



SCHOOL BOARDS CIRCA 2010

Governance in the Accountability Era

FREDERICK M. HESS AND OLIVIA MEEKS



SCHOOL BOARDS CIRCA 2010

Governance in the Accountability Era

FREDERICK M. HESS AND OLIVIA MEEKS

PUBLISHED BY

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION,

THE THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE,

AND THE IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOUNDATION

THIS REPORT WAS FUNDED IN PART BY THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

2010

Table of Contents

NSBA FOREWORD	04
FORDHAM FOREWORD	06
ISBF FOREWORD	08
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	12
INTRODUCTION	15
METHODS	18
FINDINGS	20
<i>SECTION 1: WHO SERVES ON SCHOOL BOARDS</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>SECTION 2: WHAT BOARD MEMBERS THINK</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>SECTION 3: HOW SCHOOL BOARDS GO ABOUT THEIR WORK</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>SECTION 4: HOW SCHOOL BOARDS ARE CONFIGURED</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>SECTION 5: SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>SECTION 6: SCHOOL BOARDS AND THEIR SUPERINTENDENTS</i>	<i>29</i>
MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL	32
CONCLUSION	34
ENDNOTES	36
TABLES	38

Foreword

While public education has been part of the American culture for more than 200 years, it's only in recent history that we've examined school board governance and begun linking the work of board members across the country to the achievement of their students.

Just over 10 years ago, with the help of state school boards associations, the National School Boards Association published the first version of the *Key Work of School Boards*, which created a systemic process to guide school board members through the many facets of their work. We began our work on that project by asking the question, "Are school boards still relevant?" And the answer was, unequivocally, yes.

Since then, public education has shifted toward a system of accountability that holds students and the adults who teach them responsible for their academic progress at nearly every turn. But even in this new landscape, we know that school boards are every bit as relevant today—perhaps even more so.

Districts now are dealing with the unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind Act and increased accountability requirements on students, teachers, and administrators. On an equally daunting front, most of our nation's 13,809 districts are in the midst of a severe economic recession—two-thirds of board members deemed the financial situation "extremely urgent"—that is predicted to strongly impact state and local budgets for years to come, threatening to curtail the progress made in our schools.

Nevertheless, our commitment to student achievement remains unwavering. As our economy demands a better-educated workforce, school boards know how important it is to maintain high standards for learning and to equip all of our children with 21st century skills.

The top priorities for educators, as board members and superintendents told us in this survey, are helping students fulfill their potential and preparing them for satisfying and productive lives. However, the data also show that school boards are highly attuned to student achievement and closing the persistent gaps between whites and minorities and between students from impoverished families and their well-off peers.

School board members also share our collective restlessness about the achievement of U.S. students. Among individual board members surveyed, three out of four considered improving student learning "extremely urgent" or "very urgent," while almost 70 percent said the same about closing achievement gaps. Two-thirds agree that we must make dramatic and rapid improvements in student learning, and the same number believe it is a bad idea to lower our expectations.

To accomplish these improvements, school boards are changing and reinventing their practices to move beyond an oversight role to one of shared leadership with the superintendent. As the body of research surrounding school leadership grows, it's evident that board member best practices entail a system of active engagement with the superintendent, school leaders, and the community at large.

School boards realize that test scores aren't all that matter. Nearly 87 percent of boards think it is shortsighted to define success on the basis of student achievement alone. Success goes beyond preparing students for college and the workforce; there is a much larger purpose to educating our next generation to make a living, a life, and a difference.

The questions in this survey, compared to the one conducted in 2001, reflect the changing nature of the school board member's job. What is perhaps most telling, however, is that two areas—student achievement and school funding—were the top concerns in both reports.

As their roles evolve, school board members remain the critical connection between the school administration and the community at large. Their willingness to look at the broader picture and advocate for the whole child is an example of what communities want. School boards are also one of the most representative forms of

governance—these data show that boards are more diverse than other elected bodies and are nearly evenly split between men and women.

It's clear, based on this survey and other research, that a school board's effectiveness is tied to its leadership development. Ongoing training and learning is a must for both new and veteran board members. NSBA and its state associations are the number one source of support for board development, and our organizations have pledged to make it happen.

That said, boards need latitude to perform their roles. Even as there is no checklist for good governance, this survey shows that more and more boards are engaging in efforts to improve their schools through activities such as goal-setting, monitoring, and ensuring alignment of professional development. Board members do not turn a blind eye to this work; indeed, they are eager and anxious to turn their community's vision for successful life-long learners into reality.

Given the role of states and the increased involvement of federal lawmakers, local control doesn't look like it once did, but local leadership remains every bit as relevant today. No matter what happens with education policy at the state or federal level, we will always need locally elected or appointed boards to govern and lead our schools in some capacity.

NSBA fervently believes that local school boards that have a vision, a commitment to strong governance, and the resources to support data-based decisions can make a difference in the lives of children. Research, in the form of this report and others, shows this to be true. And while we may not see eye to eye on all of the details, NSBA and the other sponsors of this report agree that making a difference is what counts—for our future, and for future generations to come.

National School Boards Association

Foreword

“The local school board, especially the elected kind, is an anachronism and an outrage....We can no longer pretend it’s working well or hide behind the mantra of ‘local control of education.’ We need to steel ourselves to put this dysfunctional arrangement out of its misery and move on to something that will work for children.”

— **Chester E. Finn Jr., President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute**

With that statement on the record, we’re doubly admiring of Anne Bryant and her colleagues at the National School Boards Association for welcoming us into this valuable project. We went into it willing to have our previous impressions of local school boards overturned. For the most part, that hasn’t happened.

Because we’re serious about America’s need for bold school reform, we came away from these data dismayed that so many board members appear hostile to some of the most urgently needed reforms—and accepting of timeworn (and for the most part unsuccessful) tweaks to the current system.

Substantial numbers view charter schools, intradistrict choice among schools, and year-round calendars as “not at all important” to improving student learning. They’re cool toward teachers entering classrooms from “nontraditional” directions. Yet they’re warm-to-hot when asked about the value of such primordial yet unreliable “reforms” as smaller classes and more professional development. And they’re more agitated about school inputs—funding above all—than about academic achievement.

One must wonder whether this is because they’ve grown acculturated to traditional educationist views of education—half of all board members have served in their current districts for more than five years—or because more than a quarter of them are current or former educators themselves. Could it be because so many of them in large districts (over a third) indicate that unions contribute to their campaigns and presumably expect something in return? Or is it that they regard their role like members of corporate boards of directors, chiefly concerned with the well-being of the organization itself (particularly its revenue streams), rather than like education policymakers, much less reformers?

There’s evidence in the data for all these possibilities—and a good many more.

Even as we applaud school board members for their service, much of it time-consuming and selfless, we cannot but wonder about some of their core values and priorities for K-12 education. Three examples:

- A tendency to cite inadequate inputs as the main barrier to improved school outcomes. Three quarters of board members view insufficient funding *as a strong or total barrier* to raising achievement. That’s about twice as many as point to collective-bargaining agreements—and more than three times as many as identify “community apathy” as a major barrier. Yes, economic times are perilous, but stressed finances call for exploring uncharted waters, not waiting for manna from the taxpayers.
- A tendency to favor intangible outcomes. Asked to rank education goals, three-fourths of board members say that “help[ing] students fulfill their potential” or “prepar[ing] students for a satisfying and productive life” is number one. Just 16 percent chose preparing students for the workforce or for college. One wonders, in our globally competitive world, how their sense of what’s important got so skewed. Do they really not put much stock in the most tangible outcomes of schooling? Are they possibly hiding from results-based accountability by selecting goals that cannot readily be measured?

- An awareness that learning levels must rise—kinda sorta maybe. Though two-thirds of boards concur that “the current state of student achievement is unacceptable,” barely one-quarter “strongly agree” with that statement. A whopping 87 percent agree or strongly agree that “defining success only in terms of student achievement is narrow and short-sighted; we need to emphasize the development of the whole child.” And a full one-third are nervous about placing “unreasonable expectations for student achievement in our schools.”

These data also show that board members are conscientious citizens who take the job seriously and work hard at it. They want to serve their communities, and they want kids to have good lives. Demographically, they comprise a fair cross section of middle-aged, upper-middle-class America. They’re better educated than most of the population, and their household income is greater than most. They’re moderate to conservative in their politics, they’re professionals or businessmen/women in their careers, and they serve on the board—they say—for altruistic, public-spirited motives, which is borne out by the fact that just 36 percent have children in school in the district whose board they’re on. (Of course, 70 percent are fifty or older.)

These well-meaning, solid citizens, however, do not manifest great urgency about changing the education system for which they’re responsible, certainly not in disruptive ways. Yes, they want it to do better. But they also cite myriad obstacles to changing it, obstacles they find outside themselves and their communities and thus obstacles that they, almost by definition, are powerless to overcome. Moreover, they’re principally concerned—the board of directors syndrome again—with the viability of the school system as an institution, fiduciaries, one might say, of a public trust rather than change agents on behalf of a compelling societal agenda.

This is not too surprising, considering that the “theory” behind elected local school boards as a public-school governance system was to induce selfless civic leaders to preside over and safeguard a valuable community institution, keeping it out of politics and out of trouble while solving whatever problems it encountered. The theory did not expect individuals elected to these roles to function as innovators, much less as revolutionaries.

The question that needs to be asked again, however, is whether American education in the 21st century would be better served by a different arrangement, one more apt to tally the considerable challenges facing communities, states, regions, and the nation as a whole and then reshape key institutions to meet those challenges. Putting it bluntly, would public education come closer to serving the country’s needs in 2011 if it were run by visionary, reform-driven leaders than by cautious, community-based fiduciaries? We’re inclined to think it would.

Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Foreword

More than a decade ago, a report from the National Research Council stated, “Raising student achievement is the most important challenge facing local school boards today.” That statement is as true now as it was then, only now there is a growing body of empirical evidence confirming the vital role of local school boards and the board actions and priorities that matter most for improving student learning. Since 1998, the Iowa School Boards Foundation has been conducting research that identifies roles and specific actions that, when boards engage in them appropriately, are associated with better district-level capacity for improving student learning and achievement.

The results of this survey provide clear evidence that boards are ready and willing to play a stronger leadership role in improving achievement. Board responses reflect a belief that more is possible in terms of student learning. More than two-thirds of board members agree that the current state of student achievement is unacceptable and that districts must make dramatic and rapid improvement in student learning. Board members and superintendents indicate that the extremely urgent issues in their districts right now are budget/funding (a given in the current economy), improving student learning, and closing the achievement gap.

Board members also show a belief that more is possible in terms of district capacity to improve student learning. Student achievement and financial management are the top two areas board members designate as extremely important when evaluating the superintendent. Board members and superintendents alike say they believe the board has the potential to positively impact district efforts to improve student achievement.

However, board and superintendent responses also indicate their practice does not consistently align with the actions that current studies show have the biggest impact on district efforts to improve. The survey responses show evidence of movement away from traditional ways of doing business toward these research-based practices, which define a new role for boards as they establish a culture of high expectations, set improvement goals and targets, regularly study data and monitor progress, connect with district leadership teams, and provide support for teacher collaboration and ongoing professional development focused on student learning needs. Significant numbers of boards, however, continue to operate in more conventional ways of working together that are not associated with the gains in student achievement we know are possible.

This is not surprising. Traditionally, school boards have been encouraged not to play an active role in various facets of student achievement. Generally, boards and superintendents have felt more comfortable leaving instructional matters solely in the hands of professional educators. Until recently, boards have been excluded from the school reform literature and from consideration as key levers in the school change process. However, the increasing public demand for accountability for student learning now places emphasis on the responsibility of the board, as a governing body, to ensure that student learning results are high and equitable. Boards are not professional educators, but the research is clear that they do have important and appropriate roles to play in clarifying expectations for improving student learning, holding the system accountable to meeting those expectations, ensuring that the superintendent has the support needed to meet the expectations, creating a sense of urgency and “will” to improve, and learning together as a board team to develop the capacity to provide systemic leadership for high and equitable student achievement.

Board member responses in this survey indicate a thirst for support and training in areas more directly focused on improving student learning. The number one choice of board members regarding their most important learning needs in order to be effective in their job as a board member was to increase their knowledge of factors that impact student achievement. When asked about the content of the training they have received, however, board members were almost twice as likely to indicate they had received training in basic boardmanship and

operations than in issues related to student achievement. Addressing the gap between what boards say they need to develop their leadership and what they are being provided has huge implications for state school board associations, the National School Boards Association, and superintendents, whom board members rely upon to provide the majority of their training and development. The stakes are high.

Throughout the country, at least one-third of the students in public schools will not learn to read well enough to handle the content in their intermediate- and secondary-level textbooks. If nothing changes, as many as one in four students will drop out of school before graduating. For children who live in poverty, who come from diverse backgrounds, or who struggle with disabilities, these numbers increase exponentially. This is the most important challenge facing public education today.

School boards matter. Solving the problems of public education will depend on the leadership of public schools. Issues affecting the conditions of schools that enable productive change are issues of policy. School boards are critical players in the school change process and must be active leaders on behalf of the students in their schools. Without effective school board leadership, systemic change becomes impossible, and improvement of student achievement will remain episodic, with only “pockets of excellence” sprinkled throughout public schools and school districts. How board-superintendent teams understand and carry out their roles can make the difference between dysfunctional leadership teams incapable of leading change and highly effective leadership teams that build districtwide capacity to ensure that every student succeeds.

Even though school boards are removed from the teaching and learning that goes on every day in classrooms, there are critical linkages between the policymakers who guide local school districts and the behaviors of those who interact regularly with students. Efforts to improve student learning must include efforts to support and develop the knowledge and skills of local school board members as vital parts of the leadership continuum providing guidance and direction around the urgent need to improve learning outcomes for students.

Iowa School Boards Foundation

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of work accomplished by the following staff:

Anne L. Bryant, Executive Director, National School Boards Association; **Mary Delagardelle**, Executive Director, Iowa School Boards Foundation; **Chester E. Finn Jr.**, President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute; **Hilary LaMonte**, Consultant, Iowa School Boards Foundation and National School Boards Association; and **Amber Winkler**, Research Director, Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

In addition to the staff who worked directly on this report, the partner organizations would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals who supported one or more of our organizations in doing this work:

National School Boards Association

Lisa Bartusek, Associate Executive Director, State Association Services and Leadership Development; Glenn Cook, Assistant Executive Director, Communications and Publications; Carrie Carroll, Senior Production Manager; Carol Chin, Director of Marketing

Iowa School Boards Foundation

Collette Stotts and Mollie Lyon, Executive Research Assistants

Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Amy Fagan, Director of Public Affairs

Iowa State University

Mack Shelley, Ph.D., Professor; Dai-Trang Le, Graduate Research Assistant

North Carolina State University

Thomas Alsbury, Ph.D, Associate Professor

Florida Atlantic University

Meredith Mountford, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Executive Summary

For more than a century, school boards have endeavored to govern America's schools and school systems. Collectively, the nation's nearly 14,000 school boards are responsible for the well-being of 52 million children, the expenditure of \$600 billion per year, and the supervision of six million employees. Despite the magnitude of this responsibility, school boards and their work are little examined and poorly understood.

That remains true even as the state of school governance has occasioned much discussion in the past decade. In the wake of the No Child Left Behind Act, amidst an unprecedented wealth of data on student achievement, and in an era of renewed attention to achievement gaps and international competitiveness, many observers have focused on the critical role of school board governance. In the past two years, the challenge of upholding high academic performance has grown more urgent due to a new daunting financial burden. The real estate bubble, the resulting financial crisis of 2008, and the ensuing recession have forced districts to wrestle with unprecedented declines in revenue.

Notable, however, is how rarely discussions about performance in these times of heightened scrutiny are informed by substantive information on school boards and board governance. Though a handful of noteworthy studies of school boards emerged in the early 2000s, little empirical research on national board practices has been conducted since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001.

To update and deepen those earlier studies, the National School Boards Association, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, the Iowa School Boards Foundation, and the Wallace Foundation have joined together to support new research on school boards and their members. The following report presents the results of that research so as to provide parents, voters, policymakers, advocates, and educators with an informative look at the individuals and bodies charged with governing America's schools.

The survey sample was drawn from the National School Boards Association's database of school boards and superintendents from 7,100 districts throughout the United States. The sample was stratified, including 100 percent of the board members and superintendents from 118 urban districts belonging to NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), as well as board members and superintendents from a random sample of 400 other districts with enrollment of 1,000 or more. In total, the survey was sent to 3,805 board members and to the appropriate superintendents in 518 districts. Of those surveyed, 900 board members and 120 superintendents from 418 different districts responded, for a response rate of 23.6 percent for board members and 22.5 percent for superintendents. At least one response was received from 80.1 percent of the districts surveyed.

The report addresses six areas of interest. Among the key findings:

III WHO SERVES ON SCHOOL BOARDS

- Nationally, 80.7 percent of respondents are white, 12.3 percent are African-American, and 3.1 percent are Hispanic. The large districts are, by far, the most likely to include minority board members. African-Americans constitute 21.8 percent and Latinos 6 percent of respondents in the largest districts.
- On the whole, board members are substantially better educated than the general adult population. Nearly three-fourths of board members have at least a bachelor's degree, far exceeding the 29.5

percent of American adults over age 25 who hold at least a B.A. In large districts, 85 percent of board members have at least a B.A., and more than half report that they have earned an advanced degree of some kind.

- Politically, a plurality of board members place themselves in the center of the ideological spectrum. When asked to identify their general political views, 47.3 percent respond as moderates, 32.3 percent as conservatives, and 20.4 percent as liberals.
- Perhaps surprisingly, given that most classroom teachers belong to districts that fall under teachers union bargaining agreements, just 17.6 percent of current and former educators who serve on school boards report that they were ever a member of an “educators’ union.”

III WHAT BOARD MEMBERS THINK

- With the contemporary focus on college and workforce readiness, many may be surprised that 14.1 percent of board members rank preparing students for college as sixth in importance out of six education goals, and 16.4 percent give the same ranking to preparing students for the workforce. When asked what they consider the most important objectives for schooling, the most popular board member responses are to “prepare students for a satisfying and productive life” and to “help students fulfill their potential.”
- More than two-thirds of boards report that the budget and funding situation is extremely urgent. The next most frequently cited issues of concern are the need to improve student learning across the board (39.7 percent deemed this extremely urgent), to close achievement gaps (30.8 percent), and to improve the quality of teaching (24.4 percent) and leadership (22.5 percent). Deemed less urgent are the needs to boost community engagement or parental involvement, to improve discipline or school safety, or to improve learning in nonacademic areas such as the arts.
- While nearly nine out of 10 boards are concerned about an overly narrow focus on achievement, nearly two-thirds also see an urgent need to dramatically boost achievement.
- Board members think a number of much-discussed reforms hold little or no promise, with 40 percent saying they attach little or no importance to recruiting nontraditional teachers. More than 50 percent feel that way about increasing within-district school choice, more than 60 percent about a year-round school calendar, and more than 80 percent about the creation of new charter schools.
- Nearly half of all boards (48 percent) indicate that they are more inclined to shift priorities in response to student needs from year to year, and a similar rate (47.5 percent) report that they are focused on engaging with the community to determine those priorities.

III HOW SCHOOL BOARDS GO ABOUT THEIR WORK

- In large districts, nearly 40 percent report working more than 40 hours a month, while fewer than one in 10 members report working less than 15 hours per month. In small districts, on the other hand, more than half of board members work fewer than 15 hours per month, and just 8.3 percent work more than 40 hours.

- More than 56 percent of board members report that they “almost always” turn to their superintendents to get the information they need to make board decisions, and 88.7 percent turn to their superintendents often or almost always. This gives the superintendent a crucial role, not only as the key decisionmaker for the district but also as the gatekeeper who may determine what information board members have access to.

III HOW SCHOOL BOARDS ARE CONFIGURED

- In small districts, three-fourths of members earn no salary, and the other quarter earn less than \$5,000 per year. In large districts, the majority of board members receive a salary, with more than 22 percent earning \$10,000 or more and nearly 8 percent earning more than \$15,000 per year.
- Nationally, over 90 percent of boards have access to administrative support and legal counsel, and over 80 percent of the largest districts report having a data analysis and research staff.

III SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

- More than nine out of 10 board members (94.5 percent) report that they were elected to office; 5.5 percent were appointed.
- Fully 73.9 percent of elected board members report that their campaign spent less than \$1,000 in their most recent election, and 87 percent spent less than \$5,000.
- Nationally, 44 percent of board members describe their most recent election as “very easy,” while just 5.8 percent describe it as “very difficult.”

III SCHOOL BOARDS AND THEIR SUPERINTENDENTS

- Superintendents are far less likely than board members to think that boards evaluate superintendent performance based on student achievement outcomes. While two-thirds of board members think student achievement is an extremely important indicator in how they judge a superintendent’s performance, only 40.3 percent of superintendents believe that to be the case.
- Superintendents’ views of their districts’ top priorities are quite similar to those of board members. When asked to rate the importance of the same goals posed to board members, approximately 20 percent of superintendents respond that preparing students for college is a first or second priority, and 15 percent say the same about preparing students for the workforce. These results are similar to the views expressed by board members, who ranked preparation for college or the workforce at only slightly higher levels (nearly 25 percent and 20 percent, respectively) when identifying the district’s most important objectives. As with boards, the goals ranked highest in importance by superintendents were preparing students for satisfying and productive lives and helping them fulfill their potential.

Introduction

For more than a century, school boards have endeavored to govern America's schools and school systems. Collectively, the nation's nearly 14,000 school boards are responsible for the well-being of 52 million children, the expenditure of \$600 billion per year, and the supervision of six million employees. Despite the magnitude of this responsibility, school boards and their work are little examined and poorly understood.

That remains true even as the condition of school governance has occasioned much discussion in the past decade. In the wake of No Child Left Behind, amidst an unprecedented wealth of data on student achievement, and in an era of renewed attention to achievement gaps and international competitiveness, many observers have focused on the critical role of school board governance. As Georgetown University professor Douglas Reed has noted, "NCLB affects a structural mismatch between authority and accountability, such that the entities who have significant property taxation authority (school boards with electoral consent) are not the entities who established the terms of accountability or its consequences. The resulting unanticipated consequence of NCLB, then, would [be] a local-level erosion of support for the generation of public educational resources, as taxpayers and voters realize that resources extracted by local school boards cannot be directed toward locally defined problems."¹

In the past two years, understanding the role of school boards has grown more urgent due to a daunting new burden. The real estate bubble, the resulting financial crisis of 2008, and the ensuing recession have forced districts to wrestle with unprecedented declines in revenue. Empty state coffers and the prospect of several more years of curtailed state and federal spending, combined with the pressures of underfunded health care and pension systems, mean that districts are struggling to close yawning budget gaps and will be doing so for at least the next few years.

We can also see tensions erupting as public debates regarding school board practices are reflected in headlines sprawled across the nation's leading newspapers in the past year or so: "Board's Hiring Sets Off a School War," *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2009; "California School Boards Group Snubs State Legislators," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 5, 2009; and "Parents Frustrated at Delay on School: Board Hasn't Voted on Opening Charter," *Washington Post*, April 8, 2010.

In an era when flawed management has been blamed for debacles at private sector firms like Enron and Tyco, and when lax oversight has been blamed for malfeasance and massive irresponsibility at financial giants like AIG and Bear Stearns, the importance of governance is self-evident. It is governance that establishes the organizational mission, sets the tone, holds management accountable, and takes ultimate responsibility for outcomes.

Given the nature of the demands placed on schools—to do dramatically better with limited resources—one might expect unprecedented attention focused on the governance bodies charged with providing the requisite leadership. Who are the individuals who serve on school boards? What do they believe? How do they go about their work? Where do they obtain their information? How do they gauge progress? How do they select and evaluate the superintendent to whom they entrust their schools? And how similar or different are their views from those of the superintendents they hire to manage the districts they oversee?

Yet, one is hard pressed to find more than a smattering of accounts that can answer these questions. Occasional case studies of this or that school board exist, as do a few select national surveys and some statistical analyses that examine whether test scores affect the rates at which school board members are re-elected (the results are mixed²) and whether school board members in communities with more elderly residents are less likely to back school spending (they are³).

To understand how well school boards are able to manage the demands placed upon them, and to understand whether they are equipped to manage these demands, it is imperative that we know more about the boards themselves. How are boards operating in an era of educational accountability? What questions do they focus on? How do they spend their time? How do they judge the efficacy of the superintendent or school teams, and how do their views jibe with those of the superintendent?

A full understanding of how boards function requires more attention to the various players that compose them. Exploring the beliefs and actions of individual board members, as well as their interactions with superintendents, will provide a more complete vision of the moving parts at play in board decision making. Such an inquiry not only can help us understand how boards have responded to the new era of accountability and how they are changing their practices, but may also help researchers more systematically identify the characteristics of effective governing boards.

This important inquiry will also give better context for the growing concern for the challenges our districts face, challenges that some critics have suggested that school boards are not up to meeting. One oft-proposed reform has been a call for mayoral control, in the hope that mayors will provide the unity and energy that boards seemingly lack. Other observers suggest that boards nationwide can benefit from importing the lessons provided by some highly effective boards. Such remedies tend to rely on a number of assumptions regarding what school boards do and how they work.

However, these discussions are rarely informed by substantive information on school boards and board governance. In fact, the number of scholars researching school governance in general is small, and the number of researchers specifically devoted to research on the relationship between school governance and student achievement can be counted on one hand. The research for one of the most prominent national studies of board practices was conducted before the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001. Since that time, a few valuable books on school boards have been published, some of them engaging in policy debates about school boards, such as Michael Berkman's and Eric Plutzer's 2005 book *Ten Thousand Democracies: Politics and Public Opinion in America's School Districts*.⁴ Others provide a compilation of practical advice for effective boards, such as the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) *Key Work of School Boards*⁵ and Nancy Walser's 2010 *The Essential School Board Book: Better Governance in the Age of Accountability*.⁶

Only a few volumes report on actual studies of school boards, including William Howell's 2005 *Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics*⁷ and Thomas Alsbury's 2008 *The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation*.⁸ Alsbury's volume, published following the Iowa School Boards Foundation's national symposium *School Board Research: Main Lines of Inquiry*, contains chapters with significant studies analyzing data about the democratic nature of school boards and their work and beliefs, studies linking board activities to student achievement and school reform, investigations of board/superintendent relationships, and studies considering the history as well as the viability of local school boards.

Another such study was the 2002 National School Boards Association report *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century*.⁹ This study examined a nationally representative sample of 827 board members and constituted the most comprehensive study of school boards at the time. Of course, not only is that data nearly a decade old, but the data collection (conducted in 2001) preceded both the new "accountability era" in public schooling and the more recent fiscal crunch that districts face. A more recent national survey of school board members was completed in 2007 by Albert Nylander, with nearly 2,000 board members responding to questions about their district, their background, school board elections, their perceptions and beliefs, their community, their reason for running for the board, and their perceptions regarding the viability of school boards.¹⁰ Another study—the Iowa School Boards Foundation's *Lighthouse Inquiry: School Board/Superintendent Team Behaviors in School Districts with Extreme Differences in Student Achievement*—examined boards in high- and low-achieving districts and identified key roles and specific actions of boards that positively impact district efforts to improve achievement.¹¹

To update and deepen those earlier findings, the National School Boards Association, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, the Iowa School Boards Foundation, and the Wallace Foundation have joined together to support this current research. The following report presents the results of that research so as to provide parents, voters, policymakers, advocates, and educators with an informative look at the individuals and bodies charged with governing America's schools.

Stepping back from the specific results that emerged from the survey, three broader trends emerge that deserve notice. First, it's clear that the past decade has had a profound influence on how school board members think about their work. Since 2002, we have seen a dramatic increase in the importance that board members accord to academic achievement. Most importantly, board members today are much more likely than they were at the start of the decade to cite student achievement as a key consideration in evaluating their superintendent. The NCLB era, for good and ill, has clearly fueled a shift in board priorities.

Second, for all the increased emphasis on achievement, it's also clear that board members would like to see student success defined by more than reading and math scores. Reflecting frequently heard concerns about curricular narrowing, nearly nine in ten board members indicated that they would like to see student success defined by metrics beyond student achievement. Obviously, given the challenges of measuring learning in other domains and the heightened emphasis on achievement noted just above, this may pose something of a tension for boards as they wrestle with teacher accountability, tight budgets, the Common Core, and efforts to incorporate "21st century skills."

Third, when it comes to strategies for boosting achievement, board members show a preference for strategies that mirror those of superintendents while expressing less faith in either more radical proposals regarding pay and school choice or in popular remedies like class size reduction. The strategies most often cited as promising by board members are efforts to promote professional development, more frequent use of assessment data, and steps to improve the quality of school leadership. Just what those strategies should entail, of course, is a vital question and one that will loom large for local leaders in the years ahead.

Methods

The survey sample was drawn from the National School Boards Association's database of school boards and superintendents from 7,100 districts throughout the United States. With a total of 13,809 districts in the United States, the database included 51 percent of the districts throughout the country. The sample was stratified, including 100 percent of the board members and superintendents from 118 urban districts belonging to NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) and the board members and superintendents from a random sample of 400 nonurban districts throughout the United States with student enrollment of 1,000 or more students.

The reasons for this sampling strategy were to maximize the number of students served by the boards and superintendents surveyed (hence the emphasis on urban districts) and to maximize the accuracy of the contact data for those boards and superintendents in order to maximize the survey return rate.

The research team manually verified all contact information from the database, using district websites and contacts with district administrative staff and state school boards associations. Before sending out the survey itself, the research team mailed each district a letter notifying them that their superintendent and board members would be included in the survey and offering them the opportunity to update their e-mail contact and the option of receiving the survey in print rather than through a web interface. Based on responses to those notifications, the survey was sent to each respondent in a personalized e-mail providing a link to the web-based survey or in a hard copy mailed to the respondent.

In the spring of 2009, the research team piloted the survey with 13 districts in North Carolina, Oregon, and Iowa. In most districts that piloted the survey, the board members and superintendents completed a paper version of the draft survey and then participated in a focus group. The research team combined the results of those pilots and brought recommended changes to the survey back to the partners for finalization.

The final survey was administered in the fall of 2009. In total, the survey was sent to 3,805 board members and 534 superintendents from 518 districts (for districts in the process of transitioning the superintendent, sometimes the outgoing and incoming superintendent were both surveyed). Of those surveyed, 900 board members and 120 superintendents from 418 different districts responded, for a response rate of 23.6 percent for board members and 22.5 percent for superintendents, with at least one response received from 80.1 percent of the districts surveyed.

In the analysis that follows, some question responses were aggregated across board members to get a sense of how the board felt as a whole when the question warranted it. In these instances, the text reads that "boards" responded as indicated. While the number of board member responses per board range from one board member (in roughly 40 percent of the districts that responded) to a quorum or majority of the board, all responses were included in the reporting of data at the board level. This maximized the amount of data represented in the report. Other responses were left at the individual level if a board-level response was nonsensical or irrelevant (i.e. respondent's gender or income level). In these instances, the text reads that "board members" responded as indicated.

The survey consisted of 90 questions in total. Of these, 23 were directed to all respondents, 26 questions were directed to all board members but not superintendents, 12 were directed to the board president or chair only, and 29 were directed to the superintendent only. The web-based survey was organized to include all questions and to jump respondents to the questions appropriate to their role based on their responses to questions about

their role. When the research team sent out hard copies to respondents, they provided a separate version of the survey that included just the questions appropriate to that respondent’s role. When the hard copy versions were completed and returned, the research team manually entered the data into the online system.

Throughout this report, data are often reported in groups by district enrollment ranges. The ranges and numbers of survey responses in each range are as follows:

STUDENT ENROLLMENT RANGE	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	No ENROLLMENT GIVEN	TOTAL
NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONSES	326 32 PERCENT	279 27.3 PERCENT	121 11.9 PERCENT	261 25.6 PERCENT	33 3.2 PERCENT	1020 100 PERCENT

FINDINGS

The results that follow are reported in six sections, which address the questions of who serves on school boards, how those individuals think about school improvement, how boards go about their work, how school boards are organized, how school board elections play out, and how school boards and the superintendents they hire interact. The six sections are:

- Section 1: Who Serves on School Boards
- Section 2: What Board Members Think
- Section 3: How School Boards Go About Their Work
- Section 4: How School Boards Are Configured
- Section 5: School Board Elections
- Section 6: School Boards and Their Superintendents.

III SECTION 1: WHO SERVES ON SCHOOL BOARDS

Who serves on school boards today? What is the composition of boards when it comes to the race, gender, education level, or income of their members? What prompted board members to run for the school board in the first place, and what do they think about their board service? When it comes to questions of school governance, these are vital questions—yet ones about which remarkably little is known.

As noted in the methods section, this study draws upon the survey responses from a sample of 900 individual board members, 120 superintendents, and 153 board presidents or chairs who collectively serve in 418 districts. For the purposes of this report, districts are sorted into four categories on the basis of student enrollment: small districts (those with 1,000-2,499 students); “medium-small” districts (2,500-7,499); “medium-large” districts (7,500-14,999); and large districts (15,000 or more).

Of the board member respondents, 56 percent are male and 44 percent female. Male board members predominate in small districts, where men constitute nearly two-thirds of board members, but they make up just under half in large and medium-large districts [Table 1]. School boards overall have become more gender-balanced since NSBA’s 2002 study, when 61.1 percent of all board members were male and just 38.9 percent were female.¹² Indeed, school boards now include women at more than twice the rate of the U.S. Congress, as only 17.5 percent of U.S. House members and 17 percent of U.S. senators serving in 2010 were women.¹³ Boards are also more inclusive of women than state legislatures nationwide, 24.2 percent of whose members were female in 2010.¹⁴

Nationally, 80.7 percent of respondents are white, 12.3 percent are African-American, and 3.1 percent are Hispanic. The large districts are, by far, the most likely to include minority board members. African-Americans constitute 21.8 percent and Latinos 6 percent of respondents in the largest districts. In small districts, on the other hand, African-Americans make up 5.7 percent of board member respondents, and Latinos, 1.4 percent [Table 2]. As with gender, school boards have become more diverse than in the 2002 NSBA study, when 85.5 percent of board members were white and 7.8 percent were African-American.¹⁵ Again, school boards are also more reflective of the nation’s diversity than are federal and state officeholders, as the U.S. House is 9.4 percent African-American and the U.S. Senate is just 1 percent African-American in 2010.¹⁶ Among state legislatures in 2009, 9 percent of members were African-American.¹⁷

More than 60 percent of respondents nationally are between the ages of 40 and 59 years old, with just 4.6 percent of board members reporting they are under the age of 40 and 34 percent reporting they are age 60 or older. The boards in small districts skew somewhat younger than do those in large districts. Slightly more than 6 percent of small district respondents are under 40, compared to 3.9 percent in large districts, while board

members over 60 comprise 38.6 percent of board members in large districts, but just 30.5 percent in small districts [Table 3].

Compared to the 17 percent of families that have children who are of school age (age 3 to 17) nationwide, 38.1 percent of board members have children in school, meaning more than 60 percent of board members do not have school-age children [Table 4].¹⁸ The share of board members with children in school is substantially higher in small districts, where it is 42.9 percent, compared to the 29 percent found in large districts.

On the whole, board members are substantially more educated than the general adult population [Table 5]. Of the 860 members who offered information on their educational background, nearly three-fourths (74.2 percent) have at least a bachelor's degree, far exceeding the 29.5 percent of American adults over the age of 25 who hold at least a B.A.¹⁹ In large districts, 85 percent of board members have at least a B.A., and more than half report that they have earned an advanced degree of some kind. In small districts, 62.8 percent of board members hold at least a B.A., and 36.6 percent hold an advanced degree of some kind. The percentage of board members who have never attended college is just over 5 percent nationally, ranging from 8.2 percent in small districts to 1.7 percent in large districts.

Board members also report higher annual household incomes than does the American adult population as a whole [Table 6]. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that median household income in the U.S. in 2009 was \$50,303,²⁰ while 90.4 percent have annual household incomes of \$50,000 or more and 48.6 percent of board members report annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more. Just over 40 percent of board members report annual household incomes of between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and about 40 percent report annual incomes of \$100,000 to \$200,000. Just 1.6 percent of board members report incomes of less than \$25,000 a year. Respondents in large districts report somewhat higher incomes than those in small districts, with 42.2 percent of small district respondents reporting annual income of \$100,000 or more, compared with 54.3 percent of those in large districts.

Politically, a plurality of board members place themselves in the center of the ideological spectrum [Table 7]. When asked to identify their general political orientation, 47.3 percent respond as moderates, 32.3 percent as conservatives, and 20.4 percent as liberals. Board members in small districts are much more right-leaning compared with their peers in larger districts, with conservatives holding a 43 percent to 16.6 percent edge in small districts. The story is reversed in large districts, where liberals outnumber conservatives 26.8 percent to 21.6 percent [not shown].

Board members have worked in a wide variety of occupations [Table 8]. Nationally, the two most common professional occupations for members are education (27.1 percent) and business or commerce (18.1 percent). Somewhat less common are members who work in nonprofit organizations and government (14.4 percent) or in professional services like law and medicine (14 percent). While this trend is consistent nationwide, large districts are more likely to have members with education backgrounds—33.8 percent of board members in these districts report they are current or former educators, compared to just over one in five among those in small and medium-small districts. Nationally, 27.4 percent of board members report that they have retired from their occupations, while 72.6 percent are still working [Table 9].

Given that more than one-quarter of board members are current or former educators, as well as the substantial impact of teachers unions on so many decisions that boards make, it is worth examining how many of these board members are union members. Perhaps surprisingly, given that most classroom teachers belong to districts that fell under teachers union bargaining agreements, just 17.6 percent of current and former educators who serve on school boards report that they were ever a member of an “educators’ union” [Table 10]. More than 82 percent of these board members report that they are not a current or former member of such a union. Of the 17.6 percent who report having been in an educators’ union, slightly more than half belong or belonged to the union in the same district where they now serve on the board. There is no particularly strong connection between unionization rates and the size of the district in which a member serves.

When asked what prompted them to serve on a school board in the first place, just over 50 percent of respondents report that their initial motivation was to ensure that schools were the “best they can be,” with civic duty finishing a distant second (22.4 percent) [Table 11]. Just under 10 percent of board members say they joined the board to address specific concerns, and 8 percent say they were recruited; approximately 5 percent or less each cite other reasons, such as representing a constituency on school-related issues, being appointed, developing their role as a public leader, or attempting to ensure that another candidate did not succeed in winning a seat. There is relatively little fluctuation in these responses across district size.

Concerning the manner in which they first entered office, 94.5 percent of board members report that they were elected, and 5.5 percent say they were appointed to office [Table 12]. Members are much more likely to have been appointed in large districts—where 10.4 percent have been appointed—than in small districts—where only 1.4 percent were. Of the elected members, 17.5 percent ran as part of a slate of candidates [Table 13]. This figure hovers around 20 percent in small, medium-small, and medium-large districts, while only 9.6 percent of large district board members were elected as part of a ballot group.

Nationally, more than half of board members have served longer than five years in their current district. Board member tenure does not vary significantly with district size, though the medium-large districts are the least likely to have members with less than two years of service [Table 14]. More than 43 percent of board members report that they intend to pursue another term after their current term expires, while 19.5 percent say they do not and 37.1 percent say they are undecided [Table 15].

On the whole, school board members are not dramatically different from the nation as a whole. That said, they’re somewhat wealthier and more educated, somewhat less likely to be African-American or Latino, and somewhat more likely to have been an educator. They’re more likely to have children in school than the typical adult, though most do not have a school-age child, and their political views broadly track those of the adult population. Finally, they frequently report having been moved to board service by notions of service and civic duty.

■■■ SECTION 2: WHAT BOARD MEMBERS THINK

A crucial role of governance, in schooling or anywhere else, is to set priorities. Consequently, a particularly revealing question is what board members themselves deem to be the most important goals of education [Table 16]. When asked that question, the two most highly prioritized responses from members are to “help students fulfill their potential” and to “prepare students for a satisfying and productive life,” with 42.6 percent of respondents giving the former their highest ranking and 31.7 percent saying the same of the latter. Perhaps surprisingly, given the contemporary focus on college preparedness and workforce readiness, these priorities garner less support. Just 8.1 percent of board members rank college preparedness the number one priority of schools, and the same percent consider preparing students for the workforce the top education goal.

Another valuable window into governance priorities is provided by other issues board members believe are most urgent for their districts today [Table 17]. When the data are aggregated to the board level, so that responses are being provided for each school board surveyed rather than for individual board members, the runaway concern is funding. More than two-thirds of boards report that the budget and funding situation is extremely urgent, and nearly 90 percent think it is extremely or very urgent. The next most frequently cited issues are the need to improve student learning across the board (39.7 percent deem this extremely urgent), to close the achievement gaps among subgroups (30.8 percent), and to improve the quality of teaching (24.4 percent) and leadership (22.5 percent). Deemed less urgent are the need to boost community engagement or parent involvement (15.7 percent think this is only somewhat or not at all urgent), to improve discipline or school safety (26 percent think this only somewhat or not at all urgent), or to improve learning in nonacademic areas such as the arts (23.4 percent think this is only somewhat or not at all urgent).

By far, board members in this study report that the most significant barrier to improving student achievement is a lack of funding [Table 18]. Over 74 percent indicate that finance/funding is at least a strong barrier to improvement, with 30.2 percent going so far as to label it a total barrier. As for other obstacles, just under 55 percent of board members find federal law to be a strong or total barrier to improvement, nearly half (48 percent) say the same about state law, and 37.9 percent of board members think similarly of collective bargaining agreements. In contrast, 6 percent or less of board members think district bureaucracy (6 percent), community apathy (4.9 percent), lack of board support (3.6 percent), or community opposition (2.2 percent) are total barriers to improvement.

More than two-thirds of board members say that lack of board support (76.3 percent) and community opposition (70.9 percent) are either no barrier or are only a minimal barrier when it comes to boosting achievement. Many board members are also sanguine about collective bargaining agreements, with 36.9 percent saying that these are no more than a minimal barrier to improvement, while around half say the same about district bureaucracy (53 percent) and community apathy (49 percent). Many board members appear to regard collective bargaining, district bureaucracy, and community apathy as less of an obstacle than popular news accounts might suggest—though it is also true that more than one in three board members think collective bargaining is a strong barrier (37.9 percent), and more than one in five think community apathy (22.5 percent) and district custom/tradition/bureaucracy (21.4 percent) are, as well.

When asked more specifically about the degree to which federal and/or state law, collective bargaining, and district policy constitute barriers to improvement, board members point to a variety of challenges [Table 19]. Forty-seven percent cite federal or state law as a barrier to removing ineffective teachers, and 37.9 percent say they are a barrier to hiring teachers with nontraditional credentials. More than half (52.7 percent) cite collective bargaining as a barrier to removing ineffective teachers, and almost one-third (30.9 percent) say it is a barrier to assigning teachers to the schools and classrooms where they are needed. Additionally, just 17.2 percent say collective bargaining is a barrier to hiring nontraditional teachers, and fewer than one out of 10 (9.3 percent) say it is a barrier to targeting professional development resources. District policy is cited as a barrier by more than one-fourth of respondents in just one area, and that is when it comes to the removal of ineffective principals (26.1 percent), where district policy is cited slightly more frequently than federal or state law (23.4 percent) and much more frequently than collective bargaining (17.6 percent).

School boards strongly favor dramatic measures intended to raise achievement for students, but they also feel that such performance outcomes do not fully reflect student learning [Table 20]. On the one hand, when responses are aggregated to the board level, nearly nine in 10 boards (86.8 percent) think it is “short-sighted” to define success only in terms of student achievement, as it is necessary to emphasize the “development of the whole child.” On the other hand, roughly two-thirds of boards (65.2 percent) believe that the current state of student achievement is “unacceptable” and that “dramatic and rapid” gains in achievement are necessary. These findings suggest that board members are seeking ways to set high expectations for assessed school performance and to also pay attention to complementary indicators and needs.

While boards have a nuanced perspective on the current focus on achievement, they agree that schools ought to be expected to boost achievement despite any challenges [Table 20]. When asked if the fact that students “face many challenges” is cause to not “place unreasonable expectations” on schools, fewer than one in 10 boards strongly agree (7.4 percent) and just one-third (33.8 percent) agree at all. In other words, while boards are concerned about an overly narrow focus on achievement, two-thirds also see an urgent need to dramatically boost achievement, and two-thirds also think it would be wrong to lower our expectations.

As for the impact of accountability and what to do about poorly performing schools, boards exhibit a gentler mien than do the more ardent champions of school turnarounds [Table 20]. More than three-fourths (77.7 percent) of boards agree—with 34.2 percent agreeing strongly—that federal and state accountability systems have created so much pressure that boards need to “celebrate hard work and initiative” on the part of teachers and administrators. Meanwhile, just 22.0 percent of boards strongly agree that restructuring requires moving

out a majority of school faculty, though 62.2 percent of boards express some agreement with that notion.

When it comes to how boards approach the task of monitoring performance, boards express a decided tendency for “hearing annual progress reports on achievement” rather than “frequently monitoring achievement progress” [Table 21]. Just over one-fifth (21.1 percent) say they monitor progress frequently, while 38.6 percent express a tendency toward annual reports. The disparity is clearest in large districts, where nearly 50 percent of boards are inclined to hear annual reports, while barely one in five reports more frequent accounts. Such responses are likely to be a testament to the limited resources available for frequent monitoring and the tendency for boards to adhere to the yearly progress report schedules mandated by state and federal agencies.

Asked how they approach goal-setting, boards are somewhat split between playing an active role in establishing goals and specific targets for achievement and setting broad expectations but leaving it to the professionals to determine more specific goals [Table 22]. Just over 34 percent of boards are inclined to set broad expectations but leave more specific goals to district staff, and 27.4 percent allow the board to set specific targets. A plurality of boards, 38.5 percent, indicate that they do both. Small district boards are actually more likely to set specific targets than just broad expectations, while large district boards favor broad expectations over specific targets by a margin of 40.9 percent to 18.1 percent.

How much should boards serve as stern taskmasters versus offering moral support to educators engaged in challenging work? When asked whether they set clear expectations that goals need to be met or whether they celebrate hard work and initiative even when goals are not met, boards strongly report a more supportive role [Table 23]. Just 12.7 percent of boards are inclined to have high expectations that goals be met, while 49.3 percent are more inclined to celebrate hard work and initiative. This split is evident in all districts but clearest in large districts, where boards favor a supportive stance by more than 5-to-1. This finding may be particularly noteworthy in the accountability era, when a decade of attention to No Child Left Behind and student achievement might have been expected to prompt boards—whatever their personal inclinations—to focus relentlessly on results. The significance of this finding deserves further exploration.

In a time of frequent paeans to data-driven decision making, boards are repeatedly advised to attend to data. There are two schools of thought as to how they might approach this task. One involves actively studying achievement data and reaching their own conclusions, while a second advises a more hands-off role in which boards rely on district leaders to summarize the data and provide the analysis or interpretation [Table 24]. By their own admission, boards are more inclined to the former, with 45.5 percent saying they take a more active role, compared with 14.7 percent who tend toward the hands-off approach. The trend is slightly more evident in small districts, but it holds in districts of all sizes.

When asked whether board priorities are more likely to remain consistent or to change annually in response to newly identified student needs, boards report that they are far more likely to adjust priorities from year to year [Table 25]. Nearly 50 percent of boards indicate that they are more likely to shift priorities between years, while just over 17 percent indicate that priorities will remain stable. The tilt is most severe in large districts, where boards opt for shifting priorities by a margin of nearly 6-to-1. While such governance poses concerns about execution and follow-through, it also makes it clear that boards are trying to respond to data on performance and student needs.

Given the nature of their role, board members can either view themselves primarily as a mechanism for drawing forth and then giving voice to community preferences, or as trustees charged with setting the direction for districts and then explaining those decisions to community members. Which stance is most common? Boards respond, by more than a 2-to-1 majority, that they “engage the community in determining district priorities” (47.5 percent) and don’t simply “inform the community about district priorities” and progress (20.4 percent) [Table 26]. That strong preference for a participatory ethos is evident across districts of all sizes, though most noticeable in the smallest districts.

What do boards think is their proper role when it comes to instruction? Do they believe that their decisions

can and should “significantly impact teaching and learning,” or do they think it advisable to “leave teaching and learning to the professionals” [Table 27]? By a wide margin, boards are inclined to say they ought to “leave it to the professionals,” with just 16.6 percent of boards believing that their priorities and actions can significantly impact teaching and learning. Large district boards are the most skeptical about the impact of their priorities and actions on teaching and learning, with 61.6 percent saying it should be left to the professionals and just 9.6 percent suggesting that the board’s priorities and actions can significantly impact teaching and learning.

What emerges is a picture of boards that prefer to focus on studying achievement data and providing support to district personnel and do not believe the board is in a position to directly influence teaching and learning. That said, boards think it is appropriate to regularly shift the district’s direction in accord with the data to engage the community in discussions about priorities and direction.

Given these general views, we can better understand how board members approach the challenge of boosting achievement. When asked which kinds of interventions are most likely to improve student learning, board members are most inclined to cite capacity-building measures such as professional development [Table 28]. For example, 86.1 percent of members consider professional development extremely or very important, and three-fourths of all respondents feel similarly about boosting the quality of school leadership. About two-thirds say raising the quality of district leadership is extremely or very important, while just over half think the same about reducing class size.

Board members are much more skeptical that policy changes such as charter schooling or merit pay will help improve student learning. Forty percent say they attach little or no importance to recruiting nontraditional teachers, and more than 50 percent feel that way about increasing within-district school choice. More than 60 percent say the same about a year-round school calendar, and more than 80 percent put little stock in the creation of new charter schools. In an intriguing finding, given the support voiced by the Obama administration for charter schooling, just 7.2 percent of board members think the creation of new charter schools is an extremely or very important tool for improving student learning. This finding is especially noteworthy considering that local boards are far and away the primary authorizers of charter schools and are hence the main gatekeepers for the creation of new ones.

When evaluating the performance of their local superintendent, board members report that the three most important considerations are financial management, student achievement, and meeting goals [Table 29]. More than 90 percent say that each of these is very or extremely important in superintendent evaluations. More than half of board members also think it extremely important that the superintendent has an effective working relationship with others. Among those qualities that were deemed less important, 40 percent think community engagement extremely important, and 24 percent say the same of parental satisfaction. Considered extremely or very important by 61.2 percent of board members, parental satisfaction is the only criterion that fewer than 70 percent of members ranked as extremely or very important.

■■■ SECTION 3: HOW SCHOOL BOARDS GO ABOUT THEIR WORK

Even when reformers and scholars do turn an eye to school boards, the result tends toward exhortation about what boards *should* do rather than an attempt to understand what they currently do. To improve board practice or recommend changes in structure or routine, it is useful to better understand what boards actually do, how they go about their work, and what such examinations might teach us about how to help boards govern more effectively.

How much time do board members devote to their jobs? Nationally, 41.6 percent of board members report spending 25 hours or more a month on school board business, with one in five spending more than 40 hours a month [Table 30]. About one-third of board members report spending fewer than 15 hours per month on

board work, with about 7 percent spending fewer than seven hours a month. There are dramatic differences in time spent on board work between large and small districts. In the latter, more than half of board members work fewer than 15 hours per month, and just 8.3 percent work more than 40 hours. In large districts, however, fewer than one in 10 board members reports working less than 15 hours per month while nearly 40 percent report working more than 40 hours.

How do boards spend that time? Nationally, nearly three-fourths of board members report that the percentage of board time spent on improving student achievement has increased during their tenure on the board, while 20.4 percent say it has decreased [Table 31]. Board members in the largest districts are slightly more likely to report increased attention to achievement: more than 77 percent of members in the largest districts report an increased focus on achievement, compared to 70.1 percent in the small districts.

Most board members report participating in board development or training [Table 32]. Overall, the most common types of board development are state-level conferences, which 65.7 percent of members have attended during the past year; whole-board seminars or workshops (62.7 percent); and seminars or workshops geared to individual members (58.8 percent). Members from the largest districts are more likely to attend national conferences (52.5 percent have done so, compared to 7.8 percent in small districts) and twice as likely as members from small districts to engage in web seminars.

Members report that they have received professional development and training from a number of sources [Table 33]. The most frequently named source is their state school boards association (81.6 percent), followed by the member's own board or district (58.1 percent) and the National School Boards Association (32.4 percent). Large district board members are the most likely to report working with consultants or vendors, with 41.1 percent having done so, while boards in the smallest districts are the most likely to report working with regional service agencies.

When board presidents or chairs are asked to address the frequency of *whole-board* development—with the entire board participating in training together—nearly one-fourth (23.3 percent) report that they never engage in such development, and 38.7 percent do so only once a year [Table 34]. The smaller the district, the less likely boards are to have whole-board development, with nearly 40 percent of the smallest districts never engaging in this kind of training. Of the boards that do not engage in whole-board development, the reason most frequently cited is scheduling difficulties (45.3 percent) [Table 35]. Cost is the next most common explanation, with 18.9 percent of presidents overall reporting it as a barrier. Open-meeting laws frequently prevent whole-board development for the smallest districts, with one in five board presidents citing such regulation as an obstacle. Though board members participate with some regularity in development and training opportunities, it is relatively rare that they do so together as a whole board.

In terms of substantive areas in which they have received training, 92.6 percent of board members have received or have received and would like more training on board roles, responsibilities, and operations [Table 36]. More than 80 percent have received training in legal and policy issues (82.7 percent) and funding and budget (82.9 percent). Roughly three-fourths have received training in leadership skills (75.2 percent) and student achievement issues (73.9 percent), while nearly two out of three have been trained in community engagement (65.1 percent). Board members report that while they have had training, they would benefit from additional guidance in several areas. More than 40 percent of board members desire additional training in funding and budget (44.2 percent), student achievement (49.2 percent), and legal and policy issues (41.6 percent). Just one in six members want additional training in board roles and responsibilities (18.5 percent). Among areas in which board members have not received training but would like to, the most popular areas are community engagement and student achievement.

Board members report that superintendents play a crucial role in determining what information board members have when making decisions [Table 37]. More than 56 percent of board members report that they “almost always” turn to their superintendent to get the information they need to make board decisions, and 88.7 percent

say they do so often or almost always. No other source of information comes close. Just 5.4 percent of board members say they “almost always” consult research journals; other sources of information consulted “almost always” are education publications (cited by 3 percent of board members), the state school boards association or other state organizations (7.9 percent), the daily newspaper or television news (11.1 percent), and search engines like Google or Yahoo (9 percent). In short, board members appear to turn to their superintendents for information more frequently than they turn to all other sources of information combined. This gives the superintendent a crucial role, not only as the key executive of the district but also as the gatekeeper who may determine what information board members have access to.

When asked to explain the knowledge that makes for an effective board member, members indicate that the most important thing for members to know is what factors impact student achievement [Table 38]. More than 63 percent of board members deem such expertise extremely important. Board members think the next most significant kinds of knowledge entail how to communicate with the public (47.5 percent), evaluate superintendents and principals (46.6 percent), and interpret student achievement data (43.8 percent). When asked which expertise area was only somewhat or not at all important, 21.1 percent of respondents point to curricular expertise, with budgetary expertise coming in a distant second to last, at 5.8 percent, and characteristics of effective districts last, at 2.6 percent.

III SECTION 4: HOW SCHOOL BOARDS ARE CONFIGURED

Like any other governing body, school boards are shaped by the rules and policies that regulate their membership, compensation, the nature of meetings, and so forth. Three-fourths of superintendents report that their boards have a total of either five or seven seats [Table 39]. Over 60 percent of boards have four-year terms for members, while only 3.4 percent have terms of less than three years [Table 40].

Nationally, 62.3 percent of board members report that they receive no salary, while 14.3 percent receive an annual salary of \$5,000 or more and 2 percent earn a salary of more than \$15,000 per year [Table 41]. The differences between small and large districts are dramatic. In small districts, three-fourths of board members earn no salary, and the other quarter earns less than \$5,000 per year. In large districts, the majority of board members receive a salary, with 22.1 percent earning \$10,000 or more and 7.8 percent earning more than \$15,000 per year. About one in four board members reported receiving a per-meeting stipend, most commonly less than \$100 [Table 42].

When board chairs are asked about the operational resources available to them, 90.8 percent respond that their board has access to administrative support, and 90.2 percent have access to legal counsel. Boards in the largest districts are most likely to have access to research and communications staff, as well as data analysis assistance: 80.6 percent report having data and research staff and 71 percent have access to communications staff. Smaller districts are far less likely to have such support [Table 43]. Nationally, more than 87.8 percent of board members report using the Internet on a daily basis, and just 5.2 percent report using it less than once a week [Table 44].

Board chairs also provided information on the prosaic details of how boards operate and interact with the public [Table 45]. Almost half of all board chairs who responded (47.7 percent of 153 boards) deliver meeting materials to board members electronically, and more than 75 percent of all districts, except the smallest, make all district policies available electronically. Two-thirds of boards (66.7 percent) feature e-mail contact information for all board members on the district website, and 56.2 percent post board minutes and supporting documents online. The largest districts are most likely to employ these tools, while the smallest districts lag by a fair margin. For example, while 84 percent of large district boards feature electronically accessible district policies, only 54 percent of the smallest districts do.

When it comes to board proceedings, over half of the board presidents responding (53.6 percent) indicate that

their boards allot one to three minutes of public comment per person, but no districts with 7,500 students or more allow more than six minutes of commentary [Table 46]. Though they allow for less public commentary, larger districts do make it easier for community members to track board activity, such as by providing live internet streaming, which is available in just over 16 percent of the largest districts [Table 47]. Nationally, 21.6 percent of board chairs report that their districts offer a live, televised showing of meetings, and 15 percent of districts offer archived video for later viewing. While meetings are much more likely to be streamed live over the Internet in large districts than in small ones (16.1 percent compared to 1.9 percent), there otherwise appears to be relatively little variation in public access to school board meetings across districts of different sizes. When asked how often their boards meet, nearly 94 percent of board chairs nationwide report meeting once or twice a month [Table 48].

Superintendents report that their boards have a substantial degree of autonomous authority. City or county councils have to approve school board budgets in only 9.3 percent of districts [Table 49]. Nearly two-thirds (65.8 percent) of boards have the authority to levy taxes, although such levies frequently require voter approval [Tables 50-51]. In 79.1 percent of cases, boards can independently choose to hold bond elections, which then go to the voters for an up or down vote [Table 52].

III SECTION 5: SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

Elections are the critical link in any system of democratic governance. Yet, while school board elections select a huge share of America's officeholders, remarkably little is known about them. How contested are school board elections? How much do they cost? How often do challengers win?

When asked how contested board member elections are, nationally 44 percent of board members describe their most recent election as "very easy," while just 5.8 percent describe it as "very difficult" [Table 53]. Nationally, just over two-thirds (67.8 percent) say their election was somewhat easy or very easy, while only about 19.5 percent say it was difficult or very difficult. Board members in large districts report much more competitive contests. While more than 75 percent of small district members term their last race somewhat or very easy and just under 10 percent say it was somewhat or very difficult, 56.7 percent of large district members say their win was very or somewhat easy and 31.4 percent say it was very or somewhat difficult.

While occasional media coverage of high-profile races may give the impression that school board elections are costly, the reality is very different [Table 54]. Fully 73.9 percent of elected board members report that their campaign spent less than \$1,000 in their most recent election, and 87 percent spent less than \$5,000. Just 2.6 percent of board members spent more than \$25,000. The patterns are very different in big and small districts, however. In small districts, 95.2 percent of candidates say they spent less than \$1,000, and none report spending \$10,000 or more. In large districts, on the other hand, 10.1 percent of members spent more than \$25,000, and over one-quarter spent \$10,000 or more, while just 33.2 percent spent less than \$1,000.

The most common sources of funds for these campaigns are board members' personal funds (used by 58.6 percent) or contributions by family and friends (used by 37.9 percent) [Tables 55a-g]. Just under one-fifth of members report receiving funds from the business community (19.4 percent), 12.3 percent from the teachers unions, and 7.6 percent from parent groups. These various interests are far more likely to contribute to board campaigns in large districts than in small ones. In large districts, 34.8 percent of members report that they received contributions from teachers unions, while just 1.2 percent of the smallest districts' board members say they did. Similarly, 56.2 percent of large district members received funds from the business community, while just 4.1 percent of small district members did.

In nearly 90 percent of elections nationwide, superintendents report that no party affiliation is listed on the

election ballot for board candidates [Table 56]. More than half of superintendents (53 percent) indicate that in their districts, school board elections are always held on the same day as national or state elections [Table 57]. Challengers face stiff odds when contesting elections against incumbent board members, with 46.8 percent of superintendents reporting that no incumbent board members have been defeated by challengers in the past five years [Table 58].

III SECTION 6: SCHOOL BOARDS AND THEIR SUPERINTENDENTS

The most significant decision school boards make is the decision to hire a superintendent to lead their school district. While a variety of measures were collected on the 120 superintendents who participated in this study, the report is focused on school boards. Those seeking a more detailed look at superintendents would do well to check out *The State of the American School Superintendency: A Mid-Decade Study*²¹ or *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*.²² Our focus here is on how superintendents and school boards view each other and how they interact.

Superintendents' views of their district's top priorities are quite similar to those of board members [Table 59]. When asked to rate the importance of the same goals posed to board members, approximately 20 percent of superintendents say preparing students for college is a first or second priority, and 15 percent say the same about preparing students for the workforce. These results mirror the views expressed by board members, who ranked preparation for college or the workforce at only slightly higher levels (nearly 25 percent and 20 percent, respectively) when identifying the district's most important objectives. Both board members and superintendents think the two most important objectives are to "help students fulfill their potential" and to "prepare students for a satisfying and productive life," with 71.7 percent of superintendents deeming the former of first or second importance and 70.8 percent saying the same for the latter.

Superintendents also closely mirror board members when it comes to identifying the most urgent issues that boards confront [Table 60]. Just as nearly 90 percent of board members think budget and funding issues are extremely or very urgent, so too do 91.6 percent of superintendents. The next three most urgent priorities for superintendents are improving student learning across the board (76.5 percent think it extremely or very urgent), closing the achievement gaps among subgroups (69 percent), and improving the quality of teaching (67.5 percent). In these, as in the areas they consider less important, superintendents' views mirror those of board members.

Compared with school boards, superintendents are less likely to cite district policies and collective bargaining provisions as barriers to such efforts as hiring nontraditional teachers, and they are more likely to point the finger at federal or state laws overall [Table 61]. For instance, when looking at the biggest hurdle to removing ineffective principals, over 30 percent of superintendents cite federal or state law as a hindrance to such efforts, while only 13.3 percent indicate that district policies are a barrier. This rate is half that of school boards, 26.1 percent of which find district regulations to be an obstacle in firing ineffective principals. When asked to identify barriers to removing ineffective teachers, superintendents again veer from school boards. Over 60 percent of superintendents cite federal or state law as an obstacle, compared with the 47 percent reported by boards.

While superintendents are less reticent than school boards to cite federal or state laws as barriers to improvement, boards and superintendents concur on the most significant barriers to raising student achievement. Over 70 percent of both boards (74.5 percent) and superintendents (79.2 percent) point to finances and funding as strong or total barriers to boosting achievement, while over 45 percent of both superintendents and boards see district customs and bureaucracy as at most a minimal barrier [Table 62]. Overall, superintendents are less inclined than boards to fault federal, state, or district policies as barriers to improving student achievement.

Superintendents appear more concerned about the state of student achievement than are board members. Superintendents are slightly less likely than boards to agree that defining success in terms of student achievement is “short-sighted,” with 86.8 percent of boards affirming the statement, compared with 82.5 percent of superintendents [Table 63]. More than two-thirds of superintendents strongly agree or are inclined to agree that “dramatic and rapid improvements” are needed to fix “unacceptable” student achievement. Superintendents are much more likely than board members to agree when asked whether schools should have greater flexibility in staffing to restructure faculty. One-third of superintendents strongly agree, compared to just 22 percent among boards. Although superintendents are more likely than board members to strongly agree with drastic measures like staffing changes to raise poor performance, four out of five superintendents strongly agree or are inclined to agree that the pressures of accountability require that they provide teachers and administrators with “moral support.”

When it comes to school board behaviors, superintendents sometimes tell the same story as boards themselves—and other times tell a slightly different story. Whereas boards report that they are far more likely to receive annual progress reports on achievement rather than more frequent monitoring (by a margin of 38.6 percent to 21.1 percent), superintendents indicate that their experience is slightly different. Superintendents in just 33.4 percent of districts say their boards receive annual reports, while more frequent monitoring is reported in 29.2 percent [Table 64]. Because the superintendents surveyed are not a matching set for the boards surveyed, it is possible that both findings are true. However, it seems more likely to be the case that boards and superintendents view their interactions somewhat differently.

When asked whether boards set specific goals for student achievement or whether they set broad expectations and leave it to the professionals to determine specific goals, the superintendent responses closely mirror those of boards—both groups indicate that districts tend to be relatively split on this score, with superintendents’ responses ranging from 28.6 percent for broad expectations to 34.5 percent for specific goals [Table 65]. Superintendents also agree with boards that boards should forgo the stern taskmaster routine, taking care to celebrate hard work and initiative even when results fall short: by a margin of 49.1 percent to 17 percent, superintendents say that boards need to take care to recognize success [Table 66]. Those figures are remarkably similar to those of boards themselves. Superintendents also agree with boards when it comes to data consumption, with superintendents reporting that boards tend to actively study achievement data rather than rely on the district staff to produce charts and summary analysis [Table 67]. Superintendents indicate that boards prefer more fine-grained data by 44.5 percent to 26 percent, numbers broadly similar to the 45.5 percent to 14.7 percent split that boards report.

Superintendents are even more likely than boards to report that boards are inclined to alter priorities each year based on new data and determinations of need. By a margin of 56.7 percent to 11.9 percent, superintendents indicate that boards are more likely to make annual adjustments than to maintain the same focus until they accomplish the desired goals [Table 68]. That is similar to, though even more stark than, the 48 to 17.2 percent response proffered by boards. Superintendents also offer a response broadly similar to that of boards when asked whether boards and district staff actively engage the community in shaping district policy or whether they focus on communicating their decisions out to the community. With a 49.2 percent response compared to boards’ 25.8 percent, superintendents indicate that they see district leaders actively engaging the community [Table 69]. And, finally, superintendents are somewhat more likely than boards to report that boards believe they have the ability to influence teaching and learning [Table 70]. Just over one-quarter of superintendents say their boards think they can impact classroom practice, while 41.5 percent say their board believes issues related to teaching and learning should be left to the professionals. Boards themselves say they are less confident that they can affect classrooms.

Overall, boards and superintendents tend to hold very similar views of how boards approach data and community input, how supportive boards are to district staff, and how boards go about shaping district priorities. The two areas where some disagreement arises relate to how often boards get briefed on district achievement and how much boards think they can impact teaching and learning. In each case, superintendents

describe boards as moderately more engaged than the boards themselves say of themselves. Whether these disagreements reflect different perspectives on the same behavior, responses from different districts, or something else is not clear.

Like their boards, superintendents cite professional development as the most important approach to improving student learning, with more than 95 percent deeming it extremely or very important [Table 71]. Superintendents also mirror their boards in emphasizing “capacity building” as a means for learning improvements. Improving leadership at the school and district level follows close behind professional development in relative importance, and increased teacher pay comes next, with just under 50 percent of superintendents citing it as very or extremely important in achieving learning gains.

Superintendents regard the frequent use of assessment data as an important strategy, with more than 95 percent also flagging data as extremely or very important. This makes superintendents notably more enthusiastic about the significance of data than are board members, of whom a more modest three-fourths consider it very or extremely important. Superintendents are also more likely to be skeptical of many popular reform initiatives than their boards. New charter schools (92.4 percent), greater school choice within the district (64.7 percent), merit pay (33.6 percent), and nontraditional teachers (58.4 percent) are all cited as somewhat or not at all important by superintendents more frequently than by boards, but boards themselves are also generally lukewarm toward these measures.

When faced with limited resources, superintendents report that their districts are more likely to target resources to low-performing students rather than allot resources equally to all students (60.5 percent versus 39.5 percent). The largest districts are much more likely to take this approach, while superintendents in districts with 1,000-2,499 students are almost evenly split, with 53.5 percent giving priority to allocating resources to low-performing students [Table 72].

Asked how confident they are that their boards will support them when making tough decisions on resources and personnel, 87.4 percent of superintendents overall report being confident or very confident. Superintendents in small and medium-small districts are slightly more confident than their counterparts in larger districts, who also report more frequent instances of their boards overturning their personnel termination decisions [Table 73]. Nearly one-fourth of superintendents in the largest districts have experienced such a reversal [Table 74].

When it comes to evaluation by their boards, 95 percent of superintendents report that their financial management is a very or extremely important factor, followed by meeting goals (90.6 percent) and having effective working relationships (89 percent) [Table 75]. Superintendents are far less likely than board members to think that boards evaluate superintendent performance on the basis of student achievement outcomes. While two-thirds of board members think that student achievement is an extremely important indicator in how they judge a superintendent’s performance, only 40.3 percent of superintendents believe that to be the case. Parental satisfaction is the least likely factor to affect superintendent evaluation, with 63 percent reporting this as extremely or very important.

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

As noted earlier, at least three macro trends are evident when one reads through the survey results. Fittingly, all of them, in various ways, relate to the question of student achievement. That alone is telling. It wasn't much more than a decade ago that district leaders routinely found themselves consumed with managing what Paul Houston, former executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, referred to as the "killer B's"—buses, buildings, books, budgets, bonds, and the like. Today, we have seen a sea change in district culture, with boards and superintendents instead much more attuned to questions of student achievement.

In the 2002 study *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, which reported board member attitudes at the start of the No Child Left Behind era, board members were less focused on student achievement than they are today. This shift is especially notable when it comes to evaluating the performance of superintendents, arguably the most important role that boards play. In 2002, board members reported that the three most critical factors in evaluating superintendent performance were the board-superintendent relationship, the morale of school system employees, and the safety of district students. The emphasis on board relationships, morale, and safety was straight from the old "killer B's" school of management. In the current survey, on the other hand, board members reported that the two dominant factors in evaluating superintendents were financial management (with 94.6 percent deeming it extremely or very important) and student achievement (with a comparable figure of 91.2 percent).

On a related note, board members express a growing thirst for information on what drives student achievement gains. In the current survey, one-half of board members said they wanted more training in student achievement—making it the area in which additional training was most desired. While different methodologies mean that one should be cautious about making direct comparisons to the 2002 results, that's a huge jump from the 22 percent who wanted more training in student achievement in 2002. And nearly two-thirds of board members now report it is "extremely important" for them to understand the factors that impact student achievement. It seems evident that the past decade has fueled increasing board interest in understanding how to govern with a closer eye on student learning and achievement.

A second key finding reflects a tension that has played out more broadly. Board members report that achievement has gained a heightened salience, but they also say that they want to see student success defined by more than reading and math achievement. This question of how to focus on achievement while also emphasizing non-tested subjects and other worthwhile skills is one that policymakers and educators have wrestled with across the land. How board members ultimately decide to resolve that tension, and whether they opt to err on the side of measurable achievement or of promoting softer skills, will do much to shape instruction and accountability in a given community.

For instance, consistent with a heightened focus on student achievement, just one-third of board members are concerned about the risks of "unreasonable expectations for student achievement." Two-thirds report that the current state of student achievement is unacceptable. Those sound like firm admonishments of the status quo and a demand that districts focus on core academic instruction. But nearly nine in 10 board members also think it's important to broaden notions of success to include more than student achievement. The two stances are both sensible and potentially complementary, but they also create possible tensions—especially if board members see the inevitable budgetary or programmatic trade-offs between reading and math instruction and other instructional opportunities.

These competing demands explain why it is a mistake to too vociferously proclaim that board members have become laser-like in their focus on achievement. While members seem to accord more importance to achievement today than they did a decade ago, they still wrestle with competing pressures. Note, for example, that 73 percent of members report that their boards had increased the amount of time devoted to student achievement issues during their tenure, while just 20 percent said the amount of time devoted to achievement had declined. These figures are impressive and suggest an achievement-centric trend. But, back in 2002, 73 percent of board members reported increased board time spent on student achievement during their tenure and just 3 percent said that time devoted to achievement had decreased. So, it appears that emphasis on achievement has continued to grow, but just how dramatic or universal that growth has been is an open question.

Finally, it's instructive to note that the strategies that boards think are most important are not the same choices that have been most evident in the popular media. Rather than class size reduction or charter schooling, board members express a preference for the same measures that superintendents are most likely to embrace. The three most popular strategies are professional development, frequent use of assessment data, and improving the quality of school leadership. These strategies represent a bet that the application of quality training, good data, and smart leadership can help today's familiar schools perform much better. Ensuring that these approaches deliver is the task for boards and their superintendents.

CONCLUSION

The linchpin of democratic government is the quality of leadership our officials provide. In schooling, this means that our hopes and expectations rest primarily on the boards that govern the nation's almost 14,000 school districts. Historically, however, we haven't paid much attention to who sits on these boards, what they consider important, how they spend their time, how they organize and manage their boards, how their behavior compares to studies of board priorities and actions that positively impact district culture and achievement, or how they get elected to office. This study represents an effort to address precisely those questions. School boards are charged with the critical task of governing our nation's public school systems. This work, as important as it has always been, has taken on renewed urgency amidst changing conditions nationwide.

Two recent trends have converged to make this report even more timely and relevant than it was when the partners first initiated this effort in early 2009. The first is that the fiscal situation facing the nation and our communities has grown even grimmer. What some had hoped would be a summer storm that would shock with its severity but would soon pass now seems increasingly likely to be a sustained autumn downpour. States and districts are likely to be looking at several years of difficult budgets, and the federal government's fiscal travails make it unlikely that any more bailouts will be forthcoming. The second is that the dramatic Republican gains of 2010—in the House of Representatives, state legislatures, and governor's mansions—seem to herald attempts to rein in the federal role. The results seem to ensure that any ESEA reauthorization will be substantially scaled back from No Child Left Behind, and perhaps even from the Obama administration's "ESEA blueprint." It also makes it likely that some federal initiatives, from Race to the Top to School Improvement Grants, are likely to be curtailed or discontinued.

These shifts promise to make the pivotal role of school boards even more significant. If districts are forced to struggle with tough budgets, questions of governance and oversight will become ever more critical. As will efforts to ensure that outlays are being aggressively monitored and that spending is delivering the biggest possible bang for the buck. And if Washington's educational footprint is about to shrink after a decade of outsized impact, the result will mean that improvement efforts will rest even more heavily on local boards. Given these larger shifts and the crucial role of K-12 schooling in assuring the future of our nation and of our youth in the 21st century, the work of school boards has never loomed larger.

Ten years ago, a similar study of the nation's school boards concluded by noting, "No matter what kind of district they serve, today's school board members report that student achievement is a pressing concern."²³ If that was true when No Child Left Behind was enacted, it's even truer today. School districts are buffeted by the pressures of accountability and by demands for consistent achievement. Yet, even as we have been reminded of the importance of strong governance by a series of unfortunate developments in the private sector in recent years—from malfeasance at firms like Tyco and Enron to reckless behavior at financial giants like AIG and Bear Stearns—we have paid remarkably limited attention to the ins and outs of school board governance.

School boards and the superintendents they hire may view their priorities through slightly different lenses, but these perspectives play a complementary role in district leadership. Boards are slightly more focused on workforce and college preparation than their superintendents, though both groups prioritize preparing students for satisfying and productive lives and are more concerned about some of the excesses of accountability and the need to support teachers and school leaders. When it comes to board member attitudes, however, as well as everything from board staffing to elections, there are substantial variations across communities.

Put simply, all school boards are not the same. While various reformers, including Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, have championed governance reform, we have seen in the preceding pages that the conditions and nature of board governance vary dramatically across the nation's districts. Such an observation may suggest that the response to the challenges is likely to vary as well.

For those who have championed mayoral control of schools in cities like Washington, D.C., and New York City, and for those who have challenged the wisdom of such measures, a better understanding of the gritty reality of district governance and the thinking of board members would seem essential. For state and federal policymakers counting on districts to translate into practice new policies governing accountability, standards, or school restructuring, an appreciation for the strengths and limitations of local boards would seem imperative. For advocates calling on district leaders to make difficult budget decisions and to rethink the use of staff and technology, the attitudes and expectations of board members loom large. It is time for those board members to receive the informed, thoughtful consideration that their critical role deserves.

ENDNOTES

- 1 As quoted in William Howell, *Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics*, ed. William Howell (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 7.
- 2 Christopher Berry and William G. Howell, “Democratic Accountability in Public Education” in *Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics*, ed. William Howell (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 150-198.
- 3 Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer, *Ten Thousand Democracies: Politics and Public Opinion in America’s School Districts* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 128-144.
- 4 Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer, *Ten Thousand Democracies: Politics and Public Opinion in America’s School Districts* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).
- 5 National School Boards Association, *Key Work of School Boards*. Available at: <http://www.nsba.org/keywork>.
- 6 Nancy Walser, *The Essential School Board Book: Better Governance in the Age of Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2010).
- 7 William Howell, *Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).
- 8 Thomas Alsbury, *The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2008).
- 9 Frederick M. Hess, *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conditions and Challenges of District Governance* (Washington, DC: National School Boards Association, 2002).
- 10 Albert Nylander, *National School Board Study, 2007-2009* (Cleveland, MS: Delta State University, 2009). Available at: http://www.oldham.k12.ky.us/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1118:national-school-board-study&catid=241:superintendents-page&Itemid=1770.
- 11 Iowa Association of School Boards, *The Lighthouse Inquiry: School Board/Superintendent Team Behaviors in School Districts with Extreme Differences in Student Achievement* (Des Moines, IA: IASB, October 2000). Available at: <http://www.ia-sb.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=568>. See also Meredith Mountford, “Motives and Power of School Board Members: Implications for School Board-Superintendent Relationships,” *Educational Administration Quarterly*, December 2004, Vol. 40, No. 5, p 704-741.
- 12 Frederick M. Hess, *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conditions and Challenges of District Governance* (Washington, DC: National School Boards Association, 2002), 26.
- 13 Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, *Member FAQs*. Available at http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/memberfaq.html.

- 14 Women's Legislative Network and the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010 Legislative Session. Available at <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=19481>.
- 15 Frederick M. Hess, *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conditions and Challenges of District Governance* (Washington, DC: National School Boards Association, 2002), 25.
- 16 Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, *Black Americans in Congress, Historical Data*. Available at <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/>.
- 17 National Black Caucus of State Legislatures and the National Conference of State Legislatures, *Number of African American Legislators, 2009*. Available at <http://www.ncsl.org/LegislaturesElections/LegislatorsLegislativeStaffData/AfricanAmericanLegislators19922009/tabid/14781/Default.aspx>.
- 18 U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Fertility & Family Statistics Branch, Table FI. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2010.html>
- 19 U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_008.asp?referrer=list.
- 20 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey 2008 (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Available at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032009/hhinc/new02_001.htm.
- 21 Thomas Glass and Louis Franceschini, *The State of the American School Superintendency: A Mid-Decade Study*, (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2007).
- 22 Theodore J. Kowalski, Robert S. McCord, George J. Petersen, I. Phillip Young, and Noelle M. Ellerson, *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*, co-published with American Association of School Administrators (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).
- 23 Frederick M. Hess, *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Conditions and Challenges of District Governance* (Washington, DC: National School Boards Association, 2002), 41.

TABLES

TABLE 1

Gender (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 893

Missing = 7

Gender	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Male	185	135	51	113	16	500
% within group	65.6%	54.7%	48.6%	48.3%	64.0%	56.0%
Female	97	112	54	121	9	393
% within group	34.4%	45.3%	51.4%	51.7%	36.0%	44.0%
Total	282	247	105	234	25	893
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of total	31.6%	27.6%	11.8%	26.2%	2.8%	100.0%

TABLE 2

Race/Ethnicity (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 886

Missing = 14

Race/Ethnicity	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
African-American or Black	16	20	19	51	2	106
% within group	5.7%	8.2%	18.1%	21.8%	8.3%	12.3%
White	249	208	83	156	18	696
% within group	88.9%	85.6%	79.0%	66.7%	75.0%	80.7%
Hispanic or Latino(a)	4	6	3	14	2	27
% within group	1.4%	2.5%	2.9%	6.0%	8.3%	3.1%
Asian	4	1	0	2	0	7
% within group	1.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	1	0	1
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	4	0	3	1	10
% within group	1.1%	1.6%	0.0%	1.3%	4.2%	1.2%
Other	4	4	0	7	1	15
% within group	1.4%	1.6%	0.0%	3.0%	4.2%	1.7%
Total	280	243	105	234	24	886
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note. 16 board members selected "Other". Five board members said the choices did not represent them or declined to state their race. The other 11 comments provided were: Mix, White/Native American, Human Race, Asian American, Moorish American, Irish/Italian American, White/American Indian, Appalachian, African-American/Irish, Caucasian, and American.

TABLE 3

Age (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 891

Missing = 9

Age Category	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Under 30	2	0	0	0	2	4
% within group	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.0%	0.4%
30-39	16	10	2	9	0	37
% within group	5.7%	4.1%	1.9%	3.9%	0.0%	4.2%
40-49	78	79	29	35	6	227
% within group	27.7%	32.2%	27.4%	15.0%	24.0%	25.5%
50-59	100	76	37	99	8	320
% within group	35.5%	31.0%	34.9%	42.5%	32.0%	35.9%
60 or over	86	80	38	90	9	303
% within group	30.5%	32.7%	35.8%	38.6%	36.0%	34.0%
Total	282	245	106	233	25	891
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 4

Do you currently have any children in school? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 890

Missing = 10

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Yes, in the same district in which I serve on the board	116	100	37	56	7	316
% within group	41.1%	40.8%	34.9%	24.2%	26.9%	35.5%
Yes, in another district	5	6	1	11	0	23
% within group	1.8%	2.4%	0.9%	4.8%	0.0%	2.6%
No	161	139	68	164	19	551
% within group	57.1%	56.7%	64.2%	71.0%	73.1%	61.9%
Total	282	245	106	231	26	890
% within group	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 5

Education Level (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 884

Missing = 16

Education Level	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Did not complete high school	1	0	0	0	0	1
% within group	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
High school graduate or GED	23	12	3	4	3	45
% within group	8.2%	4.9%	2.9%	1.7%	12.5%	5.1%
Some college or other post-secondary education/training (including AA or AS degree)	80	49	19	31	3	182
% within group	28.7%	20.0%	18.4%	13.3%	12.5%	20.6%
Bachelor's degree	73	72	27	65	8	245
% within group	26.2%	29.4%	26.2%	27.9%	33.3%	27.7%
Advanced degree (MA, MS, Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, JD, DVM, etc.)	102	112	54	133	10	411
% within group	36.6%	45.7%	52.4%	57.1%	41.7%	46.5%
Total	279	245	103	233	24	884
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 6

Annual Household Income (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 857

Missing = 43

Income	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Less than \$25,000	3	6	2	2	1	14
% within group	1.1%	2.6%	2.0%	0.9%	4.5%	1.6%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	25	25	4	15	0	69
% within group	9.3%	10.7%	3.9%	6.5%	0.0%	8.1%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	128	91	36	88	15	358
% within group	47.4%	39.1%	35.3%	38.3%	68.2%	41.8%
\$100,000 to \$200,000	90	90	48	101	6	335
% within group	33.3%	38.6%	47.1%	43.9%	27.3%	39.1%
More than \$200,000	24	21	12	24	0	81
% within group	8.9%	9.0%	11.8%	10.4%	0.0%	9.5%
Total	270	233	102	230	22	857
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 7

General Political Philosophy
 n = 878 n = 115
 Missing = 12 Missing = 5 (Superintendent)
 (Board Member)

Political Philosophy	Role Group		
	Board Member	Superintendent	Total
Liberal	179	23	202
% within group	20.4%	20.0%	20.3%
Moderate	415	75	490
% within group	47.3%	65.2%	49.3%
Conservative	284	17	301
% within group	32.3%	14.8%	30.3%
Total	878	115	993
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note. The total for each column represents the “n” for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the Board column total from 900 (the total # of board members) and the Superintendent column total from 120 (the total # of superintendents).

TABLE 8

Occupation (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 883

Missing = 17

Occupation	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Education	57	67	27	79	9	239
% within group	20.7%	27.2%	26.2%	33.8%	37.5%	27.1%
Business/commerce	52	51	13	42	2	160
% within group	18.8%	20.7%	12.6%	17.9%	8.3%	18.1%
Labor/production	7	1	2	3	0	13
% within group	2.5%	0.4%	1.9%	1.3%	0.0%	1.5%
Transportation	3	5	2	0	0	10
% within group	1.1%	2.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Farming/fishing/forestry	14	4	1	0	4	23
% within group	5.1%	1.6%	1.0%	0.0%	16.7%	2.6%
Sales	19	17	5	6	1	48
% within group	6.9%	6.9%	4.9%	2.6%	4.2%	5.4%
Construction	10	7	0	1	1	19
% within group	3.6%	2.8%	0.0%	0.4%	4.2%	2.2%
Professional services (law, medicine, etc.)	38	36	18	28	4	124
% within group	13.8%	14.6%	17.5%	12.0%	16.7%	14.0%
Nonprofit	12	5	9	19	0	45
% within group	4.3%	2.0%	8.7%	8.1%	0.0%	5.1%
Government	25	20	10	25	2	82
% within group	9.1%	8.1%	9.7%	10.7%	8.3%	9.3%
Homemaker	8	13	7	8	0	36
% within group	2.9%	5.3%	6.8%	3.4%	0.0%	4.1%
Other	31	20	9	23	1	84
% within group	11.2%	8.1%	8.7%	9.8%	4.2%	9.5%
Total	276	246	103	234	24	883
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 9

Retirement Status
(Individual Board Members Only)

n = 858

Missing = 42

Retirement Status	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Retired	71	64	24	71	5	235
% within group	26.5%	27.1%	24.0%	30.7%	21.7%	27.4%
Not Retired	197	172	76	160	18	623
% within group	73.5%	72.9%	76.0%	69.3%	78.3%	72.6%
Total	268	236	100	231	23	858
% within group	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 10

Are you a current or former member of an educators' union? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 883

Missing = 17

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Yes, in the same district in which I serve on the board	22	29	7	29	3	90
% within group	7.8%	12.0%	6.7%	12.6%	12.0%	10.2%
Yes, in another district	20	20	4	20	1	65
% within group	7.1%	8.3%	3.8%	8.7%	4.0%	7.4%
No	239	193	94	181	21	728
% within group	85.1%	79.8%	89.5%	78.7%	84.0%	82.4%
Total	281	242	105	230	25	883
% within group	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 11

Check the statement that best describes the main reason you initially ran for the board. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 879

Missing = 21

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
To fix specific issues in the schools/district	26	21	11	13	4	75
% within group	9.5%	8.6%	10.4%	5.6%	16.0%	8.5%
To give back to my community (civic duty)	61	59	24	50	3	197
% within group	22.3%	24.3%	22.6%	21.6%	12.0%	22.4%
To represent my constituency in school-related issues	6	10	8	17	4	45
% within group	2.2%	4.1%	7.5%	7.4%	16.0%	5.1%
To develop my role as a public leader in my community	6	3	2	1	0	12
% within group	2.2%	1.2%	1.9%	0.4%	0.0%	1.4%
To ensure that our children's schools are the best they can be	146	122	49	113	12	442
% within group	53.3%	50.2%	46.2%	48.9%	48.0%	50.3%
To ensure that a different candidate did not get on the board	2	3	2	4	0	11
% within group	0.7%	1.2%	1.9%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%
I was recruited	23	19	8	18	2	70
% within group	8.4%	7.8%	7.5%	7.8%	8.0%	8.0%
I was appointed	4	6	2	15	0	27
% within group	1.5%	2.5%	1.9%	6.5%	0.0%	3.1%
Total	274	243	106	231	25	879
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 12

Were you elected or appointed to the board? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 884

Missing = 16

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Elected	277	228	99	207	24	835
% within group	98.6%	94.6%	94.3%	89.6%	92.0%	94.5%
Appointed	4	13	6	24	2	49
% within group	1.4%	5.4%	5.7%	10.4%	8.0%	5.5%
Total	281	241	105	231	26	884
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of total	31.8%	27.3%	11.9%	26.1%	2.9%	100.0%

TABLE 13

If you were elected, did you run for the school board as part of a slate of board candidates running for the school board as a group? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 842

Missing = 58

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Yes	56	45	24	20	2	147
% within group	20.3%	19.4%	23.8%	9.6%	8.3%	17.5%
No	220	187	77	189	22	695
% within group	79.7%	80.6%	76.2%	90.4%	91.7%	82.5%
Total	276	232	101	209	24	842
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of total	32.8%	27.6%	12.0%	24.8%	2.9%	100.0%

TABLE 14

How many years have you served as a school board member in your current district? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 884

Missing = 16

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
0 to 2 years	58	63	15	53	3	192
% within group	20.7%	25.7%	14.1%	23.1%	12.5%	21.7%
2+ to 5 years	71	65	37	72	6	251
% within group	25.3%	26.5%	34.9%	31.4%	25.0%	28.4%
5+ to 10 years	89	60	25	55	10	239
% within group	31.8%	24.5%	23.6%	24.0%	41.7%	27.1%
10+ years	62	57	29	49	5	202
% within group	22.2%	23.3%	27.3%	21.4%	20.8%	22.9%
Total	280	245	106	229	24	884
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 15

Do you plan to pursue another term on the board after you complete your current term of office? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 881

Missing = 19

Intent to run again	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Yes	123	104	46	97	12	382
% within group	44.2%	42.3%	44.7%	42.5%	46.2%	43.4%
No	60%	46	19	43	4	172
% within group	21.6%	18.7%	18.4%	18.9%	15.4%	19.5%
Undecided	95	96	38	88	10	327
% within group	34.2%	39.0%	36.9%	38.6%	38.5%	37.1%
Total	278	246	103	228	26	881
% within group	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 16

How important are the following goals of education? (Individual Board Members Only)

Overall n= 900 (see note*)

Goals of Education	1st in importance	2nd in importance	3rd in importance	4th in importance	5th in importance	6th in importance
Prepare students for the workforce	71	85	138	161	167	117
% within group	8.1%	11.6%	18.9%	22.1%	23.1%	16.4%
Prepare students for college	71	122	137	171	133	101
% within group	8.1%	16.6%	18.8%	23.5%	18.4%	14.1%
Prepare students for civic life	26	34	70	159	191	251
% within group	3.0%	4.6%	9.6%	21.8%	26.4%	35.1%
Help students become well-rounded	57	97	205	124	111	144
% within group	6.5%	13.2%	28.1%	17.1%	15.4%	20.1%
Prepare students for satisfying and productive life	277	206	96	72	71	62
% within group	31.7%	28.1%	13.2%	9.9%	9.8%	8.7%
Help students fulfill their potential	373	190	84	41	50	40
% within group	42.6%	25.9%	11.5%	5.6%	6.9%	5.6%
Total	875**	734	730	728	723	715
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note.* The total for each column represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the column total from 900 (the total # of board members).

Note.** 25 board members did not respond. 141 of the board members who responded only marked their top choice and did not rank order the others. Therefore, the "n" is highest for the first column.

TABLE 17

How urgent are the following issues for your board and district right now?
(Aggregate Boards Only)

	Extremely Urgent	Very Urgent	Moderately Urgent	Somewhat Urgent	Not at all Urgent	Total
Budget/funding	278	96	32	7	3	416
	66.8%	23.1%	7.7%	1.7%	0.7%	100.0%
Quality of teaching	101	166	90	40	17	414
	24.4%	40.1%	21.7%	9.7%	4.1%	100.0%
Quality of leadership	93	137	101	55	27	413
	22.5%	33.2%	24.5%	13.3%	6.5%	100.0%
Discipline or school safety	57	116	135	88	20	416
	13.7%	27.9%	32.5%	21.2%	4.8%	100.0%
Community engagement/ parent involvement	73	155	123	56	9	416
	17.5%	37.3%	29.6%	13.5%	2.2%	100.0%
Improving student learning across the board	163	162	66	19	1	411
	39.7%	39.4%	16.1%	4.6%	0.2%	100.0%
Closing the achievement gaps among subgroups	127	161	87	33	5	413
	30.8%	39.0%	21.1%	8.0%	1.2%	100.0%
Improving non-academic learning in areas such as the arts, service learning, or civic engagement	15	125	177	80	17	414
	3.6%	30.2%	42.8%	19.3%	4.1%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the “n” for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 418 (the total number of districts).

TABLE 18

To what degree is each of the following a barrier to what you would like to see the district do to improve student achievement? (Individual Board Members Only)

Barriers	Total Barrier	Strong Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Minimal Barrier	Not a Barrier	Total
State law	90	331	312	111	34	878
% of total	10.3%	37.7%	35.5%	12.6%	3.9%	100.0%
Federal law	112	369	266	105	25	877
% of total	12.8%	42.1%	30.3%	12.0%	2.9%	100.0%
Collective bargaining agreements	111	221	221	158	166	877
% of total	12.7%	25.2%	25.2%	18.0%	18.9%	100.0%
Community opposition	19	69	166	353	268	875
% of total	2.2%	7.9%	19.0%	40.3%	30.6%	100.0%
Lack of board support	31	52	124	222	443	872
% of total	3.6%	6.0%	14.2%	25.5%	50.8%	100.0%
District custom/tradition/bureaucracy	52	134	223	278	184	871
% of total	6.0%	15.4%	25.6%	31.9%	21.1%	100.0%
Finance/funding	266	390	149	58	18	881
% of total	30.2%	44.3%	16.9%	6.6%	2.0%	100.0%
Community apathy	43	154	250	274	155	876
% of total	4.9%	17.6%	28.5%	31.3%	17.7%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the “n” for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total number of board members).

TABLE 19

Please indicate whether federal/state law, district policies and/or collective bargaining provisions are barriers to each of the following by checking the appropriate box(es) in the table below. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 900

	Federal/ State Law	District Policy	Collective Bargaining Provisions
Removing ineffective teachers	423 47.0%	130 14.4%	474 52.7%
Assigning teachers to the schools and classrooms where they are most needed	75 8.3%	174 19.3%	278 30.9%
Hiring teachers with non-traditional training or credentials	341 37.9%	160 17.8%	155 17.2%
Removing ineffective principals	211 23.4%	235 26.1%	158 17.6%
Targeting professional development resources	114 12.7%	154 17.1%	84 9.3%
NCLB remedies, AYP, state accountability systems	557 61.9%	71 7.9%	47 5.2%
Attitudes towards standards, assessment, accountability	260 28.9%	147 16.3%	164 18.2%
Attitudes towards charters, school choice	219 24.3%	157 17.4%	88 9.8%

TABLE 20

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement.
(Aggregate Boards Only)

	Strongly Agree	Inclined to Agree	Neither	Inclined to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
The current state of student achievement is unacceptable. We must make dramatic and rapid improvements in student learning.	114	158	94	45	6	417
	27.3%	37.9%	22.5%	10.8%	1.4%	100.0%
Students in our community face many challenges. We need to ensure that we don't place unreasonable expectations for student achievement in our schools.	31	110	126	109	41	417
	7.4%	26.4%	30.2%	26.1%	9.8%	100.0%
There is so much pressure for accountability from the state and the federal levels, our board needs to celebrate our teachers and administrators and provide them with the moral support to do their work.	143	182	59	30	4	418
	34.2%	43.5%	14.1%	7.2%	1.0%	100.0%
Defining success only in terms of student achievement is narrow and short-sighted. We need to emphasize the development of the whole child.	169	194	41	10	4	418
	40.4%	46.4%	9.8%	2.4%	1.0%	100.0%
Schools cannot be effectively restructured while the majority of the faculty stays in place. We need more flexibility in staffing to ensure a high-quality teaching force.	92	168	102	51	5	418
	22.0%	40.2%	24.4%	12.2%	1.2%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the "n" for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 418 (the total number of districts).

TABLE 21

A = Frequently monitoring achievement progress toward the district goals.
B = Hearing annual progress reports on achievement.
(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 417

Missing = 1

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	10	5	5	8	28
% within group	7.0%	4.0%	11.1%	7.6%	6.7%
Somewhat like A	21	22	2	15	60
% within group	14.7%	17.7%	4.4%	14.3%	14.4%
Both apply	63	51	23	31	168
% within group	44.1%	41.1%	51.1%	29.5%	40.3%
Somewhat like B	31	32	9	33	105
% within group	21.7%	25.8%	20.0%	31.4%	25.2%
Mostly like B	18	14	6	18	56
% within group	12.6%	11.3%	13.3%	17.1%	13.4%
Total	143	124	45	105	417
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 22

A = Participating in establishing clear goals and specific targets for improving achievement.
B = Setting an expectation that achievement improves and relying on the professionals to determine goals.
(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 416

Missing = 2

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	17	5	6	7	35
% within group	11.9%	4.1%	13.3%	6.7%	8.4%
Somewhat like A	33	26	8	12	79
% within group	23.1%	21.1%	17.8%	11.4%	19.0%
Both apply	55	50	12	43	160
% within group	38.5%	40.7%	26.7%	41.0%	38.5%
Somewhat like B	22	26	10	31	89
% within group	15.4%	21.1%	22.2%	29.5%	21.4%
Mostly like B	16	16	9	12	53
% within group	11.2%	13.0%	20.0%	11.4%	12.7%
Total	143	123	45	105	416
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 23

A = Setting a clear expectation that goals be met.

B = Celebrating hard work and initiative even if goals are not met.

(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 416

Missing = 2

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	5	6	3	4	18
% within group	3.5%	4.8%	6.7%	3.8%	4.3%
Somewhat like A	15	12	2	6	35
% within group	10.5%	9.7%	4.4%	5.8%	8.4%
Both apply	54	44	21	39	158
% within group	37.8%	35.5%	46.7%	37.5%	38.0%
Somewhat like B	44	46	12	39	141
% within group	30.8%	37.1%	26.7%	37.5%	33.9%
Mostly like B	25	16	7	16	64
% within group	17.5%	12.9%	15.6%	15.4%	15.4%
Total	143	124	45	104	416
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 24

A = Studying achievement data and forming our own conclusions about our current status.

B = Receiving copies of data charts with a presentation about what the data is telling us.

(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 417

Missing = 1

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	29	14	7	11	61
% within group	20.3%	11.3%	15.6%	10.5%	14.6%
Somewhat like A	51	35	12	31	129
% within group	35.7%	28.2%	26.7%	29.5%	30.9%
Both apply	44	56	20	46	166
% within group	30.8%	45.2%	44.4%	43.8%	39.8%
Somewhat like B	18	12	6	15	51
% within group	12.6%	9.7%	13.3%	14.3%	12.3%
Mostly like B	1	7	0	2	10
% within group	0.7%	5.6%	0.0%	1.9%	2.4%
Total	143	124	45	105	417
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 25

A = Our focus for improvement is based on student learning needs and is likely to remain the same until we accomplish the changes we want to see or data takes us in a new direction.

B = Our focus for improvement is likely to change each year based on newly identified student needs.

(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 413

Missing = 5

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	12	6	5	4	27
% within group	8.5%	4.9%	11.1%	3.8%	6.5%
Somewhat like A	19	15	3	7	44
% within group	13.5%	12.2%	6.7%	6.7%	10.7%
Both apply	42	56	16	30	144
% within group	29.8%	45.5%	35.6%	28.8%	34.9%
Somewhat like B	49	27	12	42	130
% within group	34.8%	22.0%	26.7%	40.4%	31.5%
Mostly like B	19	19	9	21	68
% within group	13.5%	15.4%	20.0%	20.2%	16.5%
Total	141	123	45	104	413
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 26

A = The board and district staff engage the community in determining district priorities for improving student learning and monitoring progress.

B = The board and district staff inform the community about district priorities and report progress.

(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 413

Missing = 5

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	31	16	5	12	64
% within group	21.8%	13.1%	11.1%	11.5%	15.5%
Somewhat like A	47	36	15	34	132
% within group	33.1%	29.5%	33.3%	32.7%	32.0%
Both apply	43	39	17	34	133
% within group	30.3%	32.0%	37.8%	32.7%	32.2%
Somewhat like B	16	23	6	14	59
% within group	11.3%	18.9%	13.3%	13.5%	14.3%
Mostly like B	5	8	2	10	25
% within group	3.5%	6.6%	4.4%	9.6%	6.1%
Total	142	122	45	104	413
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 27

A = Our board believes that priorities and actions of the board can significantly impact teaching and learning.

B = Our board believes issues related to teaching and learning should be left to the professionals.

(Aggregate Boards Only)

n = 411

Missing = 7

Best describes your board

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group				
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Total
Mostly like A	10	3	3	2	18
% within group	7.0%	2.5%	6.8%	1.9%	4.4%
Somewhat like A	20	18	4	8	50
% within group	14.1%	14.9%	9.1%	7.7%	12.2%
Both apply	59	45	18	30	152
% within group	41.5%	37.2%	40.9%	28.8%	37.0%
Somewhat like B	35	35	13	40	123
% within group	24.6%	28.9%	29.5%	38.5%	29.9%
Mostly like B	18	20	6	24	68
% within group	12.7%	16.5%	13.6%	23.1%	16.5%
Total	142	121	44	104	411
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 28

How important do you think each approach is for improving student learning?
(Individual Board Members Only)

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Total
Aggressively recruiting non-traditional teachers	77	183	267	196	151	874
	8.8%	20.9%	30.5%	22.4%	17.3%	100.0%
Increasing school choice within the district	67	153	186	158	309	873
	7.7%	17.5%	21.3%	18.1%	35.4%	100.0%
Professional development	406	357	98	22	3	886
	45.8%	40.3%	11.1%	2.5%	0.3%	100.0%
Reducing class size	214	263	239	115	53	884
	24.2%	29.8%	27.0%	13.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Linking teacher pay to student performance	150	179	187	168	200	884
	17.0%	20.2%	21.2%	19.0%	22.6%	100.0%
Boosting pay for teachers across the board	117	183	207	190	185	882
	13.3%	20.7%	23.5%	21.5%	21.0%	100.0%
Improving the quality of district leadership	281	299	153	94	55	882
	31.9%	33.9%	17.3%	10.7%	6.2%	100.0%
Implementing a year-round school calendar	58	108	157	191	369	883
	6.6%	12.2%	17.8%	21.6%	41.8%	100.0%
Supporting the creation of new charter schools	21	42	78	153	584	878
	2.4%	4.8%	8.9%	17.4%	66.5%	100.0%
Frequent use of assessment data to guide decisions	375	295	132	70	9	881
	42.6%	33.5%	15.0%	7.9%	1.0%	100.0%
Improving the quality of school leadership	369	292	129	58	36	884
	41.7%	33.0%	14.6%	6.6%	4.1%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the “n” for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total # of board members).

TABLE 29

When the board is evaluating the superintendent's performance, please indicate the importance of each of the following. (Individual Board Members only)

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Total
Student achievement	585	216	54	17	6	878
	66.6%	24.6%	6.2%	1.9%	0.7%	100.0%
Financial management	593	238	33	8	6	878
	67.5%	27.1%	3.8%	0.9%	0.7%	100.0%
Community engagement	348	369	125	30	5	877
	39.7%	42.1%	14.3%	3.4%	0.6%	100.0%
District safety	388	286	142	51	9	876
	44.3%	32.6%	16.2%	5.8%	1.0%	100.0%
Effective working relationship with others	475	317	67	12	4	875
	54.3%	36.2%	7.7%	1.4%	0.5%	100.0%
Parental satisfaction	210	325	240	80	19	874
	24.0%	37.2%	27.5%	9.2%	2.2%	100.0%
Meets goals	548	277	41	4	4	874
	62.7%	31.7%	4.7%	0.5%	0.5%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total # of board members).

TABLE 30

In a typical month, how many hours do you spend on board work? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 877

Missing = 23

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
More than 40 hours	23	34	23	88	5	173
% within group	8.3%	14.0%	22.1%	38.4%	20.0%	19.7%
25-40 hours	41	50	24	72	5	192
% within group	14.9%	20.6%	23.1%	31.4%	20.0%	21.9%
15-24 hours	67	73	32	48	4	224
% within group	24.3%	30.0%	30.8%	21.0%	16.0%	25.5%
7-14 hours	105	73	23	20	10	231
% within group	38.0%	30.0%	22.1%	8.7%	40.0%	26.3%
Fewer than 7 hours	40	13	2	1	1	57
% within group	14.5%	5.3%	1.9%	0.4%	4.0%	6.5%
Total	276	243	104	229	25	877
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 31

During your tenure as a board member, how would you characterize the percentage of board time spent on improving the achievement of all students?
(Individual Board Members Only)

n = 886

Missing = 14

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Increased	195	173	79	178	18	643
% within group	70.1%	70.3%	74.5%	77.1%	72.0%	72.6%
Decreased	67	48	18	43	5	181
% within group	24.1%	19.5%	17.0%	18.6%	20.0%	20.4%
Remained the same	11	15	4	4	1	35
% within group	4.0%	6.1%	3.8%	1.7%	4.0%	4.0%
Don't know	5	10	5	6	1	27
% within group	1.8%	4.1%	4.7%	2.6%	4.0%	3.0%
Total	278	246	106	231	25	886
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 32

During the past year, in what types of board development/training have you participated? (Individual Board Members Only)

Overall n = 900

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Workshop(s), seminar(s), or training(s) for the whole board together	148	153	70	179	14	564
% within group	52.3%	61.7%	65.4%	75.8%	53.8%	62.7%
Workshop(s), seminar(s), or training(s) for individual board members (whole board did not participate together)	152	151	68	146	12	529
% within group	53.7%	60.9%	63.6%	61.9%	46.2%	58.8%
State-level conference(s)	169	150	84	171	17	591
% within group	59.7%	60.5%	78.5%	72.5%	65.4%	65.7%
National-level conference(s)	22	45	46	124	6	243
% within group	7.8%	18.1%	43.0%	52.5%	23.1%	27.0%
Online course(s)	20	9	5	13	1	48
% within group	7.1%	3.6%	4.7%	5.5%	3.8%	5.3%
Webinar(s) (one session, Internet visuals and audio)	31	32	13	53	2	131
% within group	11.0%	12.9%	12.1%	22.5%	7.7%	14.6%
Video/DVD	25	20	15	26	2	88
% within group	8.8%	8.1%	14.0%	11.0%	7.7%	9.8%
Audio conference(s) (one session, audio only)	8	11	6	13	0	38
% within group	2.8%	4.4%	5.6%	5.5%	0.0%	4.3%
Total	283	248	107	236	26	900
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 33

What organizations have provided the board development/training that you have received? (Individual Board Members Only)

Overall n = 900

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Our board or district	133	147	73	156	14	523
% within group	47.0%	59.3%	68.2%	66.1%	53.8%	58.1%
Regional service agencies	86	58	21	48	5	218
% within group	30.4%	23.4%	19.6%	20.3%	19.2%	24.2%
State school boards association	218	208	95	193	20	734
% within group	77.0%	83.9%	88.8%	81.8%	76.9%	81.6%
State department of education	57	35	25	55	3	175
% within group	20.1%	14.1%	23.4%	23.3%	11.5%	19.4%
National School Boards Association	46	69	51	116	10	292
% within group	16.3%	27.8%	47.7%	49.2%	38.5%	32.4%
U.S. Department of Education	9	9	8	14	0	40
% within group	3.2%	3.6%	7.5%	5.9%	0.0%	4.4%
Higher education institutions	9	10	12	32	2	65
% within group	3.2%	4.0%	11.2%	13.6%	7.7%	7.2%
Consultants/vendors	64	60	30	97	6	257
% within group	22.6%	24.2%	28.0%	41.1%	23.1%	28.6%
Total	283	248	107	236	26	900
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 34

How often does your board engage in whole-board development, with the entire board participating in/receiving training together? (Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

n = 150

Missing = 3

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Once per month	1	2	0	3	0	6
% within group	1.9%	4.5%	0.0%	9.7%	0.0%	4.0%
Quarterly	1	7	4	7	1	20
% within group	1.9%	15.9%	30.8%	22.6%	11.1%	13.3%
Twice per year	10	14	1	5	1	31
% within group	18.9%	31.8%	7.7%	16.1%	11.1%	20.7%
Once per year	21	12	7	13	5	58
% within group	39.6%	27.3%	53.8%	41.9%	55.6%	38.7%
We don't engage in whole-board development	20	9	1	3	2	35
% within group	37.7%	20.5%	7.7%	9.7%	22.2%	23.3%
Total	53	44	13	31	9	150
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 35

If your board does not engage in whole-board development, what is the primary reason preventing your board from doing so? (Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

n = 53

Missing = 100

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Scheduling difficulties	10	6	1	6	1	24
% within group	43.5%	42.9%	33.3%	60.0%	33.3%	45.3%
Open-meeting laws	5	0	1	1	0	7
% within group	21.7%	0.0%	33.3%	10.0%	0.0%	13.2%
Cost	4	2	1	2	1	10
% within group	17.4%	14.3%	33.3%	20.0%	33.3%	18.9%
Don't see the benefit	3	2	0	1	1	7
% within group	13.0%	14.3%	0.0%	10.0%	33.3%	13.2%
Other	1	4	0	0	0	5
% within group	4.3%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.4%
Total	23	14	3	10	3	53
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 36

Describe the board training you have had in relation to each area by selecting from the options provided for each item (Individual Board Members Only)

	Have had training	Have had training but would like more	Have not had training but would like to have training	Have not had training and don't want/need it	Don't know	Total
Board roles, responsibilities, operations	688	146	21	16	1	872
	76.4%	16.2%	2.3%	1.8%	0.1%	100.0%
Leadership skills	482	194	90	83	5	854
	53.6%	21.6%	10.0%	9.2%	0.6%	100.0%
Community engagement	375	211	156	83	13	838
	41.7%	23.4%	17.3%	9.2%	1.4%	100.0%
Student achievement issues	367	298	145	31	7	848
	40.8%	33.1%	16.1%	3.4%	0.8%	100.0%
Legal and policy issues	454	291	84	29	5	863
	50.4%	32.3%	9.3%	3.2%	0.6%	100.0%
Funding and budget	435	311	86	28	1	861
	48.3%	34.6%	9.6%	3.1%	0.1%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total # of board members).

TABLE 37

How often do you consult the following sources to get the information you need to make board decisions? (Individual Board Members Only)

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Your superintendent	494 56.1%	287 32.6%	80 9.1%	17 1.9%	3 0.3%	881 100.0%
NSBA or other national organizations	19 2.2%	124 14.7%	275 32.5%	232 27.5%	195 23.1%	845 100.0%
State school boards association or other state organizations	68 7.9%	256 29.7%	349 40.4%	131 15.2%	59 6.8%	863 100.0%
Education Week or other specialized publications	25 3.0%	118 14.0%	267 31.6%	218 25.8%	217 25.7%	845 100.0%
Daily newspaper, TV news or radio	95 11.1%	209 24.5%	262 30.7%	164 19.2%	123 14.4%	853 100.0%
Research journals	45 5.4%	136 16.4%	296 35.6%	200 24.1%	154 18.5%	831 100.0%
Government agencies	19 2.3%	96 11.6%	331 40.0%	229 27.7%	152 18.4%	827 100.0%
Foundations	6 0.7%	48 5.8%	207 25.2%	278 33.9%	282 34.3%	821 100.0%
Search engines such as Google or Yahoo	76 9.0%	193 22.9%	285 33.8%	148 17.6%	140 16.6%	842 100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the “n” for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total # of board members).

TABLE 38

How important is it for you to have knowledge in the following areas to be effective in your job as a board member? (Individual Board Members only)

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Total
Factors that impact student achievement	555	264	56	3	1	879
	63.1%	30.0%	6.4%	0.3%	0.1%	100.0%
How to interpret student achievement data	384	360	111	20	2	877
	43.8%	41.0%	12.7%	2.3%	0.2%	100.0%
Characteristics of effective districts	356	371	126	21	2	876
	40.6%	42.4%	14.4%	2.4%	0.2%	100.0%
Communication with the public	416	319	118	19	3	875
	47.5%	36.5%	13.5%	2.2%	0.3%	100.0%
Curricular expertise	157	234	295	142	41	869
	18.1%	26.9%	33.9%	16.3%	4.7%	100.0%
Budgetary expertise	298	368	156	43	8	873
	34.1%	42.2%	17.9%	4.9%	0.9%	100.0%
Evaluation of superintendents and principals	407	324	124	14	5	874
	46.6%	37.1%	14.2%	1.6%	0.6%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 900 (the total # of board members).

TABLE 39

How many seats are on your board? (Superintendents Only)

Number of Seats	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	1	0.8	0.8	0.8
5	49	40.8	41.2	42.0
6	2	1.7	1.7	43.7
7	44	36.7	37.0	80.7
8	1	0.8	0.8	81.5
9	18	15.0	15.1	96.6
12	1	0.8	0.8	97.5
19	1	0.8	0.8	98.3
21	1	0.8	0.8	99.2
22	1	0.8	0.8	100.0
Total	119	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	1	0.8		
TOTAL	120	100.0		

TABLE 40

What are the term lengths for board members?
(Superintendents Only) n = 119 Missing = 1

Term Lengths	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2 years	4	3.3	3.4	3.4
3 years	32	26.7	26.9	30.3
4 years	73	60.8	61.3	91.6
5 years	6	5.0	5.0	96.6
6 years	2	1.7	1.7	98.3
8 years	1	0.8	0.8	99.2

TABLE 41

Check the category that describes the annual salary you receive for your board service. (Do not include per-meeting stipends).
(Individual Board Members Only)

n = 885
Missing = 15

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
No salary	208	168	50	107	18	551
% within group	74.3%	68.6%	47.6%	46.5%	72.0%	62.3%
Less than \$5,000	72	69	40	22	4	207
% within group	25.7%	28.2%	38.1%	9.6%	16.0%	23.4%
\$5,000-\$9,999	0	8	10	50	3	71
% within group	0.0%	3.3%	9.5%	21.7%	12.0%	8.0%
\$10,000-\$15,000	0	0	5	33	0	38
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	14.3%	0.0%	4.3%
More than \$15,000	0	0	0	18	0	18
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%	2.0%
Total	280	245	105	230	25	885
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 42

Check the category that describes the per-meeting stipend you receive for your board service. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 882
Missing = 18

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
No per-meeting stipend	213	176	83	181	22	675
% within group	76.6%	71.5%	79.0%	79.4%	88.0%	76.5%
Less than \$100	42	49	11	20	2	124
% within group	15.1%	19.9%	10.5%	8.8%	8.0%	14.1%
\$100-\$499	23	20	11	23	1	78
% within group	8.3%	8.1%	10.5%	10.1%	4.0%	8.8%
\$500-\$1,000	0	1	0	4	0	5
% within group	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.6%
Over \$1,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	278	246	105	228	25	882
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 43

Please indicate which resources your board has access to. (Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Administrative support	49	42	13	29	6	139
% within group	90.7%	91.3%	100.0%	93.5%	66.7%	90.8%
Staff to assist with research	23	25	9	25	3	85
% within group	42.6%	54.3%	69.2%	80.6%	33.3%	55.6%
Staff to assist with student learning data analysis and interpretation	27	31	11	25	4	98
% within group	50.0%	67.4%	84.6%	80.6%	44.4%	64.1%
Communications staff	19	25	9	22	3	78
% within group	35.2%	54.3%	69.2%	71.0%	33.3%	51.0%
Legal counsel	49	41	13	27	8	138
% within group	90.7%	89.1%	100.0%	87.1%	88.9%	90.2%
Total	54	46	13	31	9	153
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 44

How often do you use the Internet in general? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 888

Missing = 12

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Daily	237	222	90	212	19	780
% within group	84.3%	90.6%	84.9%	92.2%	73.1%	87.8%
Weekly	26	11	11	9	4	61
% within group	9.3%	4.5%	10.4%	3.9%	15.4%	6.9%
Monthly	2	3	1	1	3	10
% within group	0.7%	1.2%	0.9%	0.4%	11.5%	1.1%
Every few months	7	4	0	0	0	11
% within group	2.5%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Never	9	5	4	8	0	26
% within group	3.2%	2.0%	3.8%	3.5%	0.0%	2.9%
Total	281	245	106	230	26	888
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 45

Are the following descriptions of board operations true for your board? (Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

Overall n = 153

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Meeting materials are delivered to all board members electronically	23	24	7	18	1	73
% within group	42.6%	52.2%	53.8%	58.1%	11.1%	47.7%
Board minutes and supporting documents are available on the web	21	29	9	23	4	86
% within group	38.9%	63.0%	69.2%	74.2%	44.4%	56.2%
All district policies are accessible electronically	29	36	10	26	6	107
% within group	53.7%	78.3%	76.9%	83.9%	66.7%	69.9%
All board members can be contacted via e-mail from the district web page	31	33	8	26	4	102
% within group	57.4%	71.7%	61.5%	83.9%	44.4%	66.7%
Total	54	46	13	31	9	153
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 46

How much time is allotted per person for public comment at board meetings?
(Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

n = 151

Missing = 2

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
None	1	2	0	0	0	3
% within group	1.9%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
1-3 minutes per person	19	23	10	24	5	81
% within group	35.2%	51.1%	83.3%	77.4%	55.6%	53.6%
4-6 minutes per person	23	15	2	7	3	50
% within group	42.6%	33.3%	16.7%	22.6%	33.3%	33.1%
7-10 minutes per person	4	2	0	0	1	7
% within group	7.4%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	4.6%
More than 10 minutes per person	7	3	0	0	0	10
% within group	13.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6%
Total	54	45	12	31	9	151
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 47

How can the public access your school board's meetings remotely? Check all that apply. (Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

Overall n = 153

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000-2,499	2,500-7,499	7,500-14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
Simultaneous audio during the meeting	6	2	0	7	1	16
% within group	11.1%	4.3%	0.0%	22.6%	11.1%	10.5%
Archived audio accessible after the meeting (such as a podcast)	4	9	3	7	1	24
% within group	7.4%	19.6%	23.1%	22.6%	11.1%	15.7%
Meetings are televised live on public access TV channel	11	6	4	12	0	33
% within group	20.4%	13.0%	30.8%	38.7%	0.0%	21.6%
Meetings are streamed live over the Internet	1	0	2	5	0	8
% within group	1.9%	0.0%	15.4%	16.1%	0.0%	5.2%
Archived videos can be obtained or downloaded for later viewing	6	3	4	9	1	23
% within group	11.1%	6.5%	30.8%	29.0%	11.1%	15.0%
Total	57	46	13	31	9	153
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 48

How many times per month does the school board meet?
(Board Presidents/Chairs Only)

n = 150
Missing = 3

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
4 or more times per month	0	1	0	1	0	2
% within group	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	1.3%
3 times per month	0	1	3	3	0	7
% within group	0.0%	2.2%	23.1%	10.0%	0.0%	4.7%
2 times per month	26	19	10	20	6	81
% within group	49.1%	42.2%	76.9%	66.7%	66.7%	54.0%
1 time per month	27	24	0	6	3	60
% within group	50.9%	53.3%	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	40.0%
Less than once per month	0	0	0	0	0	0
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	53	45	13	30	9	150
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 49

Does a city or county council have to approve the budget of the board/district? (Superintendents Only) n = 188 missing = 2

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	11	9.2	9.3	9.3
No	107	89.2	90.7	100.0

TABLE 50

Does your board have discretionary authority to levy taxes?
(Superintendents Only) n = 117 missing = 3

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	77	64.2	65.8	65.8
No	40	33.3	34.2	100.0

TABLE 51

If yes, does the tax levy require voter approval?
 (Superintendents Only) n = 86 Missing = 34

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	37	30.8	43.0	43.0
Sometimes	30	25.0	34.9	77.9
Never	19	15.8	22.1	100.0

TABLE 52

What latitude does the board have to hold bond elections?
 (Superintendents Only)
 n = 110 Missing = 10

Degree of Latitude	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The board can do so independently	87	72.5	79.1	79.1
The board can do so with county/city approval	7	5.8	6.4	85.5
Requires a petition process to take it to a public vote	10	8.3	9.1	94.6
The board has no latitude to do so	6	5.0	5.5	100.0

TABLE 53

How would you characterize your victory in your most recent campaign? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 848

Missing = 52

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Very easy	137	102	49	72	13	373
% within group	49.1%	43.4%	48.5%	34.3%	56.5%	44.0%
Somewhat easy	75	47	28	47	5	202
% within group	26.9%	20.0%	27.7%	22.4%	21.7%	23.8%
Neutral	40	36	5	25	2	108
% within group	14.3%	15.3%	5.0%	11.9%	8.7%	12.7%
Somewhat difficult	22	34	13	45	2	116
% within group	7.9%	14.5%	12.9%	21.4%	8.7%	13.7%
Very difficult	5	16	6	21	1	49
% within group	1.8%	6.8%	5.9%	10.0%	4.3%	5.8%
Total	279	235	101	210	23	848
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 54

Approximately how much did you (or your campaign committee) spend on your most recent school board election campaign? (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 832

Missing = 52

"Don't know"=16

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Less than \$1,000	258	196	73	69	19	615
% within group	95.2%	85.6%	71.6%	33.2%	86.4%	73.9%
\$1,000-\$4,999	12	23	19	53	2	109
% within group	4.4%	10.0%	18.6%	25.5%	9.1%	13.1%
\$5,000-\$9,999	1	7	6	31	1	46
% within group	0.4%	3.1%	5.9%	14.9%	4.5%	5.5%
\$10,000-\$25,000	0	3	3	34	0	40
% within group	0.0%	1.3%	2.9%	16.3%	0.0%	4.8%
More than \$25,000	0	0	1	21	0	22
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	10.1%	0.0%	2.6%
Total	271	229	102	208	22	832
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55A

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from personal funds. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 804

Missing = 96

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
\$0	128	88	35	49	11	311
% within group	50.4%	40.9%	36.8%	25.0%	25.0%	38.7%
Less than \$1,000	117	116	50	83	7	373
% within group	46.1%	54.0%	52.6%	42.3%	15.9%	46.4%
\$1,000-\$2,499	6	7	4	34	2	53
% within group	2.4%	3.3%	4.2%	17.3%	4.5%	6.6%
More than \$2,500	3	4	6	30	2	45
% within group	1.2%	1.9%	6.3%	15.3%	4.5%	5.6%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	22	22
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2.7%
Total	254	215	95	196	44	804
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55B

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from family and friends. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 782

Missing = 118

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
\$0	206	149	55	41	15	466
% within group	83.1%	73.4%	57.9%	21.1%	35.7%	59.6%
Less than \$1,000	40	42	26	60	5	173
% within group	16.1%	20.7%	27.4%	30.9%	11.9%	22.1%
\$1,000-\$2,499	1	3	7	36	2	49
% within group	0.4%	1.5%	7.4%	18.6%	4.8%	6.3%
More than \$2,500	1	9	7	57	0	74
% within group	0.4%	4.4%	7.4%	29.4%	0.0%	9.5%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	20	20
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	47.6%	2.6%
Total	248	203	95	194	42	782
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55C

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from teacher unions. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 752

Missing = 148

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
\$0	238	185	73	122	20	638
% within group	98.8%	96.4%	83.0%	65.2%	45.5%	84.8%
Less than \$1,000	3	5	11	30	2	51
% within group	1.2%	2.6%	12.5%	16.0%	4.5%	6.8%
\$1,000-\$2,499	0	2	0	22	0	24
% within group	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	11.8%	0.0%	3.2%
More than \$2,500	0	0	4	13	0	17
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	7.0%	0.0%	2.3%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	22	22
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2.9%
Total	241	192	88	187	44	752
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55D

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from the business community. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 757

Missing = 143

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
\$0	231	178	71	81	21	582
% within group	95.9%	92.7%	79.8%	43.8%	42.0%	76.9%
Less than \$1,000	8	11	7	33	1	60
% within group	3.3%	5.7%	7.9%	17.8%	2.0%	7.9%
\$1,000-\$2,499	1	1	4	21	0	27
% within group	0.4%	0.5%	4.5%	11.4%	0.0%	3.6%
More than \$2,500	1	2	7	50	0	60
% within group	0.4%	1.0%	7.9%	27.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	28	28
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	56.0%	3.7%
Total	241	192	89	185	50	757
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55E

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from religiously-affiliated groups. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 736

Missing = 164

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
\$0	237	186	78	152	22	675
% within group	99.2%	97.4%	92.9%	88.4%	44.0%	91.7%
Less than \$1,000	1	5	3	15	0	24
% within group	0.4%	2.6%	3.6%	8.7%	0.0%	3.3%
\$1,000-\$2,499	0	0	2	3	0	5
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	1.7%	0.0%	0.7%
More than \$2,500	1	0	1	2	0	4
% within group	0.4%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.5%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	28	28
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	56.0%	3.8%
Total	239	191	84	172	50	736
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55F

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from parent groups. (Individual Board Members Only)

n = 741

Missing = 159

	Enrollment Group					
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	Total
\$0	234	182	77	138	22	653
% within group	97.9%	94.3%	91.7%	80.7%	40.7%	88.1%
Less than \$1,000	5	10	4	20	0	39
% within group	2.1%	5.2%	4.8%	11.7%	0.0%	5.3%
\$1,000-\$2,499	0	1	2	6	0	9
% within group	0.0%	0.5%	2.4%	3.5%	0.0%	1.2%
More than \$2,500	0	0	1	7	0	8
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	4.1%	0.0%	1.1%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	32	32
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	59.3%	4.3%
Total	239	193	84	171	54	741
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 55G

Indicate the amount of funding in your last board campaign raised from others.
(Individual Board Members Only)

n = 687

Missing = 213

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
\$0	221	159	71	84	19	554
% within group	95.3%	89.3%	86.6%	57.5%	38.8%	80.6%
Less than \$1,000	10	13	4	23	0	50
% within group	4.3%	7.3%	4.9%	15.8%	0.0%	7.3%
\$1,000-\$2,499	1	1	4	14	0	20
% within group	0.4%	0.6%	4.9%	9.6%	0.0%	2.9%
More than \$2,500	0	5	3	25	0	33
% within group	0.0%	2.8%	3.7%	17.1%	0.0%	4.8%
Do not know	0	0	0	0	30	30
% within group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	61.2%	4.4%
Total	232	178	82	146	49	687
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 56

Are school board candidates' political party affiliations identified on the ballot? (Superintendents Only)

n = 115 Missing = 5

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	13	10.8	11.3	11.3
No	102	85.0	88.7	100.0

TABLE 57

Are board elections normally held the same day as national or state elections? (Superintendents Only)

n = 115 Missing = 5

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	61	50.8	53.0	53.0
Sometimes	24	20.0	20.9	73.9
Never	30	25.0	26.1	100.0

TABLE 58

To the best of your recollection, how many incumbent board members have been defeated by challengers since January 1, 2005? (Superintendents Only)
 n = 109 Missing = 11

Number	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	51	42.5	46.8	46.8
1	25	20.8	22.9	69.7
2	15	12.5	13.8	83.5
3	12	10.0	11.0	94.5
4	2	1.7	1.8	96.3
5	4	3.3	3.7	100.0

TABLE 59

How important are the following goals of education? (Superintendents Only)
 Overall n =120 (see note*)

Goals of Education	1st in importance	2nd in importance	3rd in importance	4th in importance	5th in importance	6th in importance
Prepare students for the workforce	4	11	21	25	23	11
% within group	3.4%	11.6%	22.1%	26.3%	24.2%	11.8%
Prepare students for college	9	12	21	21	19	14
% within group	7.6%	12.6%	22.1%	22.1%	20.0%	15.1%
Prepare students for civic life	2	6	7	23	26	31
% within group	1.7%	6.3%	7.4%	24.2%	27.4%	33.3%
Help students become well-rounded	7	8	32	8	18	25
% within group	5.9%	8.4%	33.7%	8.4%	18.9%	26.9%
Prepare students for satisfying and productive life	43	33	5	10	4	9
% within group	36.1%	34.7%	5.3%	10.5%	4.2%	9.7%
Help students fulfill their potential	54	25	9	8	5	3
% within group	45.4%	26.3%	9.5%	8.4%	5.3%	3.2%
Total	119**	95	95	95	95	93
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note.*The total for each column represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the column total from 120 (the total # of superintendents).

Note.**1 superintendent did not respond. 24 of the superintendents who responded only marked their top choice and did not rank order the others. Therefore, the "n" is highest for the first column.

TABLE 60

How urgent are the following issues for your board and district right now?
(Superintendents Only)

	Extremely Urgent	Very Urgent	Moderately Urgent	Somewhat Urgent	Not at all Urgent	Total
Budget/funding	85	25	7	2	1	120
	70.8%	20.8%	5.8%	1.7%	0.8%	100.0%
Quality of teaching	46	35	20	14	5	120
	38.3%	29.2%	16.7%	11.7%	4.2%	100.0%
Quality of leadership	31	39	26	13	10	119
	26.1%	32.8%	21.8%	10.9%	8.4%	100.0%
Discipline or school safety	12	31	45	23	9	120
	10.0%	25.8%	37.5%	19.2%	7.5%	100.0%
Community engagement/ parent involvement	13	38	46	15	6	118
	11.0%	32.2%	39.0%	12.7%	5.1%	100.0%
Improving student learning across the board	56	35	19	8	1	119
	47.1%	29.4%	16.0%	6.7%	0.8%	100.0%
Closing the achievement gaps among subgroups	51	31	22	11	4	119
	42.9%	26.1%	18.5%	9.2%	3.4%	100.0%
Improving non-academic learning in areas such as the arts, service learning, or civic engagement	13	27	46	22	11	119
	10.9%	22.7%	38.7%	18.5%	9.2%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the “n” for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 418 (the total number of districts).

TABLE 61

Please indicate whether federal/state law, district policies and/or collective bargaining provisions are barriers to each of the following by checking the appropriate box(es) in the table below. (Superintendents Only)

n = 120

	Federal/ State Law	District Policy	Collective Bargaining Provisions
Removing ineffective teachers	73 60.8%	14 11.7%	65 54.2%
Assigning teachers to the schools and classrooms where they are most needed	10 8.3%	12 10.0%	46 38.3%
Hiring teachers with non-traditional training or credentials	61 50.8%	10 8.3%	20 16.7%
Removing ineffective principals	37 30.8%	16 13.3%	14 11.7%
Targeting professional development resources	16 13.3%	11 9.2%	15 12.5%
NCLB remedies, AYP, state accountability systems	88 73.3%	6 5.0%	10 8.3%
Attitudes towards standards, assessment, accountability	39 32.5%	9 7.5%	26 21.7%
Attitudes towards charters, school choice	40 33.3%	12 10.0%	15 12.5%

TABLE 62

To what degree is each of the following a barrier to what you would like to see the district do to improve student achievement? (Superintendents Only)

Barriers	Total Barrier	Strong Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Minimal Barrier	Not a Barrier	Total
State law	11	38	49	15	7	120
% of total	9.2%	31.7%	40.8%	12.5%	5.8%	100.0%
Federal law	15	41	42	16	6	120
% of total	12.5%	34.2%	35.0%	13.3%	5.0%	100.0%
Collective bargaining agreements	19	25	32	18	26	120
% of total	15.8%	20.8%	26.7%	15.0%	21.7%	100.0%
Community opposition	1	6	24	50	39	120
% of total	0.8%	5.0%	20.0%	41.7%	32.5%	100.0%
Lack of board support	2	7	21	27	63	120
% of total	1.7%	5.8%	17.5%	22.5%	52.5%	100.0%
District custom/tradition/bureaucracy	5	23	35	36	21	120
% of total	4.2%	19.2%	29.2%	30.0%	17.5%	100.0%
Finance/funding	45	50	15	9	1	120
% of total	37.5%	41.7%	12.5%	7.5%	0.8%	100.0%
Community apathy	7	21	40	25	27	120
% of total	5.8%	17.5%	33.3%	20.8%	22.5%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the “n” for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 120 (the total number of superintendents).

TABLE 63

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement.
(Superintendents Only)

	Strongly Agree	Inclined to Agree	Neither	Inclined to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
The current state of student achievement is unacceptable. We must make dramatic and rapid improvements in student learning.	44	36	19	18	3	120
	36.7%	30.0%	15.8%	15.0%	2.5%	100.0%
Students in our community face many challenges. We need to ensure that we don't place unreasonable expectations for student achievement in our schools.	7	30	13	43	26	119
	5.9%	25.2%	10.9%	36.1%	21.8%	100.0%
There is so much pressure for accountability from the state and the federal levels, our board needs to celebrate our teachers and administrators and provide them with the moral support to do their work.	34	61	18	5	0	118
	28.8%	51.7%	15.3%	4.2%	0.0%	100.0%
Defining success only in terms of student achievement is narrow and short-sighted. We need to emphasize the development of the whole child.	52	47	9	10	2	120
	43.3%	39.2%	7.5%	8.3%	1.7%	100.0%
Schools cannot be effectively restructured while the majority of the faculty stays in place. We need more flexibility in staffing to ensure a high-quality teaching force.	40	46	15	16	3	120
	33.3%	38.3%	12.5%	13.3%	2.5%	100.0%

Note. The total of each row represents the "n" for that area. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 120 (the total number of superintendents).

TABLE 64

A = Frequently monitoring achievement progress toward the district goals
B = Hearing annual progress reports on achievement (Superintendents Only)

n= 120

Missing= 0

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	5	4	3	2	1	15
% within group	11.6%	12.9%	21.4%	8.0%	14.3%	12.5%
Somewhat like A	6	7	1	5	1	20
% within group	14.0%	22.6%	7.1%	20.0%	14.3%	16.7%
Both apply	19	10	5	9	2	45
% within group	44.2%	32.3%	35.7%	36.0%	28.6%	37.5%
Somewhat like B	5	3	0	2	1	11
% within group	11.6%	9.7%	0.0%	8.0%	14.3%	9.2%
Mostly like B	8	7	5	7	2	29
% within group	18.6%	22.6%	35.7%	28.0%	28.6%	24.2%
Total	43	31	14	25	7	120
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 65

A = Participating in establishing clear goals and specific targets for improving achievement

B = Setting an expectation that achievement improves and relying on the professionals to determine goals (Superintendents Only)

n= 119

Missing= 1

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	6	4	2	4	3	19
% within group	14.0%	13.3%	14.3%	16.0%	42.9%	16.0%
Somewhat like A	6	4	2	3	0	15
% within group	14.0%	13.3%	14.3%	12.0%	0.0%	12.6%
Both apply	18	13	6	6	1	44
% within group	41.9%	43.3%	42.9%	24.0%	14.3%	37.0%
Somewhat like B	5	4	0	2	1	12
% within group	11.6%	13.3%	0.0%	8.0%	14.3%	10.1%
Mostly like B	8	5	4	10	2	29
% within group	18.6%	16.7%	28.6%	40.0%	28.6%	24.4%
Total	43	30	14	25	7	119
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 66

A = Setting a clear expectation that goals be met

B = Celebrating hard work and initiative even if goals are not met (Superintendents Only)

n= 118

Missing= 2

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	1	3	0	1	1	6
% within group	2.4%	10.0%	0.0%	4.0%	14.3%	5.1%
Somewhat like A	4	6	1	1	2	14
% within group	9.5%	20.0%	7.1%	4.0%	28.6%	11.9%
Both apply	19	7	4	7	3	40
% within group	45.2%	23.3%	28.6%	28.0%	42.9%	33.9%
Somewhat like B	8	7	5	6	0	26
% within group	19.0%	23.3%	35.7%	24.0%	0.0%	22.0%
Mostly like B	10	7	4	10	1	32
% within group	23.8%	23.3%	28.6%	40.0%	14.3%	27.1%
Total	42	30	14	25	7	118
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 67

A = Studying achievement data and forming our own conclusions about our current status

B = Receiving copies of data charts with a presentation about what the data is telling us (Superintendents Only)

n= 119

Missing= 1

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	12	5	4	8	1	30
% within group	27.9%	16.7%	28.6%	32.0%	14.3%	25.2%
Somewhat like A	7	9	2	4	1	23
% within group	16.3%	30.0%	14.3%	16.0%	14.3%	19.3%
Both apply	11	12	3	6	3	35
% within group	25.6%	40%	21.4%	24.0%	42.9%	29.4%
Somewhat like B	7	0	3	2	1	13
% within group	16.3%	0.0%	21.4%	8.0%	14.3%	10.9%
Mostly like B	6	4	2	5	1	18
% within group	14.0%	13.3%	14.3%	20.0%	14.3%	15.1%
Total	43	30	14	25	7	119
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 68

A = Our focus for improvement is based on student learning needs and is likely to remain the same until we accomplish the changes we want to see or data takes us in a new direction

B = Our focus for improvement is likely to change each year based on newly identified student needs (Superintendents Only)

n= 118

Missing= 2

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	1	1	0	1	1	4
% within group	2.3%	3.3%	0.0%	4.2%	14.3%	3.4%
Somewhat like A	3	2	2	2	1	10
% within group	7.0%	6.7%	14.3%	8.3%	14.3%	8.5%
Both apply	12	10	5	8	2	37
% within group	27.9%	33.3%	35.7%	33.3%	28.6%	31.4%
Somewhat like B	11	8	2	4	1	26
% within group	25.6%	26.7%	14.3%	16.7%	14.3%	22.0%
Mostly like B	16	9	5	9	2	41
% within group	37.2%	30.0%	35.7%	37.5%	28.6%	34.7%
Total	43	30	14	24	7	118
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 69

A = The board and district staff engage the community in determining district priorities for improving student learning and monitoring progress
B = The board and district staff inform the community about district priorities and report progress (Superintendents Only)

n = 116

Missing = 4

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	9	6	3	6	3	27
% within group	21.4%	20.7%	23.1%	24.0%	42.9%	23.3%
Somewhat like A	15	6	2	6	1	30
% within group	35.7%	20.7%	15.4%	24.0%	14.3%	25.9%
Both apply	6	11	4	5	3	29
% within group	14.3%	37.9%	30.8%	20.0%	42.9%	25.0%
Somewhat like B	8	4	1	2	0	15
% within group	19.0%	13.8%	7.7%	8.0%	0.0%	12.9%
Mostly like B	4	2	3	6	0	15
% within group	9.5%	6.9%	23.1%	24.0%	0.0%	12.9%
Total	42	29	13	25		116
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 70

A = Our board believes that priorities and actions of the board can significantly impact teaching and learning
B = Our board believes issues related to teaching and learning should be left to the professionals (Superintendents Only)

n = 118

Missing = 2

Best describes your board	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Mostly like A	4	1	1	1	2	9
% within group	9.3%	3.4%	7.1%	4.0%	28.6%	7.6%
Somewhat like A	5	8	3	5	0	21
% within group	11.6%	27.6%	21.4%	20.0%	0.0%	17.8%
Both apply	16	8	5	9	1	39
% within group	37.2%	27.6%	35.7%	36.0%	14.3%	33.1%
Somewhat like B	8	6	1	3	2	20
% within group	18.6%	20.7%	7.1%	12.0%	28.6%	16.9%
Mostly like B	10	6	4	7	2	29
% within group	23.3%	20.7%	28.6%	28.0%	28.6%	24.6%
Total	43	29	14	25	7	118
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 71

How important do you think each approach is for improving student learning?
(Superintendents Only)

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Total
Aggressively recruiting non-traditional teachers	8	11	31	29	41	120
	6.7%	9.2%	25.8%	24.2%	34.2%	100.0%
Increasing school choice within the district	7	13	22	19	58	119
	5.9%	10.9%	18.5%	16.0%	48.7%	100.0%
Professional development	77	38	4	1	0	120
	64.2%	31.7%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Reducing class size	14	35	43	18	9	119
	11.8%	29.4%	36.1%	15.1%	7.6%	100.0%
Linking teacher pay to student performance	17	31	31	22	18	119
	14.3%	26.1%	26.1%	18.5%	15.1%	100.0%
Boosting pay for teachers across the board	25	33	33	21	7	119
	21.0%	27.7%	27.7%	17.6%	5.9%	100.0%
Improving the quality of district leadership	34	43	24	13	6	120
	28.3%	35.8%	20.0%	10.8%	5.0%	100.0%
Implementing a year-round school calendar	8	12	26	26	48	120
	6.7%	10.0%	21.7%	21.7%	40.0%	100.0%
Supporting the creation of new charter schools	2	6	1	11	99	119
	1.7%	5.0%	0.8%	9.2%	83.2%	100.0%
Frequent use of assessment data to guide decisions	85	30	4	1	0	120
	70.8%	25.0%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Improving the quality of school leadership	53	40	18	8	0	119
	44.5%	33.6%	15.1%	6.7%	0.0%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the “n” for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 120 (the total # of superintendents).

TABLE 72

Given limited resources, how does your district allocate resources between low-performing students and all students? (Superintendents Only)

n = 119

Missing = 1

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Targets resources to low-performing students	23	15	10	19	5	72
% within group	53.5%	48.4%	71.4%	76.0%	83.3%	60.5%
Allots resources more equally across all students	20	16	4	6	1	47
% within group	46.5%	51.6%	28.6%	24.0%	16.7%	39.5%
Total	43	31	14	25	6	119
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 73

When you have to make tough decisions regarding resources and personnel, how confident are you that the board will support you? (Superintendents Only)

n = 119

Missing = 1

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Very confident	25	9	6	9	3	52
% within group	58.1%	29.0%	42.9%	36.0%	50.0%	43.7%
Confident	14	19	5	12	2	52
% within group	32.6%	61.3%	35.7%	48.0%	33.3%	43.7%
Neutral	2	1	2	0	0	5
% within group	4.7%	3.2%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%
Less confident	1	2	1	3	0	7
% within group	2.3%	6.5%	7.1%	12.0%	0.0%	5.9%
Not confident	1	0	0	1	1	3
% within group	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	16.7%	2.5%
Total	43	31	14	25	6	119
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%

TABLE 74

Since you have been superintendent, has the board overturned a decision you have made related to personnel termination? (Superintendents Only)

n = 119

Missing = 1

	Enrollment Group					Total
	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 7,499	7,500 - 14,999	15,000+	Enrollment Size Not Given	
Yes	4	2	2	6	1	15
% within group	9.3%	6.5%	14.3%	24.0%	16.7%	12.6%
No	39	29	12	19	5	104
% within group	90.7%	93.5%	85.7%	76.0%	83.3%	87.4%
Total	43	31	14	25	6	119
% within group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

TABLE 75

When the board is evaluating your performance, please indicate the importance of each of the following. (Superintendents Only)

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Total
Student achievement	48	46	17	6	2	119
% of total	40.3%	38.7%	14.3%	5.0%	1.7%	100.0%
Financial management	66	47	2	3	1	119
% of total	55.5%	39.5%	1.7%	2.5%	0.8%	100.0%
Community engagement	36	53	27	3	0	119
% of total	30.3%	44.5%	22.7%	2.5%	0.0%	100.0%
District safety	34	42	32	8	2	118
% of total	28.8%	35.6%	27.1%	6.8%	1.7%	100.0%
Effective working relationship with others	58	47	11	1	1	118
% of total	49.2%	39.8%	9.3%	0.8%	0.8%	100.0%
Parental satisfaction	26	49	31	10	3	119
% of total	21.8%	41.2%	26.1%	8.4%	2.5%	100.0%
Meets goals	62	44	7	3	1	117
% of total	53.0%	37.6%	6.0%	2.6%	0.9%	100.0%

Note. The total for each row represents the "n" for that option. Missing data can be determined by subtracting the row total from 120 (the total # of superintendents).



NSBA'S MISSION

Working with and through our State Associations, NSBA Advocates for Equity and Excellence in Public Education through School Board Leadership.

NSBA'S VISION

National leadership that encourages outstanding school board governance to achieve student success.