. The ILCS is unclear on what exactly constitutes a board member removal for failure to perform duties. An attempt at clarifying the code from regional superintendents suggested that most county regional superintendents are also unclear concerning what constitutes a board member failure to fulfill her/his duties. According to Braun (1998), regional superintendents have seldom removed board members from power despite all of the criticisms related to school board governance. Unfortunately, we may continue to see an increase of citizens running for the board carrying personal agendas, additional micromanagement of the superintendent, and poor board/superintendent relations if board members are not held accountable in learning and upholding their roles and duties.

Respondents in this study agreed that new school board members often run for the board with personal agendas because they think that will give them power to assert their

will. However, who can ultimately blame board members from running for the board with personal agendas considering the fact that the ILCS requires very few qualifications to become a board member and is vague concerning the powers of the board and removal of board members? Board members are generally not provided a clear job description and have little oversight to ensure that they are fulfilling their duties. Thus, board members often have to individually determine what their role is. In defining their role, it is natural for board members to include issues they are personally passionate about and they may or may not understand how their agendas can potentially impact effective board governance.

There are examples in the research regarding board member personal agendas and how the issue can create havoc for the school board. Respondents in this study noted that some board members have children in the district and desire special advantages such as those related to sports and Parent Teacher Organization issues. It is difficult to determine how often this occurs, though my participants did offer several examples from their experiences. Nevertheless, personal agendas are open-ended and can include a variety of different agendas. For instance, a citizen may desire to run for the school board with the intent of hiring/firing specific staff members, including the superintendent. No matter what the personal agenda is, it can create tension with other board members and/or the superintendent due to a misalignment of objectives. In a nutshell, when board members do not understand their roles and duties, they can run for problematic reasons. Scenarios like these could be prevented if board members understood their roles and there was a system of accountability in place.

Board members are more likely to engage in micromanaging the superintendent if they do not understand their roles and duties (Todras, 1993). Participants in this study

agreed and indicated that the job of the board is to implement policy while the superintendent oversees the day-to-day operation of the school district. Also, board members noted examples of role confusion that have occurred in their districts. For example, one participant noted how one board member resigned because the member falsely believed that he/she could be directly involved in a personnel matter and attempted to work directly with the superintendent regarding the issue. Other examples of role confusion include instances where the board wanted to evaluate a teacher, because the board was responsible for approving tenure. However, administrators, and not board members, are certified to conduct staff evaluations.

There are multiple reasons why board members do not understand their roles. I have referenced the vague language of the ILCS concerning powers and duties of the school board as a factor in role confusion. It may also be unfair to cast blame primarily on board members. A research participant noted how board members inadvertently govern inappropriately because they do not understand their roles. When situations like this occur it creates stress for the superintendent; after all, the school board is the superintendent's employer. Hypothetically, what if other school board members on this board felt similar to the board member who resigned in this study? Would this create negative feelings from other board members in collaborating with the superintendent and supporting her/his recommendations in the future? Glass (2001) notes how micromanagement is an issue for most superintendents. Due to issues such as micromanagement, the average tenure of superintendents was 2.3 years in 1999 (IEL, 2001). In regard to the example of the resignation of the board member in my study, what if other board members agreed that it is the superintendent's job to directly handle

personnel issues? Although the superintendent may have the support of other members of the board, can board governance still be negatively affected? Yes, because the board still has to find a replacement board member. Participants in this study indicated how challenging it is to find good replacement board members, especially citizens who know their responsibilities and are team players. Nevertheless, if the board member who resigned was properly oriented regarding his role as a board member, the resignation may not have occurred.

Board/superintendent collaboration is negatively impacted as a result of board members not understanding their roles and duties. Again, personal agendas and role confusion not only negatively impact board/superintendent collaboration but community satisfaction as well. According to the Dissatisfaction Theory, citizens may have the right to vote but primarily choose not to except when they are dissatisfied with local events. Further, according to Dissatisfaction Theory, the political cycle of school boards is a long period of political inaction with changes to the governance cycle being the result of a negative event of great magnitude such as tax referendums. Therefore, it is vital for board members to understand the Dissatisfaction Theory and to not become complacent regarding their tenure. Through training and evaluation, board members can attain skills and knowledge that will aid them in their role as board members which will decrease board member turnover.

Commonly, participants in this study noted how personal issues and passions can hamper board members from reaching and supporting final school board decisions. For instance, if a board member disagrees with a board decision, she/he may not support the decision while in public, which will create disharmony on the school board. Further,

participants in this study indicated how some board members do not understand their roles and fail to realize that they cannot speak for the board or have any powers outside of board meetings. It is essential for board members to understand that effective board governance relies on a team approach. Through training, perhaps board members can understand different people's perspectives and better understand their roles, expectations and limitations as board members.

Recommendations for Practice

When board members lack an understanding of their roles and duties, board governance is negatively affected in the following areas: increase in individual board member personal agendas, micromanagement of the superintendent and poor board member/superintendent relations. As a remedy to these problems, I offer recommendations for future training and evaluation programs based upon my research study and relevant literature. Potential training/evaluation programs needs to take into consideration the role of the state as well as areas of concern from board members and superintendents such as the form and scope of board trainings and evaluation, local district needs, and how trainings and evaluations will be conducted.

Role of the State

As previously discussed, school boards are creations of the state. Therefore, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that the role of the school board is clearly defined and to provide the necessary oversight for school boards. Because the state of Illinois has been complacent regarding its obligations, many school boards are not as effective as they should be and students are not achieving at their highest levels. To promote student achievement and effectiveness of school districts, the state should mandate pre-

orientation training for individuals seeking to become board members and board member

training and evaluation programs for current board members. What would be the role of

the state in school board trainings given the fact that states such as Illinois have

traditionally taken a laissez-faire approach to school board governance? I believe that the

state, through regulatory guidelines, should require each school district to develop or

participate in a training program(s) that focuses on the unique needs of the school district,

as described by CASDA (1990). It is obvious from participants in this study that they are

accustomed to, and prefer, trainings from the IASB and/or superintendent as opposed to

other organizations such as the Illinois State Board of Education. Nevertheless, this will

allow Illinois to provide guidance without providing direct trainings as with past

protocol. More importantly, board members will come to understand their roles and

duties, which will allow them the opportunity to practice good governance so that the

school board can be more productive.

Nature and Scope of Board Trainings and Evaluations

School board members and superintendents agree that school board

training/evaluation is needed, but there remains disagreement regarding the form and

scope of board trainings and evaluations (Land, 2002). What should be included in a

training and evaluation program for board members and how much time will it entail?

Land (2002) indicated that training should focus on every aspect of a board member's

role. Board members in this study rated trainings by the IASB favorably. The IASB

recommends school board member training in the areas of law, finance and governance.

CASDA (1990) recommended the following be a part of a training program: mission and

vision statement for the district; relationship with the superintendent; administering,

developing and implementing policy; staff, student and community relationships; knowledge of the instructional program; conflict management; and board/superintendent evaluation. Based upon research on my study, I believe that it is imperative that the following is in a training program: school board/superintendent collaboration, role and duties of board members, finance and governance. These areas were most commonly cited among board members and superintendents in my study that productive school board members should understand.

As previously stated, it is important to keep board members' concerns in mind regarding the structure of a training program. Training and evaluation policy that addresses the specific concerns of school board members has a good chance of success because board members themselves would have a voice and stake in the policy and resulting programs. Board members in this study were concerned about the following: new board members not understanding their roles and duties, local control issues, school board/superintendent collaboration and how trainings will be conducted. To address the concerns of board members, a state mandated yet flexible training program would be beneficial. In mandating a training program, the state should require two trainings: one training for individuals interested in becoming a board member and the other for current members. Regarding both of these programs, the state should require that specific areas of concern are implemented into the design of a training program. The state, in consultation with the IASB who has participated in board member trainings and evaluations, should determine key areas of training that should be covered such as law, finance and governance.

New school board members. Regarding the first training program, a pre-orientation training should be conducted for citizens interested in serving as board members. Board members in this study agreed that it is often new school board members who are unclear about their roles and duties and run for the school board carrying personal agendas as a result. By requiring citizens to attend pre-training, it will deter some citizens from running for the board for purely selfish or personal reasons. Regarding training for current members and the fact that they may not need as much training in basic areas, they will benefit from trainings that address their unique needs such as school board/superintendent collaboration and policy implementation.

Local control. Board members in this study were concerned about how some training programs may erode local control, especially if training dictates policy changes. After all, school board members are elected or appointed to meet the needs of the local community. School board members in this study also noted that there are major differences associated with school board governance issues in rural, suburban, and urban districts. Therefore, trainings should address the unique needs of these districts compared to a standard model. If training programs were structured to fit the needs of individual districts, they could maximize board member attendance and buy in.

School board training for current members should also be tied to the local needs of the district in addition to a limited number of specific training areas that are mandated from the state. By having two separate trainings, the state can be more versatile in considering the differing needs of those who are interested in running for board service versus those who are current board members. For instance, the pre-orientation training for interested citizens can include many more mandated topics that the state regards as

essential to understand board members roles and duties such as law, finance and governance, along with local district information. Regarding training for current school board members, the majority of the training can focus on unique district needs along with other area(s) the board members deems essential. A key mandated training area may be the topic of consensus building, considering the board governs as a group and not as individuals. Board governance in this study was negatively impacted when board members failed to work collaboratively with each other or the superintendent. In designing and/or participating in training programs that addresses local district needs, school districts may want to work with established organizations such as the IASB and/or utilize consultants to cater to the unique needs of the district.

How should trainings be conducted? Board members and superintendents in this study indicated that the superintendent should play an important role in board member training. Superintendents agreed that it is a part of their job is to assist in educating the board about their roles and duties. The superintendent could conduct some of the board member pre-orientation, partly because superintendents and board members in this study agreed that effective superintendents set the overall tone in the school district. By allowing the superintendent to conduct orientation trainings, the superintendent is more likely to be perceived as an educational leader and the superintendent will assist in establishing the tone that training is important. In a nutshell, board members are more likely to support board member training if the superintendent deems it necessary.

In regard to training for current school board members, perhaps these trainings can occur at board retreats and/or through the IASB in a manner to which board members

are accustomed. This would alleviate fears of time commitment associated with
mandatory training programs. The district can utilize local consultants as well. In regard
to the superintendent role, the superintendent should work alongside with the board
and/or consultant(s) in determining the district's unique needs. By allowing the
superintendent to play a role in these trainings, the superintendent and the board will
continue to the see the superintendent as a leader and educator.

What Should be the Nature and Scope of Board Evaluations?

      Types of evaluation. There are two general types of board evaluations; self-
evaluations, which are subjective, and external evaluations, which are conducted by an
external person or group. Board members in this study preferred informal self-evaluations
conducted at board retreats. They agreed that they are more apt to be open and honest
because they are not subject to sunshine laws (acts and deliberations of the board must be
conducted publicly) in traditional board meetings. Also, self-evaluations will ease the
tensions associated with external evaluations, allowing the board to be more fully
engaged in its own assessment.

      The purpose of a board evaluation is to improve the board's effectiveness. To
identify areas of concern, board members should be frank in discussing their strengths
and deficiencies, which can be identified using self-evaluations. More importantly,
utilizing an evaluation tool designed by certified consultants and/or the IASB targeting
board concerns may be more efficient and reliable compared to board members who view
the voting process as the ultimate evaluation tool. Research cited by Yackera (1999)
explained how the voting process is unreliable in gauging school board effectiveness.

How should evaluations be conducted? In conducting self-evaluations, there will always be a certain degree of subjectivity because it is primarily based on school board member's perspectives. Nevertheless, to increase accountability and generate board member buy-in, the IASB and/or consultant should facilitate these self-evaluations. Specifically, board members in this study valued and supported the IASB's resources in regard to board member training and evaluation. Regarding the IASB and/or consultant, their role perhaps will not be seen as a conflict in interest as with the superintendent who is the employee of the board. Superintendents in this study indicated that it is not best practice for superintendents to evaluate their boards. Similar to the evaluations of most administrators, school boards should engage in self-evaluations on a yearly basis to determine growth toward board identified goals. According to board members in this study, board goals were discussed yearly at board retreats organized by the superintendent.

Areas to be assessed. Board members and superintendents in my study agreed that an evaluation should be designed that primarily targets board members' roles and duties. Board members should not be evaluated in areas for which they are not responsible, so as not to lead to micromanagement. Besides evaluating board member roles and duties, all areas for which the board receives training should be assessed to monitor the board's progress. More importantly, this information will be helpful to boards in determining the board's progress regarding board selected training needs.

<center>**Recommendations for Further Research**</center>

This study was limited to school board members and superintendents from southern Illinois. Additional research that focuses on other board members and

superintendents throughout the Illinois would improve the amount and quality of information associated with board member training and evaluation. More specifically, a comparative study is needed between school boards based upon rural, suburban and urban regions. This information will be helpful in determining the perspectives of board members based upon their region and how they may differ and the specific training topics needed based upon regional differences. Based upon my research and review of literature, additional research on school boards is needed in the areas of student achievement, comparative study of boards that have and have not received training, perspectives of board members over a period of time, the state's perspective, and best practices in school board evaluation.

It appears that board member training/evaluation can positively affect student achievement. However, some board members in this study were confused concerning student achievement being a reflection of the school board's performance. There is a shortage of research that explores the board's role and its impact on student achievement. More research is needed on the relationship between board functioning and student achievement.

Some school districts are very successful in positively impacting student achievement and obtaining other significant achievements compared to other districts. Perhaps the governing practices of the board in those districts are significant. A comparison study between boards of education that consistently engages in systemic training compared to those that do not and their philosophy regarding training is needed to determine if board training is a positive factor between school board governance and district accomplishments. Further, a case study between high and low achieving districts

conducted over an extended period of time may yield helpful information in terms of identifying key effective governance practices and beliefs and their impact on student achievement.

There is limited research that explores the perceptions of school board members regarding training and evaluation from their initial interest in the position throughout their time on the board. It will be interesting to determine how their perceptions may change and develop concerning school board member training and evaluation.

As stated, Illinois defines the board powers in very broad ways. This can result in board members and superintendents struggling with board members who do not understand their role and duties. Because the state is responsible for the oversight of school boards, research should be conducted at the state level. For example, do state educational officials feel that there is a need for more systemic school board training and evaluation programs? Also, a comparison study between state boards of education is needed that explores if board training and evaluation is needed and possible areas that need to be addressed. Currently, there is a lack of research that studies school board training from the state perspective.

Due to the lack of research regarding school board evaluation, research is needed in determining best practices in school board evaluations and how they are conducted. A comparison study across states that have evaluation plans in place may be helpful in determining best practice and which states have the most successful policies. Also, research is needed to measure the correlations between evaluation and areas of school board training to determine if the training is yielding any positive dividends. This research will be helpful in determining guidelines for future evaluations.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that school board member training and evaluation are critical to the achievement of effective and accountable school boards, free of the role confusion that leads to governance problems; including board members who carry personal agendas while in service of the school district, superintendent micromanagement, and poor board/superintendent relations. As this study indicates, the current ILCS does not provide a clear written policy regarding board member training and evaluation, yet all field research conducted for this study suggests that training and evaluation are essential for effective board governance.

Although there remain concerns about the nature and scope of board trainings and evaluations, based upon information from research literature and findings from this study, it is important that board training and evaluation be mandated in order to increase board effectiveness. In order to maximize board member support for a training and evaluation program, it is necessary that board members' concerns are addressed. By obtaining board member support for a training and evaluation program, this will ensure that there is a system of accountability of all those in charge of the educational program and that sound educational decisions are being made regarding our most valuable resource, our students.

Final Reflections

At the conclusion of my research, and in reflecting back on this study, there are certain aspects of my work that I wish I would have done differently to enhance my findings. Also, there were some challenges and enablers while conducting this research, things that I learned about the research process, helpful insights based upon my role as a principal and my advice to other educators and researchers conducting similar research.

To collect data for my research I interviewed board members and superintendents from two similar sized districts and conducted two focus groups comprised of board members and superintendents from Southern Illinois. Although I believe that my research provided me with rich and valuable data, my research could have been enhanced by conducting focus groups comprised of board members and superintendents from a range of districts, including in rural, suburban and urban areas. Focus groups comprised of participants from different geographical regions would have enhanced my research by accounting for varied perspectives based upon regional difference and how they may differ. In order to do this efficiently, it would have been helpful to establish a relationship with the IASB and conduct my focus groups at the IASB annual state conference in Chicago. Further, I wish that I could have formed a partnership with the IASB and IASA (Illinois Association of School Administrators) to conduct qualitative surveys as well. Qualitative surveys would have allowed me to include the perspectives of a wider range of stakeholders.

There were certain challenges and enablers while conducting this research. Given my roles and duties as a principal, a major challenge was the time needed to conduct the interviews for this study. Some of my participants could only meet at designated times which took away from my responsibilities as a building principal. Due to the nature of my work as a principal, research study hours for this project were often limited. On the other hand, there were many enablers as well. Contacting and arranging to meet with the board members and superintendents who participated in this study could have been tedious work. Fortunately, my superintendent who was nominated superintendent of the year (2008-2009) provided resources that were very valuable for me. My

superintendent's assistance enabled me in identifying and obtaining consent from willing participants. Further, IASB assistance helped me to identify legislation impacting board training and evaluation. More importantly, my major professor challenged me to think more critically throughout the research process, which enhanced the overall quality of the research.

I learned a wealth of information about the research process. Doing the mock interviews, I learned the importance of monitoring my body expressions and making sure that my research questions were clear and concise. For instance, I often nodded my head while conducting my mock interviews. I learned that this may be a sign that I am in agreement with what a research participant is discussing which may taint my results if the research participant is giving me information that he/she presumes I want to hear. I also learned the importance of making sure that my research questions were clear and concise. This benefited my learning process tremendously because research participants readily understood the nature of my research, which assisted me in understanding how various themes were emerging.

This research was very insightful to me as a principal in understanding how the school board influences the direction of the overall educational process. Primarily, the degree of educational influence depends on how the school board views its role. For instance, if the board feels that they should assist in the managerial aspects of the district, boards are more likely to micromanage the superintendent which impacts building principals indirectly. Often, it is the principal who carries out the assignments of the superintendent. On the other hand, boards that view their role as to implement and

monitor policy are more likely to rely on the superintendent to handle the day to day operations of the district.

Collecting data for my research was not easy, but was very rewarding. I enjoyed conducting this research because I am passionate, dedicated and sincere about my research topic. In general, I think we still have much to learn about how to ensure that school boards function efficiently and effectively. Providing more guidance in terms of training and evaluation will certainly help in creating more successful school boards.

REFERENCES

Alsbury, T. (2004). Does school board turnover matter? Revisiting critical variables in the Dissatisfaction theory of American democracy. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 7(4)*, 357-377.

Alsbury, T. (2002). *Superintendent turnover in relationship to incumbent school board member defeat in Washington from 1993-2000: a quantitative and qualitative analysis.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Anderson, R. (1980). Leadership training for the school board members: One approach. *Education,100(3),* 227-35.

Anderson, R., & Snyder, K. (1980). Leadership training for the school board members: one approach. *Education, 100,* 227-35.

Barnett, J.M. (n.d.). Focus Groups Tips for Beginners 1, . *Texas Center fro the Advancement of Literacy and Learning*. Available: http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/orp/orp1.htm

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (2003). Qualitative Research for Education An Introduction to Theories and Methods (4th ed.) *Boston: Pearson Education Group, Inc.*

Borg, W., Gall, J., & Gall, M. (1993). Applying educational research a practical guide (3rd ed.). *New York & London: Longman.*

Bracey, G. W., & Resnick, M. A. (1998). *Raising the bar: A school board primer on student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association.

Braun, B. (1998). Illinois School Law Survey. *Illinois Association of School Boards*

Bushweller, K. (1998). Under the shadow of the state. *American School Board Journal,* 185(8), 16-19.

Calvert, B. (2004). Mandated training for public board members (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 2004). Dissertation Abstracts International, 65 (09), 3224A.

Campbell, D. W., & Green, D. (1994). Defining the leadership role of school boards in the 21st century. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 75(5), 391-395.

Canciamilla, L. S. (2000). From many to one: The intragroup behaviors of high-performing school boards (Doctoral dissertation, University of La Verne, 2000). Dissertation Abstacts International, 61 (01), 35A.

Capital Area School Development Association. (1990). *A view from inside: The roles and responsibilities of school board members.* Albany, NY: Author.

Castallo, R. (2000). Clarifying roles through self-evaluation and periodic checks. *School Administrator, 57 (8)*, 50-1.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Making sense of qualitative data. Sage Publications, Inc.

Cox, W., & Stewart, M. (2000). Signs of fiscal health: A new evaluation system links school finance and academic results. *In School Spending 2000-Investing in learning* [On -line]. Available: http://www.asbj.com/schoolspending/cox.html

Danzberger, J. P. (1994). Governing the nation's schools: The case for restructuring local school boards. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75 (5)*, 367-373.

Danzberger, J. P., & Usdam, M. D. (1994). Local education governance: Perspectives on problems and strategies for change. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75*, 366.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2003). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Duran, Y. (1996). School board performance as viewed by superintendents and school board members (Doctoral dissertation, Texas A & M, 1996). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57 (10), 4201A.

Emmanuel, C. & Gray, R. (2003). Preparing a research proposal for a student research dissertation: a pedagogic note. Accounting Education. 12 (3), 303-312.

Fridley, C. M. J. (2006). Study of the relationship between school board evaluation and Illinois State Board of Education indicators of effectiveness (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale). Dissertation Abstracts International, 67 (08), 118A.

Glass, T. (2000). Better boards, better schools. *American School Board Journal, 187 (11)*, 42-4.

Glass, T. (2001). Superintendent Leaders Look at the Superintendency, School Boards & Reform. *Education Commission of the States*, Denver, CO.

Goodman, H., Fulbright, L., & Zimmerman, W. (1997). *Getting there from here. School board-superintendent collaboration: Creating a school governance team capable of raising student achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Goodman, R. H., & Zimmerman, W. G. (2000). *Thinking differently: Recommendations for 21st century school board/superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork for high student achievement.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Grissom, T. (2005). The impact of mandate school board member training in Tennessee (Doctoral dissertation, Tennessee State University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (08), 2790A.

Hammersly, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography Principles In Practice(2nd ed.).* New York & London: Routledge.

Hess, F. M. (2002). *School boards at the dawn of the 21st century*. A report prepared for the National School Boards Association.

Hill, P. (2003). School boards: Focus on school performance, not money and patronage. *Progressive Policy Institution. vol. 23.*

Illinois Association of School Boards (2006). Your School Board + You. Springfield, Illinois: *Illinois Association of School Board Journal.* Available: www.iasb.com.

Illinois Association of School Boards. IASB Delegates Reject Concept of Mandatory Board Member Training, 2008. Springfield, Illinois: *Illinois School Board Newsbulletin.*

Illinois Association of School Boards. (2003). Surveys of School Board Members and Superintendents. Springfield Illinois: *Illinois Association of School Board.* Available: http://www.iasb.com/services/03surveys_menu.cfm

Illinois Association of School Boards. (n.d.) Board Training. Springfield, Illinois: *Illinois Association of School Board.* Available: http://www.iasb.com/training/

Illinois General Assembly (n.d.). Available: from http://www.ilga.gov/

Illinois Association of School Boards. (2006). *Illinois School Code (2006 edition).* Charlottesville, VA: Matthew Bender and Company

Institute for Educational Leadership. (2001). *Leadership for student learning: Restructuring school district leadership.* Washington DC: Author.

Iowa Association of School Boards. (2000). IASB's lighthouse study: School boards and student achievement. *Iowa School Board Compass, 5 (2)*, 1-12.

Jane, E. (2003). School board form elusive. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 1-8.

Jazzar, M. (2005). Curbing micromanagement. *American School Board Journal.*

Kirst, M. (1994). A changing context means school board reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75,* 378-81.

Kirst, M. (1994). The future for local school boards. *Education Digest; 59,* 3pg.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in Qualitative Research: The Assessment of Trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy,* 45, 214-222.

Land, D. (2002). Local school boards under review: Their role and effectiveness in relation to student's academic achievement. *Educational Research, 72 (2).*

Lashway, L. (2002). *Using School Board Policy to Improve Student Achievement.* ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management Eugene OR.

Let's redefine local school boards (1992). *Education Digest. 58(3),* 21-26.

Lutz, F. (1996). Viability of the Vulnerability Thesis. *Peabody Journal of Education, 71(2),* 96-109.

Lupardus, S. C. (2006). The Impact of mandated school board training on school board members' perceptions of their governance role in the state of Missouri (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 2005). Dissertation Abstracts International, 66 (08), 2793A.

Malinsky, S. (1999) A case study of good practice of selected school boards in Illinois (Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University, 1999). Dissertation Abstracts International, 60 (04), 132A.

Martin, J. A. (1996). The school board and self-evaluation: Do school boards in the Comomonwealth of Virginia evaluate their own performance? (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1996). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57 (07), 2776A.

McAdams, D.R. (2002). Leading City Schools Challenge and Change in Urban Education Strengthening Urban Boards. *American School Board Journal.*

McCloud, B., & McKenzie, D., (1994). School Boards and Superintendents in Urban Districts. *Phi Delta Kappan 75*, 384-5.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, M. A. (1994). School board member perceptions of boardmanship education, training, and development resources with regard to the performance of school board duties (Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, 1994). Dissertation Abstracts International, 56 (01), 61A.

Moore, D. (1998). *Community relations and communication in the Cardinal School District.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

National School Boards Association. (n.d.) Key Work of School Boards. Alexandria, Virginia: *National School Boards Association*. Available: http://www.nsba.org/keywork

National School Boards Association. (n.d.) Mandated Training for Local School Board Members Survey—Sept. 2008. Alexandria, Virginia: *National School Boards Association*.

Available:http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/ResourceCenter/SurveyStudiesandEvaluations/MandatedTraining_1_2aspx

Nikolai, P. C. (1999). School governance: Impact of boardsmanship training on board member perceptions of effectiveness (Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University, 1999). Dissertation Abstracts International, 60 (08), 2758A.

Odden, A.R., & Archibald, S. (2000). Investing in Learning: How schools can reallocate resources to support student achievement. *In School spending 2000-Investing in learning* [On-line]. Available: http//www.asbj.com/schoolspending/odden.html.

Official Portal for the State of Georgia. *Georgia Removes Clayton County School Board Members* (2008). *Official Portal for the State of Georgia.* Available: http://gov.georgia.gov

Payne, J. D. (1994). Mandated school board member training for local boards of education in Tennessee as perceived by local boards of education members and superintendents of schools (Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University, 1994). Dissertation Abstracts International, 55 (09), 2670A.

Petronis, J., Hall, R., & Pierson, M. (1996). *Mandatory school board training: An idea whose time has come?* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 400625)

Picus, L. O. (2000). Setting budget priorities. *In School spending 2000-Investing in learning* [On-line]. Available: http://www.asbj.com/schoolspending/resourcespicus.html

Rallis, S.F., & Criscoe, J. (1993, April). *School boards and school restructuring: A contradiction in terms?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Resnick, M. (1999). *Effective school governance: A look at today's practice and tomorrow's promise.* Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Roberts, P., & Priest, H. (2006). Reliability and validity in research. *Nursing Standard. 20, 44,* 41-45.

Rose, L., & Gallup, A. (2006). The 38th Annual phi delta kappa/gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*.

Rumsey, D. (2003). Statistics for Dummies. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Selby, J. O. (1985). Superintendent and board president perceptions of in-service training for Kansas school boards (Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, 1984). Dissertation Abstracts International, 46 (01), 42A.

Sell, S. (2006). Running an effective school district: School boards in the 21ˢᵗ century. *The Journal of Education,* 71-97.

Schumaker, A. (2005). A case study of the development, implementation and utilization of a local school evaluation (Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2005). Dissertation Abstracts International, 66 (02), 440A.

SERVE: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education. (1997). *School Board Member Training in the Southeast. Second Edition.* Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.

Sharp, Malone, G, &Walter (2003). *Superintendent and school board evaluation: A three-state study*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Educational Research Association, Columbus, OH.

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information. 22* 63-75.

Simpson, L. S. (2003). The impact on school governance of the team of eight-school board training as perceived by selected school boards and superintendents in Texas public schools (Doctoral dissertation, Texas A and M University, 2003). Dissertation Abstracts International, 64 (08) 2735A.

Speer, T. (1998). *Reaching for excellence, what local school districts are doing to raise student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for grounded theory, 2ⁿᵈ 2d. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Thomas, R. G. (1993). *Learning needs of school board presidents in the central region.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 362 481)

Thomas, T. (1994). Who's minding the schools? *U.S. News and World Report, 116,* 78-9.

Todras, E. (1993). The changing role of school boards. Eugene, OR (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 357434)

Trenta, Cunningham, Printy, Kruse, Griswold, Hunn &Aquila. (2002, October). *Governing learning in Ohio's urban school districts: An exploration of five sets of governance issues that appear related to student achievement.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the MidWestern Educational Research Association, Columbus, OH.

Tuckett, A. (2005). Part 11. Rigour in qualitative research: complexities and solutions. *Nurse Researcher*, 13, 29-42.

U. S. Army Family Advocacy. *Focus Groups!* (1996). Available: http:child.cornell.edu/army/focus.html

U. S. Census Bureau. (2009). Retieved September, 2009 from: http://quickfacts.census.gov

Usdam, M.D. (1994). The relationship between school boards and general purpose government. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75,* 374-377.

Wagner, R.F. (1992). The case for local educational policy boards. *Phi Delta Kappan, 74, 228-229.*

Washington State School Director's Association. (2001). Serving on your local school board, a guide to effective leadership. *Washington State School Director's Association* pp. 1-51.

Wikipedia. (2009). Retrieved September, 2009 from: www.wikepedia.com

Wilson, B. A. (2004). School board-superintendent relations: Impact of new board member orientation on effective school governance (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 2004) Dissertation Abstracts International, 66 (03) 858A.

Workman, M. S. (2003). An analysis of the perceptions of superintendents and school board members regarding the ability of the school board to effectively govern in local districts (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 2003). Dissertation Abstracts International, 64 (08), 2740A.

Yackera, T. J. Jr. (1999). A survey of attitudes toward training mandates for school board members: Views by Keystone State (Doctoral Dissertation, Widener University, 1998). Dissertation Abstracts International, 60 (01), 41A.

Villegas, M. (2003). *Leading in difficult times: are urban school boards up to the task? Policy trends.* Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

APPENDICES

Patrick Rice
Human Subjects Form Committee application form
Interview/Focus Group Questions

Interview questions

1. How are board members trained?

2. How are board members evaluated (eg. self-evaluations or external)?

3. How does your school board measure their effectiveness?

4. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of requiring all school board members to obtain formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. If you were asked to give input concerning the structure of an evaluation tool, what are some of the components you would recommend?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure?

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, matter in which an incident was handled, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, RTI, closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. What impact do you think board member training and evaluation might have on limiting community dissatisfaction?

Focus group questions

1. What have you heard about training programs for board members?

2. What have you heard about evaluation programs for board members?

3. How do school boards measure their effectiveness?

4. What, if any, are the advantages or disadvantages associated with requiring board members to undergo formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. Could you describe some key components of an effective board evaluation tool?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure?

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, RTI, closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. Overall, what are your thoughts concerning the relationship between training, evaluation, and community satisfaction or dissatisfaction with school boards.

Consent Letter

2-6-09

Dear

My name is Patrick Rice. I am a doctoral student at Southern Illinois University working on my dissertation with the department of Education Administration. As part of my graduation requirements, I am conducting a qualitative research project in order to gain an understanding of the perceptions of public school superintendents and school board presidents regarding school board training and evaluation. This research project will be conducted during the Spring and Summer of 2009. I will present my dissertation at the university and may also present the results in an academic venue.

I would like you to participate in this research. Your participation would include either an individual interview for approximately sixty-ninety minutes, or participation in a focus group for ninety minutes. I will ask you questions about your perceptions as a public school superintendent or school board member regarding school board training and evaluation. I would like to audio tape record these interviews. The reason for audio recording is so I can construct an accurate verbatim transcript to use in analysis. I will erase the tape recordings six months after the final report has been constructed and any necessary revisions have been made. The audio tapes will be kept in a locked place at my residence. Only I or my dissertation advisor will have access to the audio tapes. You have been selected because you are a resident of Southern Illinois and represent a K-8 school district. Also, the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) and/or the IASB assisted me in identifying participants from K-8 school districts.

I will keep whatever information you provide confidential. No one other than me and/or my advisor will have access to the information, and the information you provide will not be identified by your name. Additionally, you will not be identified by your real name (pseudonyms will be used) in the final report I construct. Only I or my dissertation advisor will have access to the interview transcripts. In the final research report I write, there may be some quotations from the interviews, but I will not use your real name and will endeavor to protect your identity so you will experience no adverse effects for your honesty in the interviews and your willingness to participate. All reports based on this research and written by the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of individuals in the group. **For focus group participants,** "Only group data will be reported and no names will be used. Since a focus group involves a group process, all members of the group will be privy to the discussions which occur during the session; therefore, absolute confidentiality on the part of the participants, themselves, may be difficult to ensure."

Your participation is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate. Also, you are free to withdraw from participation at any time, for any reason, with no penalties of any sort. If you have any questions about this research or your rights as a participant, please contact me, my professor, or the SIUC Human Subjects Committee:

Patrick Rice	Dr. Kathy Hytten (Interim Chair)
3906 Robin Drive	Educational Administration-SIUC
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864	Carbondale, IL 62901
618-316-9708	618-536-4434
price@mtv80.org	khytten@siu.edu

Please, sign below and return this form if you understand what I am asking of you and if you are willing to participate.

Thank you,

Patrick Rice

I understand and am willing to participate and understand that my responses will be audio/video taped. _____
<div align="right">Signature of Participant</div>

"This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu"

Patrick Rice
Human Subjects Form Committee application form
Interview/Focus Group Questions

Interview questions

1. How are board members trained?

2. How are board members evaluated (eg. self-evaluations or external)?

3. How does your school board measure their effectiveness?

4. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of requiring all school board members to obtain formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. If you were asked to give input concerning the structure of an evaluation tool for the entire board, what are some of the components you would recommend?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure? Ex. Board member(s) were not re-elected because they voted to close down a school due to budget issues.

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, matter in which an incident was handled, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, RTI, closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. What impact do you think board member training and evaluation might have on limiting community dissatisfaction?

Focus group questions

1. What have you heard about training programs for board members?

2. What have you heard about evaluation programs for board members?

3. How do school boards measure their effectiveness?

4. What, if any, are the advantages or disadvantages associated with requiring board members to undergo formal orientation and continuing professional development?

5. Could you describe some key components of an effective board evaluation tool for the entire board?

6. Could you describe key events (e.g. contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with school board member resignations and/or school board member defeats due to public pressure? Ex. Board member(s) were not re-elected because they voted to close down a school due to budget issues.

7. Could you describe key events (e.g. new beliefs of school board members, contested elections, sports programs, academic achievement) associated with the replacement of the superintendent due to public pressure?

8. Could you describe key events (balanced calendar, RTI, closing or restructuring schools) associated with board governance and community dissatisfaction of school programs?

9. Overall, what are your thoughts concerning the relationship between training, evaluation, and community satisfaction or dissatisfaction with school boards.

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Patrick Rice   Date of Birth: March 10, 1975

3906 Robin Drive, Mt. Vernon, IL 62834
ptrckric@aol.com

Southwestern Illinois College
Associate of Arts, May 1997

Eastern Illinois University
Bachelor of Arts, Education, December, 1999

Eastern Illinois University
Master of Science, Education, May, 2001

Eastern Illinois University
Specialist in Education, Education, May, 2003

Dissertation Title: An Analysis of the Impact of School Board Training and Evaluation
As Perceived By School Board Members and Superintendents

Major Professor: Dr. Kathy Hytten, Ph. D.