EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE BOARDS IN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN OHIO

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of board governance activities of traditional public school boards and charter (known as community) public school boards in the state of Ohio. The six categories of school board activities were defined by Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness (Smoley, 1999). The six areas of focus are (1) Making Decisions, (2) Functioning as a Group, (3) Exercising Authority, (4) Connecting to the Community, (5) Working Toward Board Improvement, and (6) Acting Strategically. The literature review explored the historical role of the traditional public school board, the emerging role of the charter school board and the board effectiveness studies of Eugene R. Smoley, Jr., the work of Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland and Barbara E. Taylor, and the work of the Institute for Educational Leadership under the direction of Jacqueline P. Danzberger.

A 73 item survey was sent to superintendents of Ohio’s community/charter schools and of the traditional public school district within which they are geographically located. The overall MANOVA test of differences in effectiveness of board governance activities across types of board revealed a significant relationship between the two types (p = .0015). Since there was a significant difference, univariate tests were run for each of the six subgroup activities. Community/charter school boards were found to be more effective than traditional public school boards in which they are geographically located in the areas of Making Decisions, Functioning as a Group, and Acting Strategically. Only the community/charter public school boards were
perceived as “effective” in Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness. They were “effective” in two of six areas, Making Decisions and Acting Strategically.

The results suggest that public school boards in both traditional and community/charter school settings need to be committed to building an effective governance board. Boards need to develop their capacity to govern by reflecting on areas of weakness and developing strengths to provide the necessary leadership for public education in a democratic society.
To the memory of my mother and father

Robert Thomas Woodward

and

Helen Ward Woodward

who enriched the lives of everyone they touched

and made the world a better place in which to live.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Many communities in the state of Ohio have traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards in their educational midst. The recent advent of the community/charter public school has led researchers to examine the relationship of this new form of education to the structure that has existed over the life of the democracy in America. The current study compared the governance activities of the traditional public school board to those of the community/charter public school board to determine if there are any significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of these different models of governance.

In 1995, there were three incumbent candidates and one new candidate for the local public school board election to fill three seats. In 1997, there were two candidates to fill two seats. All of these candidates were high school graduates and most were graduates of the district. During this same period of time, there was a community/charter public school formed in the city that housed the same public school district. The community/charter public school’s appointed board included a local lawyer/city councilman, a university professor who had worked for the U.S. Department of Education, a former area public school district principal, a former district teacher, the president of the local community college, and a cost accountant for a large corporation. Most of the members lived in the local school district but none of them had pursued the positions on the traditional public school board. Was there something different about the governance of the community/charter public school that led them to serve on its board and not pursue the traditional public school board? The traditional public school district where the charter school was located chose not to sponsor the school and it was then sponsored by the Board of Education of a large urban populous county 50 miles north. At the time, the traditional
public school district board did not want to sponsor what it considered to be the competition, so it was sponsored by the nearby county board.

Background to the Study

This first chapter presents the background of the study including a history of the traditional public school board and that of the charter school, known as community school in Ohio. It defines the theoretical framework of the study based on the work on school board effectiveness research of Eugene R. Smoley and its underpinnings in the governance studies of Holland, Chait and Taylor. The chapter provides a statement of the focus of the study based on a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the six specific research questions that are to be addressed. The chapter provides further distinctions for the reader by providing both definitions of the dependent and independent variables and definitions of terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study to current educational research and its limitations in applicability to similar populations.

A Brief History of American School Boards and the Emergence of Charter School Boards

The elected public school board is an “institution” in American culture. An “institution” is an organization or establishment for the promotion of a particular object or, in sociological definition, an organized pattern of group behavior, well-established and accepted as a fundamental part of a culture. As early as 1642, Massachusetts began to establish laws that would impact educational requirements and opportunities. Although the “first” law that called on certain men of each town to determine if parents or masters were attending to their educational duties and training children in learning and labor was largely ignored, it set the tone for legislation that would follow (First & Walberg, 1992). The law was abandoned since it did not mandate the establishment of public schools. The Old Deluder Satan Law, passed in 1647,
required that a teacher be appointed in any town with fifty or more families. Towns with one hundred or more were to employ a Latin teacher (Castallo, 2003). While the growth of private schools at the time limited the effect of the legislation on the colonists, its underlying premise that it was the duty of the local government to administer education made it historically significant (Castallo). In 1683, local control over education was further solidified through the enactment of a law that called on towns and their selectmen to jointly maintain schools and the law mandated the imposition of a tax to support the schools (First & Walberg, 1992). These laws were soon common throughout the New England colonies.

As towns grew, so did the duties of the selectmen. By 1721, the first permanent school committee was appointed in Boston to exclusively oversee the governing of the schools (First & Walberg, 1992; Danzberger, 1992). The colonial practice of local control continued after the Declaration of Independence and the pattern also appeared in the new territories, as evidenced in Ohio with Article III of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance. The Northwest Ordinance provided that “religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged” (First & Walberg, 1992, p. 9). The tradition has been handed down and formalized in most of the state constitutions of the United States.

Ohio Revised Code (hereafter ORC) Chapter 3313 establishes the guidelines for public schools in Ohio. Specifically ORC § 3313.01, *Membership of board of education or governing board of service center*, states:

In local and exempted village school districts and educational service centers, except as provided in section 3311.054 and 3311.056 of the Revised Code, the board of education or governing board of an educational service center shall consist of five members who
shall be electors residing in the territory composing the respective districts and shall be
elected at large in their respective districts.

In ORC § 3313.47, *Management and control of schools vested in board of education*, the role of
the board is defined:

Each city, exempted village, or local board of education shall have the management and
control of all of the public schools of whatever name or character that it operates in its
respective district. If the board has adopted an annual appropriation resolution, it may, by
general resolution, authorize the superintendent or other officer to appoint janitors,
superintendents of buildings, and such other employees as are provided for in such annual
appropriation resolution.

While state and federal government regulations began impinging on the absolute
authority of the boards of education, it was not until the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* by
the National Commission on Excellence in Education that reformists became active in school
reform initiatives. These reform initiatives often left the local school board out of the picture or
created alternative educational options with separate governance systems.

The precursors to the charter school had begun to develop. In 1985, for example,
Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich introduced proposals for several public choice programs. In
1987 the legislature passed the Areas Learning Center Law and High School Graduation
Incentive Act. The law allowed teenagers and adults who had been unsuccessful in school to
attend schools outside their district boundaries. They could also attend private, nonsectarian
schools if their local district made contracts with those schools. High school juniors and seniors
who were achieving were given a postsecondary option to take all or part of their coursework at
colleges and universities. By 1988 legislation allowed open enrollment to public schools outside
the district for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade as long as there was room and the transfer did not upset racial balance. School choice was at the time an option in many states (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002).

That same year, 1988, Ray Budde, a retired teacher and expert of school district reorganization, published a book that proposed that local school boards directly charter teachers to establish innovative programs within the schools. This book offered a platform for the public debate of charter programs. American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker supported Budde’s ideas at a conference in Minneapolis in 1988. At the 1985 American Federation of Teachers annual convention, Shanker advocated local school boards and the teachers’ unions to jointly create an autonomous public school within a school which he called charter schools (Budde, 1996).

In part a reaction to the school reform movement focused on new initiatives for public education and conversely in response to the pressure for private school vouchers, charter schools are seen as a compromise between public education and private school competition. Charter schools would provide choice within the public school context and adhere to the idea of public education while embracing competition and other free market values (Weil, 2000).

In 1991, Minnesota became the first state to pass charter school legislation. It provided for eight charter schools statewide that were approved by the local school boards. The law was quickly amended to include forty schools that had the option of being authorized by the Minnesota Board of Education if the local school district turned the school down. Other states quickly followed, including California in 1992 and Colorado and Massachusetts in 1993. In June 1997, with the enactment of Amended Substitute Ohio House Bill 215, a pilot community school program was created in Lucas County. This “community” school is how Ohio terms its charter
school. Additional legislation in Substitute House Bill 364 in 2002 expanded the community/charter public school program to its current number and Ohio House Bill 66 (2005) legislated changes in sponsorship.

The structure of charter school governance throughout the nation varies due to the autonomous nature of these schools and the state specific nature of charter school laws. While many charter school governing boards have a large percentage of parent members, many, especially those in at-risk areas, have little representation from the parent and student population they serve (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). While ORC § 3314.03 specifies that a charter school establish a governing board and defines that board’s duties, it does not delineate the constitution of such boards. In only one state, Minnesota, are the members of charter school boards required to be elected, even though charter schools are funded with public monies in all states that have them.

In a Phi Delta Kappan article, *Do Charter Schools Do It Differently?* (Finn & Kanstoroom, 2002), the authors ask the question “Are charter schools really different?” Because of the myriad issues of the startup process, it’s too soon to have a definitive answer but it is a perfect time to study the differences and changes that have taken place in these publicly funded seedbeds of reform. Educators and policy makers who are looking at these beta sites for a renewal of public education in the United States are keenly interested in how these schools are different from the current public school. Others find that community/charter public schools are a reflection of their traditional public school counterparts. In general, “based on available state-level data, charter school governing boards appear to exercise typical boardlike powers and responsibilities” (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002, p. 88).

In addition to traditional school-board-like governance structures, charter schools have
sponsoring agencies that oversee creation and operation of the schools. ORC Chapter 3314 delineates who may sponsor a charter school, e.g., the governing board of any educational service center. Current legislation with HB 66 placed limits on sponsorship. The Ohio Department of Education who was a sponsor for many of the original community/charter public schools in Ohio was eliminated as a sponsor. The community/charter public schools that the Ohio Department of Education sponsored were sponsored by other entities. Another change in the original Chapter 3314 of the ORC includes the addendum that only 30 new start-up community schools sponsored by non school district entities may open until July 1, 2007.

Over the last decade, there has been little research on the role of a charter school’s sponsoring/authorizing board until a recent study from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003). The researchers emphasized the importance of this overlooked piece of the community/charter public school puzzle and argued that the success of the community/charter public school depends on the effectiveness of those sponsors/authorizers. Just as raising successful children depends greatly on the efforts of their parents, the creation and operation of successful charter schools hinges in large measure on the work of the entities that authorize them (Palmer & Gau, 2005). As of July 1, 2005, the Ohio Department of Education is no longer a participant in the regulation of charter schools. The schools that the Ohio Department of Education had sponsored are now being regulated by a federal housing contractor in Columbus, a Cincinnati orphanage, and a black cultural center in Cleveland. Currently fourteen groups – in addition to public school districts – have the authority to sponsor schools and six more are seeking that authority. Many sponsors can also conduct much of their work in private because they are not subject to Ohio’s open meeting and open records laws (Associated Press, 2005).
Currently, there is much educational debate on the use of for-profit management firms by community/charter public schools. Who is actually governing the school is the question. The teachers in the community/charter public schools that were managed by an EMO (Educational Management Organization) were less involved in the decision making than the other community/charter public schools in Ohio (Fox, 2002). Michigan has a large number of schools that are under the auspices of EMOs and have contributed most to the literature.

Theoretical Framework: Board Effectiveness

Although basing their work on the literature of trusteeship, Chait, Holland and Taylor (1991) wanted to develop a framework for effective trusteeship that would be systematically and empirically tested. The research was designed with the critical incident or behavioral event technique and led them to a common definition of the activities of effective boards of trustees in colleges in the United States. Their study was limited to boards of private colleges due to the problems associated with public boards including political agendas. Holland conducted a companion study with social services agencies and health care agencies which extended their applicability to different types of private boards. Their findings, however, are useful and applicable to both private and public boards but suggest a need to further research the board of trustees of public boards.

Eugene R. Smoley, Jr., while an associate professor of educational leadership at the University of Delaware, undertook a study of school board effectiveness funded by the Good Samaritan Foundation in 1993. His experience is complemented by eight years as a high school principal, two years as an assistant to the Montgomery County (Maryland) superintendent and extensive work as a consultant for board development. His study was based on extensive individual interviews with 40 percent of the school board members across the state of Delaware.
These two-hour interviews described specific occasions when these board members felt that their board carried out their responsibility effectively. The interviews used the critical incident technique to determine common themes in the stories of board members interviewed. This technique was the same used by Chait, Holland and Taylor (1991) in their work with boards of trustees conducted at the National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance, University of Maryland. A software program allowed sorting of the material by activity. The number of times each activity occurred could then be counted and also coded in a way that allowed for multiple coding of events. In total there were 111 descriptive vignettes which were coded by activity. A qualitative, iterative process refined the definition of the text to form the framework for Smoley’s model of effective board activities.

Six key themes were identified from effective activities: (1) Making Decisions, (2) Functioning as a Group, (3) Exercising Authority, (4) Connecting to the Community, (5) Working Toward Board Improvement, and (6) Acting Strategically. Examples of activities that are related to the key theme of Connecting to the Community were a periodic written report including the board’s activities, ad hoc committees or task forces that include staff and community representatives as well as board members, and public information collection on the perspectives of staff and community. Each of the key themes has twelve activities associated with it except Making Decisions, which has thirteen. For each theme identified, Smoley defined the specific characteristics that define effectiveness:

(1) Making Decisions: Board decisions are rational, informed by data and full discussion.

(2) Functioning as a Group: Board exhibits the characteristics of well-functioning groups demonstrated by a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values.
(3) Exercising Authority: Board members exercise their authority discreetly and stand firm when they must.

(4) Connecting to the Community: Boards connect with the community informally, as well as by an established formal process.

(5) Working Toward Board Improvement: Boards work toward self-improvement, assist new members, reflect on their responsibilities, and seek assistance when they need it.

(6) Acting Strategically: Board actions are strategic, matching long-term plans with immediate actions, focusing on results, and adjusting to new situations.

Statement of the Problem

Are the governing boards of traditional public school districts functioning differently or in a more effective manner than their counterpart community/charter public school boards of education in the six areas of effective board governance defined by the work of Smoley? Some argue that appointed school boards are not consistently different or better performing than elected school boards (Boyd & Miretsky, 2003). Are the boards of traditional public school districts and the community/charter public schools effective based on Smoley’s model of an effective school board? The governance of public education is on trial (Boyd & Miretsky; Danzberger & Usdan, 1994). While many reformers advocate school board reform, there is little consensus on what option or combination of options is most effective (Danzberger, 1992; Kirst, 1994; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1999). The Education Commission of the States (ECS, 1999) proposed an alternative educational governance model that resembles that used for the community/charter public schools in Ohio. Under this model, there is a system of publicly funded, publicly authorized but independently operated schools. The sponsoring/authorizing agency monitors school operations, channels funds, holds those operating the charter school
accountable but does not operate independent charter schools. The community/charter public school then appoints a local operational board according to their charter.

The 2004 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll indicated that the public prefers using and changing the existing public school system rather than creating an alternative school system (Rose & Gallup, 2004). The 2005 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll reported that while 49% favor community/charter public schools, 80% say that charter schools should be accountable to the state just as regular public schools are accountable. In addition, 65% of respondents oppose having charter schools in their community if it means reducing regular public school funding (Rose & Gallup, 2005).

The public debate over how community/charter public schools will be governed and who will govern them is good reason to examine the effectiveness of governance styles of the existing public school entities: city/exempted village/local school boards and community/charter public school boards. Is there any difference in the effectiveness of the governance style of the traditional public school district and the governance style of the community/charter public school? This study asks: Are there differences in board effectiveness, as defined in Smoley’s six areas of effective school board governance, between the city/exempted village/local school board and the community/charter public school board?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if there are statistically significant differences in six areas of effective board behavior of city/exempted village/ school district boards of education (to be referred to as the “traditional public school boards”) and the community/charter public school boards in areas served by the city/exempted village/local school district in the State of Ohio.
The study will focus on the differences in effectiveness of activities between two types of governance boards (traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards) across six categories of school board activities as defined in Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness (Smoley, 1999). These six areas of focus are (1) Making Decisions, (2) Functioning as a Group, (3) Exercising Authority, (4) Connecting to the Community, (5) Working Toward Board Improvement, and (6) Acting Strategically.

Research Questions

(1) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Making Decisions as perceived by their superintendent?

(2) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools agencies differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Functioning as a Group as perceived by their superintendent?

(3) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Exercising Authority as perceived by their superintendent?

(4) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Connecting to the Community as perceived by their superintendent?

(5) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Working Toward Board Improvement as perceived by their superintendent?
(6) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Acting Strategically as perceived by their superintendent?

Definitions of Variables

Dependent Variables

The dependent variable is board effectiveness measured through the six elements identified by Eugene R. Smoley, Jr. in conducting research for the School Board Effectiveness Project funded by the Good Samaritan Foundation in 1993 and based on the work of the Cheswick Center.

1. Making Decisions – Boards describe a decision making process with a variety of distinctive characteristics. It is a rational process, informed by data and full discussion. Members maintain flexibility and objectivity when considering the merits of alternative courses of action. This process works toward a consensus of views rather than a majority vote. For the purpose of this study, Making Decisions will be measured by the mean score on a thirteen-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

2. Functioning as a Group – Boards describe a shared respect and trust that recognizes the contribution of each board member. There is a feeling of cohesiveness and of working together, shared goals and values, leadership within the board and a shared understanding and agreement on operating rules. For the purpose of this study, Functioning as a Group will be measured by the mean score
on a twelve-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

3. **Exercising Authority** – Board members speak of their effective activities in the context of the chief executive officer’s recommendations and actions. There is support of the chief executive but sensitivity about not being a rubber stamp board. Board members cite examples of effectiveness where they initiated actions, overruled the chief executive officer, or withstood the pressure of staff, community and government. For the purpose of this study, Exercising Authority will be measured by the mean score on a twelve-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

4. **Connecting to the Community** – Board members cite actions in maintaining a multifaceted relationship with the community. This relationship includes informal conversations and structured input from the community as well as board presentations to the community. Board members serve as a conduit between the school district and the community. For the purpose of this study, Connecting to the Community will be measured by the mean score on a twelve-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

5. **Working toward Board Improvement** – Board members describe activities that help new members understand their responsibilities. They cite actions that include reflection on and adjustment of board responsibilities and authority. They seek outside assistance and cultivate leadership and membership on the board. For the
purpose of this study, Working Toward Board Improvement will be measured by the mean score on a twelve-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

6. *Acting Strategically* – Board members discuss and resolve issues that are central to assisting children to learn. They plan systematically and long term, taking into consideration the needs and concerns of internal and external constituents, balancing substantive and political realities. They match plans against results. They organize responsibilities and authority between the chief executive officer and the board, adjusting for strengths and weaknesses. For the purpose of this study, Acting Strategically will be measured by the mean score on a twelve-item, four-point Likert scale on the Board Governance Survey based on Smoley’s (1999) Board Self Assessment Questionnaire.

*Independent Variable*

The independent variable for the study is governance board type, a two-level categorical variable.

1. City/Exempted Village/Local School District Board of Education Membership

2. Community/Charter Public School Governance Board Membership

*Definitions of Related Terms*

*Board of Education*: Authorized in ORC § 3313.47 Each city, exempted village, or local board of education shall have the management and control of all of the public schools of whatever name or character that it operates in its respective district.
Charter School: Public, nonprofit, nonsectarian school that operates independently of any school district but under a contract with a sponsoring entity. In Ohio, they are referred to as community schools.

Community School: Authorized in ORC § 3314, community schools (often called “charter schools”) are public, nonprofit, nonsectarian schools that operate independently of any school district but under a contract with a sponsoring entity.

Governance: Management and control.

Serving District: The community/charter public school is located within a city, exempted village or local school district (traditional public school district). This traditional public school district is the serving district.

Sponsoring agency: Many entities can sponsor community/charter public schools in the State of Ohio. They include local school districts, educational service centers, public universities, and qualified non-profit entities.

Superintendent: The administrator of the traditional public school district or community/charter public school who oversees daily operations of the organization and interacts with the governance board on operational and policy matters.

Significance of the Study

Gallup polls indicate that public attitudes toward public schools are favorable to the local public school board as it exists (Rose & Gallup, 2003). Over the last five years, the public consistently chose options for improving the existing systems despite the major reform efforts of the 1990s (Danzberger et al., 1992; ECS, 1999; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1992). These reform efforts include mayoral takeovers of large urban districts, recent legislation for the creation of community/charter public schools, and use of public school vouchers for private
school education. Despite opinions favoring local public school boards, school board races see thin slates (Higgins, 2003) and little public interest. Generally, only 10-13% of eligible voters turn out for school board elections. Is public confidence in the current system of governance well founded? Is there a difference in the effectiveness of school governance in community/charter public school reform efforts? Is the state of Ohio investing public funds to create a community/charter public school system that mirrors that of the traditional public school system? Are there significant differences among the effective governance activities of traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards? This study will provide evidence of the effectiveness of the community/charter public school boards in comparison to effectiveness of their traditional public serving school district boards of education. The current study will provide a framework for discussion of the current structure of board governance in traditional public school districts and of the community/charter public school. The strengths and weaknesses of both types of boards will provide insights to reform for both types of governance structures.

Limitations of the Study

One survey instrument will be used in this study. The survey is designed to collect perceptions of superintendents of their governance board’s activities in the following six areas: Making Decisions, Functioning as a Group, Exercising Authority, Connecting to the Community, Working Toward Board Improvement and Acting Strategically. The survey used in this study is a validated instrument to measure perceptions of governance members’ activity. Interpretation of activities and honesty of response are dependent on the knowledge and integrity of the respondent.
The sample for the study included the 209 superintendents of non-digital community/charter public schools not in their first year of operation, and the 36 superintendents of the traditional public school districts in which the community/charter public schools reside in the State of Ohio during the 2005/2006 school year.

The sample for this study will not include online charter schools due to the unique nature of their governance and areas of service.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

“The governance of American public education is clearly on trial today. The future character of American education very much hangs in the balance. After decades of criticism and mounting discontent...both policymakers and the public are increasingly embracing radical measures to alter or reform the governance and operation of the education system” (Boyd, 2003, p. 1).

This chapter reviews current educational literature to provide a framework for understanding the two constituent groups that compose the independent elements for this study: the governance of the traditional public school and the governance of the community/charter public school. The final element of the literature review defines the dependent variable of the study – board effectiveness, defined by the work of Eugene R. Smoley. This work, based on the original higher education governance studies of Thomas Holland, William Chait and Barbara Taylor, was reconstructed to fit the context of the elementary/secondary public school environment by Smoley.

Traditional Public School Governance

Historical Perspectives of Public Education Governance Systems

The American school board is a unique institution. In an era of mergers, conglomerates, and global economies, the local school board is one of the few remaining examples of grassroots democracy. When Daniel R. Davies, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University and Fred W. Hosler, superintendent of schools in Oklahoma City, originally published The Challenge of School Board Membership in 1949, they could not imagine the political complexities of the next sixty years. Yet, in its simplicity, they recognized the value of the local school board, urging
that any proposals to transfer power from the local boards to the federal government be strongly resisted (Davies & Hosler, 1949). What some see as a major weakness of school boards – that they are directed by well-meaning amateurs – may actually be a strength.

During the formation of the United States, colonists distrusted distant government and wanted decisions made close to home, especially decisions regarding education. As early as 1642, Massachusetts passed a law to oversee the education of children. By 1647, town meetings administered education as a role of local government and, as towns grew, residents found selectmen to represent the wishes of the whole. As society’s demands for local control of education increased, the first permanent School Committee was appointed in Boston in 1721 (Russo, 1992). School committees were established in the new American republic and shortly thereafter chosen by election. In 1826 the Massachusetts law was amended to ensure that members of the board were not members of other governmental bodies to eliminate political influence on educational policies. The Massachusetts system of a separate educational governance system for each local school district was a prototype for the current governance of schools by local school boards (Carol et al., 1986). Horace Mann in 1845 as a Massachusetts legislator encouraged the development of common schools defining the need for public education. “As our republican government was founded upon the virtue and intelligence of the people, it was rightly concluded by the framers, that, without a wise educational system, the government itself could not exist.” (Mann, 1872)

Westward movement continued to support public education through the language in Article III of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, but it was the Tenth Amendment of the Bill of Rights that reserved the rights of education to the States. Kirst (2004) found that even though the Tenth Amendment left the control of education to the States, the States delegated that power to
the local school board. The States rarely intervened. Only in recent years have large districts been taken over by mayors and State governments (Danzberger, 1992; Kirst & Bulkley, 2000). The doctrine of local control of public schools has occupied a sacred place in American ideology (Boyd, 2003).

In urban areas in the late 1800s, board members were elected in local ward elections often tainted by corresponding local ward politics and corruption (Danzberger, 1992). In 1895, the twenty-eight cities in the nation with a population of more than 100,000 maintained school boards with an average of 21.5 members (Howell, 2005). In a reform movement, board members were elected at large instead of by wards. The board of education was modeled on corporate boards with superintendents as the chief officers (Danzberger, 1992). Through numerous reforms, school boards have declined to five or seven members. The average number of board members has remained at the decreased number of seven. And just as the number of board members per board decreased, so did the number of boards. In 1936, there were 118,892 school districts with an average of 218 students. By 1997, just 15,178 districts schooled an average 3,005 students each (Howell, 2005).

In 1920, elementary and secondary schools received 83% of their funds from a local source, but by 2000 local revenue was just 43%. This increased state and federal dependence has also increased the number of school board regulations from both the state and the federal government.

Courts have also had a profound effect on school governance beginning with the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision. Howell (2005) notes how the courts set rules on student assembly, funding for boys’ and girls’ sports, and accommodations for students with disabilities, and vouchers with the recent Supreme Court case of Zelman v. Simmons-Harris.
State courts have had a significant impact on funding in the state of Ohio, as evidenced in *DeRolph v. State of Ohio* (1997, 2000, 2001).

**Governance Reform and the Loss of Local Control**

Social institutions are notoriously difficult to change. Public education is no different (Boyd, 2003). The ideology of local control of public education is widely shared and provides deep structures of beliefs about how it should be organized and governed (Tye, 2000). Followers of this ideology are deeply committed to a belief in a democratic system of public schools that are accountable to a locally elected public school board. It is the one best system or so it has been believed. Changes in demographics, economics, and social and political trends have occurred simultaneously that have allowed such a deeply seated belief of how schools should be governed to be questioned by those who have always shared the same value.

Since the politically charged 1983 Presidential report, *A Nation at Risk*, pressure for radical reforms has put the governance of American public education on trial. Boyd (2003) found that the element of society calling for governance reforms mainly reflects the thinking of corporate leaders, policy analysts, foundations, and critics of public education. Joseph Viteritti (2004) pointed out that it has been twenty years since the Institute for Educational Leadership studies exposed the shortcomings of school boards. Little research has been devoted to school boards since that classic piece. While much has changed, many underlying issues described in the report, such as representation of the constituency served, trusteeship versus management, and concerns about federal involvement, remain.

From 1930 through 1970, the consolidation movement reduced the number of districts from 130,000 to 16,000 for efficiency and economy (Danzberger, 1992). This consolidation created a change in politics whose real effect can still not be adequately assessed. Has this
reduction in the number of local boards disenfranchised the students and parents that the districts serve? It has been suggested that the loss of the local neighborhood school caused a loss of community and shared values with the school district (Meier, 2003). While some of the results of the consolidation were beneficial to students by offering them more course options and better competitive sports options, it was not without some cost to the local governance of the school. Once, one of every five hundred citizens sat on a school board. Today, because of school and school district consolidation, only one out of nearly twenty thousand is a school board member. Once most Americans knew a school board member personally but today, few do. Meier (2003) lamented it was not surprising that citizens are not concerned about the demise of public education; they do not feel connected to it. This shrinkage of public participation in school governance represents a loss for public education, for the relationship of citizens with their government, and for democracy itself. Boards need to multiply and return to the level of service and intimacy at the school level that allowed them to be the true voices of their constituencies. Society needs to trust ordinary citizens with this experience in democracy. Thomas Jefferson was willing to allow people to govern themselves. If they faltered at self governing, he felt the remedy was not to take governing from them, but to inform them through education.

Importance of Public School Governance in a Democratic Society

Boyle (2004) believed that the “public” in public schools is about how we prepare the next generation to assume responsible roles as citizens in society, to establish and maintain the economy and to engender those ideals in the generation that will follow. The public school is essential for the preservation of a democratic system of government and the universal tool to establish a common set of values that embody our way of life. Tyack (2003) noted that democracy in education and education in democracy are not just quaint sayings but relevant for
the current and future American culture. All citizens have a stake in the education of future
generations. Mintron (2001) encouraged educational reformers to advocate democracy as a social
practice. Choice and freedom are more likely when groups have opportunities to participate in
political decision making. Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (1998) wrote that schools need
to transform children’s lives and build a better future. Take these moral purposes away and
society will fall victim to opportunists or fads which will talk about educational change yet not
speak to the true dimension of education.

Cunningham (2003) observed that the public no longer feels that the schools are theirs. This
disconnect may lead citizens to abandon public education as they now know it. The present
school governance system has not modeled democracy and civic involvement. What is needed in
school governance is a true grassroots democracy that develops a sense of community, civic
governance and shared public purpose through local control. Rousseau, Jefferson, de
Tocqueville, and Dewey have all argued the importance of a participatory society. Boyle (2004)
proposed that learning how to govern effectively in a representative democracy is the single most
critical issue in board development. Because governing is a collaborative activity, individual
board members must learn to act collaboratively by establishing shared values. O’Donnell
(2005), for example, reported that the Chamber of Commerce’s Education Committee in El Paso,
Texas aided the school districts in the county by providing prospective school board candidates
with a public forum. The Chamber’s solution to better educational governance was the
recruitment of qualified school board members. The community was involved on two levels as
recruiter and recruited, trainer and trainee.

David E. Campbell (2001), in a study of public participation in local politics including
school district politics, found an interesting paradox. Although participation in local elections
was relatively low, participation rates in local meetings, including school board meetings, was fairly high. How does the social environment affect participation by the public and will this involvement affect either their participation in or attitude toward the governance structure?

Campbell found that participation was most likely to occur in smaller settings of homogeneous members. While diversity can present problems, a study in 1993 by Berry, Portney and Thomson highlighted the positive participatory impact of small-scale neighborhood associations on decision making powers. In the formation of the neighborhood association, homogeneity was established through common interests and activities even among diverse participants. As school district residents become more diverse, can districts become small neighborhood associations dedicated to the common interest of education of its children? Can school board governance emulate this practice of democratic engagement?

*Current Educational Governance Reform*

Howell (2005) pointed out three trends in public education that have accelerated the decline of local school board powers: mayors and states have taken over control of the functioning of the public school in their jurisdiction; there has been a federal and state push for standards and accountability such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); and, reforms through school choice have dominated education for over two decades.

Lewis Cohen (2006) found that in Chicago and elsewhere, control by the mayor removes opportunities for the community to hold the schools accountable. The role of the elected school board is diminished, and the positive effects of Chicago’s elected school councils, which brought governance of schools closer to the communities they serve, have been undone. Likewise, Educational Management Organizations (EMOs) have moved decision making a step further
away from the school’s community. EMOs are generally for-profit companies that operate schools. Community/charter or private schools contract services from EMOs to operate individual schools. EMOs may provide and manage the facility, hire the teaching staff, provide the curriculum, and/or provide other services as part of the contract. As the educational provider, the EMO may affect the decision making of the school. The effects of the new hospital model can provide a cautionary lesson for education. As decisions moved from the health professionals to administrators outside the profession, the quality of health care declined. Decisions are based on finances and the doctor/patient relationship is arranged by the health management organization. The result of businesslike management has neither proved efficient nor cost effective. Management systems, whether in medicine or education, are imposed in the name of accountability. Ayers and Klonsky (2006) reported that the new Renaissance 2010 schools in Chicago will be run mostly by EMOs with no elected local school councils. There is no evidence to show that privately run charter schools can produce better results.

Wong and Shen (2003), in their study of mayoral takeovers, have found little evidence of these takeovers’ effect on management and staffing outcomes. Mayoral takeovers have not been able to fully integrate city hall with school district operations. In some cities, there has been some progress, but some laissez-faire relationships like the early 2000s mayor/superintendent relationship in Cleveland, Ohio have led to little change in district operations. In the fall election of 2004 in Detroit, the issue of who would control the public schools was decided by a 64.5 percent vote against a ballot measure to give the city’s mayor the authority to appoint a chief executive officer for the district. The return to an elected board with traditional powers has been an issue since the state of Michigan took over the Detroit school system in 1999 and replaced the elected board with a board appointed by the mayor. More than seventy residents ran in a 2005
primary for four at-large and seven district seats on the board. This increased attention and
interest in the school board indicated a willingness of the people to participate in the governance
of their school at the local level.

Looking at school governance from a constitutional perspective, it is ultimately the duty
of the state to oversee education. State control over education is shaped through the state
legislature. While representatives are elected by the constituency of the district they represent,
state legislators are less representative of local constituency needs and interests than the local
school board. Richard Briffault (2005) found that local school boards may assert the power of
education de facto at the local level; the federal government may intervene especially when
federal funding is involved, but it is the state that has the ultimate constitutional right to oversee
education. Only a few state constitutions expressly grant local school boards power over the
local schools. These include Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana and
Virginia and the extent of that authority differs by state.

The problem with national education reform, which may be laudable in its intent, is its
inability to address individual differences in communities. The local school board is an advocate
for a community, is accessible and accountable to a local resident of the district, and is a
community’s educational watchdog (NSBA, 2003). Federal intrusion dilutes the powers of the
locally elected school board to design policies that suit the individual needs of the populations
they serve (Howell, 2005). Fraga, Rodriguez, and Ehrlichson (2005) found that the local school
governance structure can support but may also contradict the rulings of state and federal
directives. Local school boards work to make policy changes effective at the local level. The
speed of the implementation of change is often enhanced or restricted by the school board at the
local level. The speed may be dependent on fiscal resources, staff resources, and other factors
that are specific to the local conditions of the district. Tyack (2003) found that communities are often slow to respond to change because they have witnessed the swing of the reform pendulum through their various cycles. They may have implemented a reform, only to have it replaced by a different reform based on a change in national education policy. The local school boards want to represent the community at the local level while adopting only the best of what reform either at the national level or implemented in other communities, may have to offer for their community.

Berry and Howell, in a 2000 study of South Carolina elections, found that accountability was achieved through the process of local school board elections. While the NCLB may have introduced new standards and new tests, voters in the United States have always held the education system accountable through the vote of local people in local public elections for local public school boards. Kirst (2004) pointed out that even though local school board members have less and less to say about education, the public still holds them accountable for their school’s academic results and organizational stability. It would be hard to imagine a mayor or member of Congress not reelected because of the state of the local school district. So, despite the imperfections that seem to exist, the current system’s governance structure appears to be held accountable at least at the polls. Mary Lee Smith (2003) sensed that political spectacles like NCLB lulls ordinary people to indifference, political passivity, and cynicism. As a result education policy makers stand little chance to repair the inevitable failures that current programs are bound to produce. But Howell (2005) thought that when citizens view state and federal infringement on school board prerogatives as infringements on their own ability to guide education policy, boards will have a considerably stronger basis on which to promote the benefits of local control.
When local school boards lose control over the number and type of charter schools that enter their districts, and when students use state funds to switch from public to private sectors, the local school board’s powers are fundamentally compromised (Howell, 2005). But others argue that using state funds for alternative forms of education can lead to a revolution in public oversight which will replace this accidental governance system of the local public school district with one that is designed deliberately. This deliberately designed system of balanced accountability, in which schools are largely self-regulating and answer directly to families, teachers, donors, and government, can allow standards-based reform to fulfill its promise (Hill, 2003). But in a recent poll by Hess (2002), only 16% of the districts had school choice as an option. Charter schools may impact education more than the 16% would imply because many of the districts that had choice options were larger metropolitan districts that represented a larger number of students. Kirst and Bulkley (2000) found that historically, changes in school governance have not had much impact on classrooms, but recent experiences in Chicago and Boston may indicate a change, at least for the large urban districts. Reformers will continue to use governance in an effort to improve the performance of education, even though these mechanisms may offer an indirect or uncertain strategy for improving classroom instruction.

Governance and Politics

As Danzberger (1992) suggested in her work for the Institute for Educational Leadership on school governance, the school board election in and of itself is often a source of the problem of school governance. The issue of centralized vs. decentralized approaches to representation that plagued the colonists, as was noted earlier in this chapter, are still present in current educational governance reform discussions. The Progressive Era tried to disassociate politics from education. Hess (2002) found that 89 percent of school board participants in his study reported that
elections were nonpartisan. As a part of historical legacy, school board elections were often divorced from high profile elections. Less than half of district elections are always held on the same day as national and state elections while 35 percent are never held on the same day as such elections. Given this schedule for elections, low voter participation in school related issues might be expected. It is still difficult to pinpoint low profile elections as the actual cause for low voter turnout. Iannaconne and Lutz (1994) discovered that when voters believe that their representatives are no longer representing the community values and needs, voters become active in elections. With this dissatisfaction theory it could be assumed when people are satisfied with their local schools, they see no reason to vote because they feel represented.

Constituents often cite lack of representation when board members are elected in at large elections. Hess (2002) found that more than 56 percent of members are elected at large. For reasons unknown to Hess, medium-sized districts (5,000-24,999) were more likely to elect their board members districtwide than are either large or small districts. Kenneth Meier and Erik Juenke (2005), in a study of over a thousand school districts in the state of Texas, predicted valuable gains in switching from at-large to ward-based elections in districts with large Latino populations. Melissa Marschall (2000) found similar findings with African-American minorities in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles. Minority constituents report higher levels of satisfaction with their schools when they feel represented.

Terry Moe (2006), based on interviews conducted from 2000 to 2003 with school districts and school board candidates in California, found the power of the teachers’ union is too strong and financially influential to allow true democratic elections of candidates. While he found that partisan elections might actually have a constraining effect on union activity, there is a flaw in the democratic process that allows influential organizations to impact how the local
values of the citizens are or are not reflected in the local school board. Hess and Leal (2005), based on a survey of school boards conducted in association with the National School Boards Association and the 2000 census data, asserted that the effects of unions or any organization as a funding source were relatively minimal. While the teachers’ union is the most active organization in school board elections, its effect on elections was mixed at best either through financing, campaigning, endorsing or even voting. Unions had more influence in urban areas and in areas that are represented by collective bargaining. They suggest that attempts at school election reform should be shaped on the local conditions. Ninety nine percent of the districts are not urban, but urban districts represent almost half of the school population.

Needed Reforms and the Future of Public Governance

Wirt and Kirst (2001) found that there is a public perception of a major operational failure in the system of school governance in metropolitan areas. This perception about the structure of the system itself is reinforced by media reports of school violence and dismal test scores. Whether this academic failure is attributable to the structure of the school system and its governance or not, Cibulka (2001) noted that dismal performance and negative publicity has undermined the legitimizing values that supported the governance structure that was in place. Public confidence would have to be restored in a system that has been maligned throughout the last twenty years. Despite the historical belief that changing the structure of decision making will improve the quality of decisions, Cuban (2003) has found no substantial evidence that a change in the school governance structure will solve society’s educational problems. Just as the IEL study authored by Carol et al. (1986), IEL’s survey authored by Danzberger et al. (1992), and Kirst (1994) proposed, Cuban found that a single arrangement for educational governance is not likely to be found. Researchers must rely on the context of the governance to find a match that
best suits the constituents of the school district as a whole or the school within the district. Children’s educational needs and capacities vary widely from community to community which underscores the need for a local governing institution (Howell, 2005).

The political unrest in the San Diego school district, stemming from top down reform strategies, demonstrated some important lessons not only for the large city school district but also for school governance as a whole. Michael Usdan (2005) presented some key lessons learned based on the San Diego Project Review under the direction of Frederick Hess. Usdan stated that whether school reformers explicitly acknowledge it or not, an important lesson from San Diego is that school boards remain very important players in school governance. If school boards spent more time on educational planning and outcomes rather than management issues, they might attract members who have the trusteeship orientation toward public service which goes to the heart of effective governance. Carver (1990) describes the trustee relationship as acting in trust for the community that it serves. Board members are morally if not legally trustees for the school district community and responsible for the integrity of its governance. Moral ownership or trusteeship is the basis for accountability. To achieve a trusteeship focus on governance, it may require a statutory change in the duties of the governance board and/or a change in the selection process by appointment instead of election. San Diego also demonstrated the problem of contentious board members whose conflicts discredited the work of the board and the school system. The conflict was not only internal but external with the private sector and larger community. This cooperation amongst the board of education, the municipal government and the private sector determines voters’ perception of the efficacy of the district. While dissension remained on the board, the new board members see themselves as public-service-
oriented consensus builders and conflict resolvers who have the skills to improve the organizational climate of the school system’s governance structure.

Hill, Warner-King, Campbell, McElroy, and Munoz-Colon (2002) found that past approaches to school board reform have failed because they have only tinkered with the structure. To overhaul the system of governance to focus on trusteeship, school board members must change in three areas: answer to a broader constituency, limit their basic powers and duties, and eliminate their exclusive authority to oversee schools in a specified geographic area. If board members represent a particular neighborhood or area of a district, they may favor decisions and proposals that are of interest to that geographical area. If school board members are chosen at large or appointed by the mayor to represent a broader constituency, some of the special interest factors may be eliminated. There is also the larger issue of what is good for students in the long term which may be overshadowed by the interests of the parents or citizens in the present. If the powers of the board are limited to issues of mission, the common practice of micromanagement that drains so much of current board members’ time would eliminated. Finally, if the local school board is the only entity that can oversee a school funded with public money in a geographic area, it may become complacent. Proposals to allow multiple boards or to allow competent entities to establish schools will creative a competitive environment that encourages high quality schools. Only through radical reform can school boards effectively connect with the constituents they serve. Hill (2003) concluded that the work of local school boards needs to be focused on school performance. While many of the standards-based reforms have helped focus on student achievement, the same excessive regulations and oversight remain. These regulations and oversight inhibit reform for systemic change.
Perhaps complete overhaul of the system is not necessary if the focus of the system changes. Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) proposed that to attract and retain citizens on a school board, state law and local policies should focus on leadership and governance for high student achievement. Citizens will be more inclined to serve when more time is spent on developing goals and policies for quality education for children. Hess and Leal discovered from the 2001 national survey of school boards sponsored by the National School Boards Association that the average service for school board members is 6.7 years which was not enough time to build long term memory in the organization. Fullan (2005) found that cases of high turnover are disastrous. It is not the turnover itself that is the problem, but instead the discontinuity of direction, which is based on long term memory of the system. In order to sustain ongoing systems, the organization needs a level of sustainability built on leaders developing new leaders.

**Governance Capacity**

Harsh criticism of boards has been ongoing. The basic question is the question of board effectiveness and how it is measured (Glass, 2000). It isn’t enough that school boards are held accountable at the polls. There should be some external evaluation that provides a serious look at their governance. With the current barrage of criticism has come some serious attention to the plight of the public school board. At the 2003 Harvard Conference, sessions were offered in citizen participation in school governance (Colgan, 2004). Thomas Jefferson proposed not to take governance from those who desire to govern themselves but inform their discretion by education. McAdams (2003) found that a trained board is a better board, but training does not guarantee good governance. Training almost always improves a board but unfortunately, few boards make board development a priority. Most states mandate continuing education for board
of education members and use board training to focus on the building blocks of good governance.

Land (2002) in an extensive search of the research literature stated that without a rigorous body of qualitative and quantitative research that identifies the characteristics necessary for effective board governance and substantiates that school boards affect student’s academic achievement, boards will remain in jeopardy of losing further control over local education and face possible elimination. While the research of Institute for Educational Leadership authored by Carol, Cunningham, Danzberger, Kirst, McCloud and Usdan in 1986 was an exceptional case study and survey research, the study occurred before a systemic reform movement was in place. Changes in governance structures that have resulted from this movement need to be examined. Danzberger, Kirst and Usdan (1992), Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) and Rice, et al. (2000) have provided ongoing data but most of these studies lack a research base. Much of the current literature reflects anecdotal tales, political corroborations, or philosophical debate. New research is emerging that attempts to define any direct correlations between school governance and student achievement.

An example of an exemplary quantitative study of school boards is the work of R. H. Hofman in the Netherlands in 1995. This quantitative study of the relationship of governance and math achievement in four sectors of schools in the Netherlands was based on the assumption that the governance structure of the school influences the processes within the school and the classroom. The research findings indicate the importance of the influence of the school community members on the school board’s decisions. The research advocated that policy and decisions of the school board should rely more strongly on input from members of their school community. A communal educational school policy leads to a stronger sense of community in
the schools and this, in turn, shapes conditions within the school that affect student achievement.

The Iowa Association of School Boards using reliable statewide data collected longitudinally from work in Georgia by the Council for School Performance designed a study to link governance behavior with student achievement. Because the link to student achievement has been largely uncharted territory, the Lighthouse Inquiry sought to use quantifiable, reliable measures of student achievement. Derived from extensive reviews of research on productive change, researchers established seven conditions for school board renewal. The Iowa Association of School Boards found the understanding and beliefs of school boards in high achieving districts based on the seven conditions were markedly different from those in low achieving districts. The study could not state a causal relationship between the governance and student achievement, only the relationship on the seven conditions.

The issue is not just about elementary and secondary education governance, but now encompasses higher education. Sara Hebel in a 2004 article discussed whether the members of governing boards of public universities and colleges should be elected or appointed. Historically, public education governance has mirrored that of business and government.

Some argue that governance is not the issue. Lewis Cohen (2006) states that the source of the problems facing today’s schools is not about management. Although recent reform initiatives have identified governance as the source of the problem of schools currently, education is primarily about teaching and the relationship of the teacher and student.

**Governance Structures in Ohio K-12 Public Education**

Section 2 of Article VI of the Ohio Constitution defines education in the state of Ohio: The general assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of common
schools throughout the state; but no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive rights to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state.

As a basis for the study of school board effectiveness in the state of Ohio, the following table shows the structure of the K-12 public education governance system in Ohio.
Table 1

*K-12 Public Education Governance System in Ohio*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>appoints 8 of the 19 voting members of the state board of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>house education committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>senate education committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>legislative committee on education oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief State School Officer</td>
<td>state superintendent is appointed by the state board of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Board of Education</td>
<td>19 voting members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 members appointed by the governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 members elected by the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 ex-officio non-voting members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>house education committee chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>senate education committee chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Regional Boards</td>
<td>61 elected educational service center boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Superintendents</td>
<td>61 educational service center superintendents appointed by educational center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>District School Boards</td>
<td>612 district school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>elected city school district school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>elected exempted village school district boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>elected local school district school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>one mayoral appointed municipal school district board in the Cleveland district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>612 district superintendents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>city school district superintendents appointed by the local school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>exempted village school district superintendents appointed by the school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>local school district superintendents appointed by the local school boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>one municipal school district superintendent in the Cleveland school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Schools</td>
<td>3854 public schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Public School Governance

Historically, the traditional public school board has been institutionalized and venerated as the unchallenged method of overseeing the education of publicly educated students in the United States. The locally elected public school board has been revered as one of the last remnants of grassroots democracy. Although constitutionally the states have control over the education of students, all but Hawaii have delegated their authority to the locally elected district school board. The consolidation movement, paired with the decline in the number of members on a local board, has caused a decline in the participation in local school governance as well as widespread personal familiarity with those who are participating on the local board. Through local participation in school board elections and governance, citizens both witness and participate in the American democratic form of government. The infusion of federal and state dollars with accompanying regulations, judicial decisions, and legislative mandates has eroded the ultimate power of the traditional public school board. This erosion in power has caused local citizens to question both the board’s and taxpayer’s role in the education of its children. Problems of large diverse urban districts have often become the focus of media attention but are often different in focus or intensity of those of smaller homogenous districts. Reform efforts in urban settings have centered on election reform, mayoral appointments of board members or superintendents, and school choice mostly through publicly funded charter schools. Gallup polls show that the public supports the traditional school board. Districts need to develop the capacity of the local school board to govern school districts effectively. Current efforts include recruitment of board members, training and development of current members, and assimilating best practices of boards which are effective.
Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools under a contract called a charter. They are publicly funded and publicly accountable. They are legal entities that exist under a public contract with their authorizing sponsor. Murphy and Shiffman (2002, p. 4) provide a sample of some definitions of charter schools which includes the following:

(1) An independent public school of choice, freed from rules but accountable for results.
(2) A charter school is an autonomous, results-oriented, publicly funded school of choice that is designed and run by teachers or other under contract with a public sponsor.
(3) Charter schools are public schools that are granted a specific amount of autonomy, determined by state law and/or the specific charter, to make decisions concerning the organizational structure, curriculum and educational emphasis of their school. Charter schools are granted waivers from certain regulations that typically bind public schools. In return for this additional autonomy, charter schools are held accountable for the academic achievement of the students in the charter school, and the school faces suspension or closure if accepted performance standards are not met.

Charter schools vary from state to state but broadly are defined to indicate publicly funded schools that have been given freedom from traditional forms of compliance in exchange for accountability to the parents, students and community that they serve. Manno, Finn, Bierlein, and Vanourek (1998) defined the public school as any school that is open to the public, paid for by the public, and accountable to public authorities for its results. Elected and appointed officials play a strategic rather than a functional role in public schooling. This definition of “public” included both the traditional public and the charter public school.
Historical Perspectives of Charter Education Governance Systems

Through much of its history the current educational system has encouraged uniformity and conformity. Based on compulsory attendance laws and the assimilation of immigrant populations, unique or diverse schools were unacceptable. The government saw education as a means for producing citizens for a common culture (Tyack, 1974). With racial desegregation beginning in the 1950s, schools were also seen as providing equality and nondiscrimination, or were working toward those goals. But by homogenizing the educational system, no one’s needs were met (Sarason, 1998). The government saw an opportunity for change and developed the Experimental Schools Program in the Nixon era. It was evident then that the educational status quo was so entrenched that comprehensive change was unachievable by both government and local districts. Creation of a new educational setting would require paradigm shifts both internally and externally, both conceptually and procedurally (Sarason, 1998).

Nathan (1996) described three essential precursors for the foundation of the charter school prototype. First, innovative schools were created by public school educators and parents to design distinctive educational options for student groups. Among these schools were the Metro High School in Chicago, City as School in New York, Parkway in Philadelphia, Marcy Open School in Minneapolis, and St. Paul Open School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Second, the magnet schools of the 1970s offered specialized curricula designed to foster incentives for integration, and third, alternative schools in the late 1970s were designed to serve specific populations that did not fit the traditional model of education.

As early as the early 1970s, Budde, a teacher and administrator, tentatively outlined a book demonstrating the potential of charter schools. Budde (1996) recalled that he circulated the outline to a number of his colleagues and friends, some of whom were superintendents and
principals. He wanted to know if this charter concept made sense and asked if they would be willing to give it a try. At the time, there was no enthusiasm for his idea and he abandoned it. Finally in 1998 he published his book on a charter school concept in *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. Budde’s idea would allow a group of teachers already working in a school to contract with the school board to work with educational innovations during the normal school year. The notion of charter schools was also introduced in a 1990 book by John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe entitled *Politics, Markets, and America’s schools*. Joe Nathan, a former teacher, and Ted Kolderie, former executive director of the Citizens League, played key roles in shaping the charter school concept in Minnesota and later throughout the county. Opened in 1991 in Minnesota, the City Academy was the nation’s first charter school (Gahr, 1996).

Seymour B. Sarason (1998) saw the charter school movement as this country’s most radical educational reform effort because state governments encourage and permit schools to be created exempt from burdensome, stifling, innovation-killing features of existing systems. According to Sarason, it was apparent that the creators of the new settings were conceptually unprepared for what they would encounter. An innovation that was such a radical departure from tradition should have been carefully described and assessed so as to provide as model for future charter schools. Creating an educational setting is very complex process and in the case of charter schools has only been superficially assessed. Leadership in charter schools often assumes that good will and strong motivation will be sufficient to overcome the problems that are encountered. But, Manno, Finn, Bierlein and Vanourek (1998) found that charter schools are like America’s original village schools of the early 19th century, especially their local autonomy, community ties, accountability to parents, and need to attract and retain students for revenue flow. Innovative programming within the traditional school model has been implemented with
magnet schools or academies that allow open enrollment based on parental choice, but charter schools may represent an evolution in the K-12 public school education system just as the community college did, meeting a need in higher education that the traditional university could not satisfy.

*Charter School Limits on Innovation*

The charter school as a test bed for school redesign has limits because it assumes that the structure and power relationships of the traditional school district will remain intact and not be affected by the experiences of the charter school. Rofes (1998) found that climates and cultures of the traditional public schools almost always changed when a charter school was introduced in their communities, but the changes were not predictable. Indeed, some districts sponsor charter schools so that the state per pupil funding remains in the district. The community/charter schools created by the traditional school district often fall victim to the traditional school bureaucracy. States in which only traditional local school districts can sponsor charter schools showed significantly less evidence of reform efforts from the development of charter schools than did states which allowed for multiple sponsors. Vergati (1999) found that charter school advocates attest that the current system of public education has bureaucratic obstacles that limit diversity and flexibility in the teaching of educational content. One of the major obstacles to change was an intrusive school board which involved itself in the daily operation of the school district. And whether a traditional local school board or another entity authorizes a charter school, Ascher and Greenberg (2002) found that the failure of a charter school is often seen as a failure of the authorizer. Bulkley (2001) found that despite the type of accountability measures used, most of the authorizers (sponsors) planned to renew the charters that they had granted. Some planned to renew en masse as evidenced with a University sponsor; but, some renew in a model process as
with that of the Massachusetts Department of Education. In many cases the internal accountability of the charter school may compensate for the lack of external accountability that some charter school advocates had hoped to accomplish. Renewal of the charter school contracts rests with the authorizers and is subject to political and personal ramifications if non-renewal is desired. Defenders of the choice movement as a whole may perceive the failure of any charter school as a sign that the movement is flawed.

Other authorizers have tightened the standardization and monitoring of the schools hampering innovation, a major tenet of charter school design. Lake and Millot (1998), in a study of accountability components in charter school law, found three general responsibilities for charter school authorizers: (1) the charter school application; (2) charter school monitoring; and (3) decisions regarding the renewal or non-renewal of the contract for a school that has not met the terms of the contract. Katrina Bulkley (2001) found that in the early stages of charter schools, authorizers had little experience with performance contracts and were under political pressure to get schools up and running quickly. But in retrospect, the authorizers have found that the process of application in itself can be an accountability mechanism. A rigorous process at the start will require less monitoring when the school is in practice.

The most basic level of oversight is for the charter school authorizers to ensure that the schools are in compliance with legal requirements of the state, federal and local governments and include acceptable accounting practices. Palmer and Gau (2005) found that very few authorizers were required to report to a state organization on the accountability of their charter schools. There was no mechanism to audit the internal operations of the authorizers in reference to their chartering duties and left little options to improve their authorizing practices. While the theory is on student achievement, many authorizers are focused on oversight. Some extend the oversight
to include information from parents, onsite visits, audits and media coverage.

Authorizing/sponsoring schools often required assessment information but were unclear as to the standards and the consequences of not meeting those standards (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1998). Authorizers/sponsors often cited the certifications of teachers and alignment of curriculum with state standards as indicators of accountability. These measures differ little from that of the established public education system and do not reflect the rich literature of new accountability tools for charter school reform efforts. Accountability typically means a not thought out version of the top-down regulation-and-compliance system that the state or community applies to its conventional public schools (Finn, 2000, p. 135). Failure of the charter school has to be part of the reform movement and test bed experience. Restraints and strictures diminish the innovation that charter schools could offer to public education and limit the positive practice that charter schools could add to educational research.

Wohlstetter (1995) felt that despite the efforts of charter schools to become accountable to the education marketplace, legislators are reluctant to relax the traditional state and typical school district top-down controls to allow market accountability to function. Katrina Bulkley (2001) in an early work on accountability of charter schools introduced some inherent problems with authorization. An underlying foundation of the charter school is that it will be more accountable for educational performance because the authorizers have the ability to revoke or not renew the contracts (Nathan, 1996). In the early stages of charter schools, Chester Finn Jr. found that the most common reasons for closure of charter schools were organizational chaos or fiscal irresponsibility, not educational performance (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000). Ideally, there will be market accountability and performance accountability, which combined will produce a stronger form of accountability than is found in the traditional public school system. Students
may simply choose not to go to the school because it does not meet their educational needs or the sponsor may non-renew the contract because students are not achieving according to the contract that was established with the sponsor. Nathan (1996) found that one of the challenges that the state faces in developing the charter idea is how to balance flexibility, opportunity and regulation. Geske, Davis and Hingle (1997) found that while teachers felt a higher degree of satisfaction in working in a charter school, the charter school did not differ that much from their traditional counterparts in terms of accountability.

If local and state constraints are not restrictive enough, the federal government on one hand praises the innovation of charter schools and on the other hand strangles them in the regulatory straightjacket of conventional schools. The federal government has added a new dimension to charter school accountability with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). There is concern that charter school goals may get lost in efforts to meet new state targets based on federal guidelines of NCLB. Herdman, Smith and Skinner (2004) suggested that academic accountability should be carried out in ways that do not inhibit or discourage the initial approval or ongoing oversight of innovative high quality charter schools. In Ohio, community schools are required to participate in all state mandated assessments to meet accountability for NCLB. In addition, the contract between the community school and its sponsor identifies other measures of student performance assessments. Surveys from parents, staff and students also offer feedback on the overall success of the school as a viable organization. After two years of operation, all Ohio community/charter schools also receive a state Local Report Card that measures student achievement, attendance, graduation rate; and a determination with respect to meeting Adequate Yearly Progress per guidelines established by the NCLB.

Andrews and Rothman (2002) stated that one of the fundamental reasons for the creation
of charter schools was to model innovations that could then be brought back to the larger public school system. Project Connect, a federally funded program, was based on the premise that charter schools may stimulate broader reform of public education. Ted Kolderie (2003) noted that evaluation should simply tell us whether chartering does some things that cannot be done as well in the current schools, or at least does them more quickly. If charter schools are to contribute to solving long standing educational problems, they must develop and document new approaches to the research literature. Good and Braden (2000) found that charter schools were meant to serve as locations for experimentation and innovation, but most schools were found to be traditional in their approach. While policy makers expect charter schools to put competitive pressure on the public schools, the laws of chartering do not contribute to the type of competition that is essential for change. To improve the innovation of charter schools, states need to have a competitive process for charter school authorizing instead of trying to grant too many charters too quickly. Additionally, Good and Braden (2000) argued that states keep management companies out of the chartering process, have a state plan of monitoring charter school progress, and support the concept of research and development by granting charters on the basis of their benefit to the knowledge base of school reform. Kemerer (1999) found that while overly restrictive laws intrude on the autonomy of the charter school to choose its own governance system, an overly permissive law may play into the hands of unscrupulous entrepreneurs. In 1993, AFT President Albert Shanker wrote that vouchers, charters and for profit management schemes are quick fixes that won’t fix anything (Shanker, 1993).

Progressive educators promote charter schools as a public reform measure. Such schools as charter schools encourage collaborative experimentation and implementation of creative new ideas that can change and save public education (Weil, 2000). Nathan (2005), however, noted
that the charter school movement was not a panacea. Wise states would try to both improve existing schools as well as give people the opportunity to create new schools. Traditional and charter schools both should learn from the successes of each. Unfortunately, those who favor the established way of doing things see the successful rebel, not as a model, but as a threat (Hechlinger, 1987). Schneider (1998) found that some large city traditional school superintendents felt that the charter schools distracted reformers and policy makers alike from making concerted efforts to fix the existing public school system. Similarly, researchers have urged for more, not less, collective effort to change the current environment, rather than expend effort to create a new environment. In the 37th Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll (Rose, 2005), measuring attitudes toward the public schools, 68% of the public felt that reforming the existing public school system was better than finding an alternative to the existing public school system. On the other hand, proponents of charter schools argue that politics, coupled with public schools that are mired in burdensome bureaucracy and administratively top-heavy, simply will not and cannot reform the school system.

Private schools are also feeling the effects of the charter school movement. Dayton, Ohio has grown into the nation’s number one charter school market since its first community/charter school opened in 1998. In the past five years, intense competition for students from new charter schools in the area has forced private schools into the unfamiliar role of competitors. The increased competition has caused a 20 percent drop in private school enrollment and the consolidation of five Catholic elementary schools into two schools (Elliot, 2006).

*Are Charter Schools Really Different?*

Gardner (2000) found that the charter school movement seems a quintessentially American enterprise, one that would not have surprised Alexis de Tocqueville when he visited
America in the 1830s. For many educators and policy makers who view charter schools as beta test sites for a broader effort to renew and reinvigorate education in the United States, there is a keen interest in the question of whether charter schools are really different from traditional public or even private schools (Finn & Kanstoroom, 2002). Early evidence from two studies of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation suggested that charter schools are different. The informal study by Bill Triant and the scientific study of Podgursky and Ballou both conclude that charter schools are seedbeds for change. Additionally, Zimmer (2003) found that charter schools differ markedly from each other. Charter schools are so diverse it is impossible to paint a single picture of them. Finn (2005), in an article discussing judging charter schools, indicated that it is much too early to pronounce the charter movement a success or failure. But surely, it is an experiment worth continuing – and studying. The RAND analyses from a 2002 study stated that political decisions will be made for, and against, vouchers and charter schools. These decisions will be informed by good evidence, one hopes, but will not be fully justified by it for many years to come (Gill, 2001). Yet, in the original charter school legislations passed in Texas in 1995, up to twenty charter schools were authorized and sold as a pilot program. The legislature required an independent evaluation of the program to determine whether it should be expanded or disbanded. In 1997 the evaluation component was discarded. Without any performance data and without examining whether the charter schools were working, more schools were authorized. This occurred during a period when student achievement in traditional public schools was improving on state exams in the public school setting. Texas public policy was not based on good evidence.

Manno, Finn and Vanourek (2000) saw the charter school movement as a solution to problems faced by urban education which has had a particularly troubled history. There are numerous approaches currently shaking up the status quo of urban school governance, including
district-led reconstitutions of failed schools, state takeovers of troubled districts, school systems placed under the control of specially created boards, school districts placed under the control of mayors, and non-educators hired to manage the school systems. Inside the district, reforms have led to a flurry of unfocused activity that often impedes reform because of a lack of any sustained effort. Hess (1999) found that of the fifty-seven urban districts he studied, on average the school districts implemented eleven different proposals for change in a three-year period. Charter schools could provide a focused approach to urban reform within the public school system. Researchers note that if charter schools are to contribute to solving long standing educational problems, they must develop and document these approaches in the research literature (Land, 2002; Murphy & Shiffman, 2002).

Charter schools were offered freedom from burdensome rules and regulations in exchange for innovation. Although charter schools by definition were autonomous entities free from many restrictive regulations, Medler (1996) reported that when charter school officials were asked why they opened their charter schools, autonomy from central administration was only the sixth most popular reason. Wohlstetter and Griffin (1997), in their study of seventeen charter schools in Boston, Los Angeles and Minneapolis/St. Paul, found that while autonomy of governance is often beneficial in the operation of the charter school, autonomy in and of itself is not sufficient. In addition to autonomy, a strong organizational capacity is necessary to support the educational environment. Schools with weak organizational structures appeared to have the most difficulty in capitalizing on their self-governance. Wells (1998) noted that educators and policy makers need to study which aspects of autonomy are most supportive of and important to education in order to create and support appropriate levels of autonomy at the school level. In Minnesota, the first state to offer charter opportunities, the St. Paul Pioneer Press editorialized
that rather than merely chartering schools at will, communities should be replicating schools that improve student achievement, and closing schools that fail to achieve the level of performance achieved by traditional schools. With strong monitoring and accountability in place, a state encourages the development of effective charter schools and makes possible the continuous improvement of education.

*Charter School Boards*

Finn, Bierlein, and Manno (1997) felt that charter schools established a much needed prototype of educational accountability. Charter schools must be accountable both to their clients and also to public authorities. Public schools should and must be held similarly accountable. The accountability of the charter school is established by the governing board of the charter school. Budde (1988) proposed that through the process of charter education, the operation of the school board changes. The work of the charter school board differs from that of its public noncharter school counterpart. Cookson (2000) felt that in a democracy, representative institutions, such as school boards, should run the schools in the interest of the whole society to ensure social equity. Friedman (2004) and Chubb and Moe (1990), however, argued that parents advance broad social goals through choice itself. And with that choice make governing boards accountable to them. Cornell-Feist (2005) stated that in the charter school setting, effective governance is vital for delivering on promises made to students, parents and the community. Charter schools will only thrive if they are led by an effective governing board. Carnochan (2002) found that the charter school reforms did not necessarily lessen tensions and conflict in the school but disagreements were directed to different types of problems than in traditional public schools. Many times parents were distressed with their lack of representation on the board or that personal interests of the board members were being served. In some instances, faculty formed factions that thwarted
the initial intent of the charter. With self-autonomy, members of the school community were no longer united in the struggle against a common central administration and began arguing among themselves. At one charter school in Colorado, the board developed an open process of governance. To facilitate the process, they adopted the fourteen principles of governance spelled out by John Carver in his acknowledged work on board governance. This process allowed the charter board to move from the micromanagement of daily events to the visionary work of school reform. King (1998) believed the governance of a charter school must be conducted differently from that of a regular school.

Murphy and Shiffman (2002) found the majority of state laws do not determine the structure of charter school governance. Only a description of the process is included. The most common governance structure features a charter school board and a chief administrator. Based on available state level data, charter schools’ governing boards appear to exercise typical boardlike powers and responsibilities. In Ohio, there are two types of community schools: conversion schools and new start-up schools (ORC § 3314.02). Conversion schools are sponsored by local school districts that have converted some aspect of their school into a community school. New start-up schools are all other types of community schools. Both types of schools may also vary in the population they serve, their size, location and how curriculum is delivered. In Ohio, each governing authority must consist of at least five individuals (ORC § 3314.02). Nationally, procedures for selecting board members appear to be determined primarily by the charter. More members are appointed than elected. Horn and Miron (2000) found that charter school sponsors in Michigan requested that applicants include a list of the proposed board members and their qualifications in the application. In New York a Request for Information from Prospective Charter School Members requires the prospective board member to explain their
understanding of the school’s mission and educational program, why they want to serve, the specific knowledge and experience they have, and their understanding of the role of the charter school board member. Lange, Lehr, Seppanen, and Sinclair (as cited in Murphy & Shiffman, 2002), however, noted that in Minnesota, the members must be elected. Boards in Minnesota also include school staff and parents of enrolled students. Scott and Holme (2002) found that regardless of social location or stated intentions, most charter schools selected individuals for their governing boards because of the connections, expertise, or resources these people could bring to the school. The connections that the governing board members brought to the school helped the school secure management expertise and ties to the businesses in which the board members worked.

National Charter School Governance Support

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is a nonprofit membership association of educational agencies across the country that authorizes and oversees charter schools. Created in 2000 by a diverse group of charter school authorizers nationwide, NACSA is dedicated to supporting and strengthening the capacity of authorizers to charter successful schools. The association’s members support charter schools as a promising strategy to expand and improve educational opportunities, and wish to work with charter schools in developing new models of school governance and accountability that can be instructive for public education broadly. The mission of NACSA is to achieve the establishment and operation of quality charter schools through responsible oversight in the public interest. Through two grants from the United States Department of Education, NACSA has developed Building Excellence in Charter School Authorizing (BECSA), a collection of six major resources and technical assistance. Advisors include Jeanne Allen, Checker Finn (sic), Jim Griffin, Lisa
Graham Keegan, Robin Lake, Bruno Manno, Kay Merseth, Anita Nelam, Andrew Rotherham, John Rothwell, Bob Wedl, and Caprice Young. One of the tools in the kit is the Authorizer Self-Evaluation Instrument which provides authorizing boards with a self-assessment tool. This instrument is intended to help authorizers reflect on their practices by identifying authorizing strengths and areas for ongoing improvement. A September 2005 Brief concluded that authorizers were paying close attention to the charter school governing boards. The work of the authorizer was seen as “to deliberately articulate the relative importance of a strong governing board and develop authorizing procedures and practices that work to promote, support and reinforce effective charter schools governance. For charter schools will only thrive if they are lead by effective governing board” (sic) (Cornell-Feist, 2005, p. 7).

**Charter School Sponsors and Authorizers**

An important element of the charter school is the other half of the charter, the chartering agency which is referred to as the sponsor or authorizer. Although charter schools have been in existence for over a decade, there is still little evidence on the operation and responsibilities of the authorizers or sponsors of the charter schools (Palmer & Gau, 2005). They speculate that this may be in part because each state has a different set of rules concerning authorizers and in part because of the lack of experience in authorizing. No two charter school laws are the same with many being restrictive to the kind or numbers of charter schools that can be established. States may modify the law by amendment as practice impacts policy. In states that restrict authorization to the approval of the local school boards, charter schools may be restricted based purely on political contention. In the twenty four states that Palmer and Gau studied, there were 502 different types of authorizers for charter schools. The largest group of authorizers was 439
individual local school boards, 29 regional school boards, 14 state school boards, 12 university
boards, 4 nonprofit organizations, and 2 specially formed state charter boards.

Charter School Authorization and Sponsorship in Ohio

In the State of Ohio, the Office of Community Schools, under the Ohio Department of
Education oversees the operation of the community/charter schools in the State. The Office of
Community Schools (OCS) authorizes the sponsors. The following six entities are eligible to
apply to be a community school sponsor: the board of education of the district in which the
school is proposed to be located; the board of education of any joint vocational school district
with territory in the county in which is located the majority of the territory of the district in
which the school is proposed to be located; the board of education of any other city, local or
exempted village school district having territory in the same county where the district in which
the school is proposed to be located has the major portion of its territory; the governing board of
any educational service center; the board of trustees of any of the thirteen state universities listed
in section 3345.011 of the Ohio Revised Code [University of Akron, Bowling Green State
University, Central State University, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Kent
State University, Miami University, Ohio University, The Ohio State University, Shawnee State
University, University of Toledo, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University], or
a sponsoring authority designated by any such board of trustees, as long as a contractually
specified mission of the proposed community school will be the practical demonstration of
teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the
university’s teacher preparation program approved by the state board; and finally, any qualified
tax-exempt entity under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The tax-exempt entity
needs to have been in operation for 5 years, have assets of at least 500,000 dollars, be fiscally
responsible, and have successfully implemented educational programs. OCS determines the number of charter schools that these entities can authorize based on their capacity to monitor and provide technical assistance and adhere to current sponsor caps as established by the state legislature. The OCS is required to provide training for the sponsors.

As a part of their responsibilities to the OCS, sponsoring entities are required to provide information, data, and documents regarding their chartered schools. Sponsors are required to monitor legal, financial and academic performance of the charter school as well as contractual compliance. The sponsors are required to provide reports about the charter school to parents on an annual basis. The sponsors are required to report to the OCS any compliance problems, as well as provide legal and financial reports about their sponsored charter schools to the OCS.

While the sponsors are required to provide technical assistance to charter schools, they are also required to intervene in the school’s operation to correct problems in its performance, declare the school to be on probationary status, pursuant to section 3314.073 of the Ohio Revised Code, suspend the operations of the school, pursuant to section 3314.072 of the Ohio Revised Code, or terminate the school’s contract pursuant to section 3314.07 of the Ohio Revised Code. The sponsor must have a written plan of action (i.e. handling of facilities, equipment, materials, supplies, employees, students, school records) ready for implementation in the event the school experiences financial difficulties or closes prior to the end of the school year.

National Charter School Sponsorship Trends

Palmer and Gau (2005) argued that the success of the charter school movement depends on the effectiveness of the authorizers. Palmer, Gau, and Shekerjian (2003) designed a study funded by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute to determine the effectiveness of the entities that sponsor or authorize the charter school. Their study was triangulated among the survey responses
of authorizers, operators and observers to obtain a more accurate picture of the reality. There were four major findings. First, most major authorizers were doing an overall adequate job, but red tape and compliance edicts remained concerns. As authorizers attempt to ensure accountability for their charges, they have had difficulty in regulating the permissiveness that allows for invention and the restrictiveness that allows for accountability. In some states this is not at the fault of the authorizer but under the regulations with which they have to comply.

Second, many state policy environments were not supportive of charter schools and authorizers. Many of the states have capped the number of charter schools that may be authorized which limits the political credibility that charter schools may have in the state. Local school districts in states that offer charter schools have often been unsupportive of the new enterprises and there is general misunderstanding by the public of the difference in purpose of the charter school. And while some states have established an office of community schools as a part of the state department of education, funding for the authorizing agency is not adequate to support the staffing required for oversight responsibilities. Third, local school boards generally did not make good authorizers. Although public school boards are accountable to the public and might seem to be the logical representative of all publicly funded schools, the overall scoring for public school boards in the study showed them to be less effective. Local school boards are subject to political forces which may include many opponents to charter school development. Another issue for local school boards is the scope of the authorizing. Most local school boards do not have the means either economically or in personnel to oversee a large number of charter schools, and yet the effort of creating oversight of a few is too time consuming for the return of the time invested. As exceptions, Chicago and Houston have a sufficient number of charter schools to allow the districts to create positions to support the charter school effort. This charter school responsibility
is full time and not an addition to a position that currently exists in the district. Another exception is Wisconsin where charter schools have generally addressed the needs of at risk students. The local school boards have found charter schools to be a complement to the local school district, not a competitor. Local school boards also have support from the state in their authorizing efforts. Finally, states with fewer authorizers, serving more schools each, appeared to be doing a better job. Authorizers appear to benefit from economies of scale that allow them to be more effective when their oversight included more charter schools. With sufficient staffing, authorizers who oversee numerous charter schools can develop expertise in the complexities of the chartering process as well as developing best practice that can be used throughout numerous charter schools. There are of course exceptions to every finding. For example, local boards often do not have the infrastructure to support another organization but some sponsoring boards have so many charter schools that they cannot give adequate attention to all of their entities.

These researchers found that state boards of education resemble the local school board and respond to political forces because many of the states boards of education are elected officials. But, some state boards of education are very effective authorizers with high scores going to Arizona, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey and Texas.

Universities authorizing charter schools had average scores in authorizing. Most of the university authorizers are not operated out of the departments of education but out of the university president’s office. Specially created state charter authorizers in Arizona and the District of Columbia scored high but are charged with a single purpose. These departments were expensive to maintain and could be subject to politics because they were appointed by state elected officials. In two states authorizing powers have been granted to municipalities, the City of Milwaukee and the mayor’s office in Indianapolis. While the scores were relatively high, open
ended responses indicated that it was difficult to arrange authorizing oversight without political interference. Finally, the newest entity in charter school authorizers is nonprofit organizations. There were only a few in Minnesota so the results were both too few and too new to determine their effectiveness. Ohio has recently allowed this approach with statutory changes in HB 66. “More needs to be learned about the role that authorizers play…but it is certain that the creation and operation of successful charter schools hinges in large measure on the work of the entities that authorize them” (Palmer & Gau, 2005, p. 357).

**For Profit Charter Schools and Educational Management Organizations**

Dykgraaf and Lewis (1998) noticed that numerous articles addressed the topic of charter schools, but the subtopic of for-profit management seldom appeared. Researching a portion of the almost 80% of the charter schools in Michigan operated by for-profit educational management organizations (EMO), these researchers found a strong centralized authority imposed over the schools in the study. In practice, these schools seemed to belong to the corporation and not to the public. Miron and Nelson (2002) reported that in some instances, the EMOs are heavily involved in the selection of the charter school board members. The tight control of charter school boards in EMO operated schools is also illustrated by a company that held joint board meetings for all of its schools for greater efficiency. Even the student handbooks were the same. Often the impetus for a new charter school will come from the EMOs through informational meetings rather than from a group of parents or educators.

In some EMO-created schools in Ohio, Fox (2002) found that teachers felt a lack of consideration from the governing board. Horn and Miron (2000) found that although charter schools emphasize that they are a new form of public schools, in Michigan they operate like private schools. In charter schools operated by EMOs employees are actually private employees.
Facilities, equipment and furniture are privately owned. Refusals to supply information were based on the argument that private EMOs do not have to disclose information to the public. Student handbooks, calendars and committees were all identical. Several EMOs shaped their charter school communities by the following mechanisms: They do not provide transportation, provide only elementary grades, require parents to volunteer, require pre-application interviews, do not provide a hot lunch program, and selectively share their recruitment information. Willard and Oplinger (1999) reported that Ohio’s community-charter schools are not the centers of educational innovation envisioned by charter school supporters, but they are schools that are using canned methods and practices created by private for-profit education companies.

About twenty percent of the Ohio community schools are managed by for-profit EMOs (Fox, 2002). Mooney (2002) thought that the basic bargain in America was that everyone has a say in how the school system is governed, even if just through their vote. But in turning over tax money to private EMOs, voters may break that fundamental contract. Mooney argued that the charter school movement is more about privatization and profit than community control.

Despite the number of regulations governing the operation of charter schools and their boards the concerns on the accountability of sponsors in Ohio remain. As of July 1, 2005, the Ohio Department of Education is no longer a primary participant in the sponsoring of community/charter public schools, turning over that duty to nonprofit organizations such as a federal housing contractor in Columbus, a Cincinnati orphanage, and a black cultural center in Cleveland. Those and other private groups can now control who can receive millions in taxpayer dollars to run charter schools (*Lima News*, 2005). The Ohio Federation of Teachers is concerned that the for-profit sponsors are not subject to the same open record laws as the public school and fear conflicts of interest. Despite requirements from the state, Educational Resource Center
(ERC), which was registered for less than a year, is sponsoring two charter schools by using a church’s status as the basis for its approval. The board of the ERC meets and votes in private. Sponsors oversee community/charter public schools’ activities in return for up to three percent of the money the state allocates to the school.

**Legal Challenges of Charter Schools**

The Ohio attorney general's office is reviewing the legal status and operation of the Toledo based Ohio Council of Community Schools. The Ohio Council of Community Schools, created when the University of Toledo decided to stop sponsoring community/charter schools, is the second largest sponsor of community/charter public schools in Ohio. The council, a private, nonprofit organization, sponsors schools run by management companies, such as the Leona Group of East Lansing, Mich., which operates six charter schools in the Toledo area, and White Hat Management, the largest for profit educational company in Ohio. The coalition that sued over the constitutionality of community/charter schools in Ohio asked the attorney general to examine the charter sponsor. The coalition questioned how the Ohio Council of Community Schools was accountable to voters, taxpayers, and the thousands of students across the state in community/charter public schools that they sponsor. The executive director of the Ohio Council of Community Schools, Allison Perz would not release a copy of the council's budget and did not respond to a public records request. Ms. Perz is the daughter of Sally Perz, former state legislator who helped write and approve the legislation creating Ohio's charter schools. The board members of the Ohio Council of Community Schools are recruited. The Council sponsors 39 charter schools, up from 24 in June of 2005. Of those, twenty-two have no state academic rating; eight are in academic emergency; three are in academic watch; and six are listed in continuous improvement. None of the schools is rated effective or excellent. “I think the regretful element of
the charter school movement in Ohio is reflective of individuals who don't have the best interest of children in their scopes,” said Eugene Sanders, Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools. “They are attempting to run private types of business with public funds, and we have seen it with the Lucas County ESC, and it seems to be playing out with Allison Perz's group.”

Some states have questioned the constitutionality of the charter school but to date no state’s Supreme Court has struck down charter schools as unconstitutional. The Ohio Supreme Court heard arguments on November 29, 2005 in a four year old lawsuit. The suit was brought by a coalition of groups associated with public education, including the Ohio PTA, the Ohio Federation of Teachers and the Ohio School Boards Association. The coalition wants the court to declare the state’s law unconstitutional and order more local control of charter schools, such as putting them under a locally elected school board. The suit contends local real estate taxes are wrongly diverted from local school district to charters schools that are not accountable to voters. It also contends charter schools fail children because in 2005 seventy-seven of the state’s two-hundred-ninety-seven charter schools were in academic emergency, the state’s lowest academic rating. According to the 1851 Ohio Constitution and a 1933 Ohio attorney general’s opinion, the state legislature is required to create a single, common system of schools administered by public officials with uniform funding and standards. The current system of funding public schools in Ohio has been found to be unconstitutional four times and sent to the legislature to respond to the problem.

Summary of Charter School Governance

The history of charter public schools and their governance is short in contrast to that of the traditional public school. While precursors of today’s charter schools were evident in the 1960s and 70s, the first official charter school opened in 1991. Traditional public school laws
were established as early as 1642. Although charter schools were developed to be free from traditional forms of compliance in exchange for market accountability to parents, they are restricted by judicial decisions, state and federal mandates and regulations that come with state and federal funding. Some states allow only traditional local schools board to sponsor a charter school and are subsequently subject to some of the same educational innovation limitations of the traditional public school. The creation of a new educational structure is a complex task and many schools revert to traditional methods of instruction. Those who are innovative and successful should serve as a model for other schools to emulate whether they are charter or traditional public schools, but, competition often limits this opportunity. Boards of charter schools are generally appointed and often chosen for individual expertise or connections. Size and structure of the charter school board are often not regulated but included as part of the charter itself. Although some charter school proponents advocate a network of independent schools accountable to the national government, current charter schools have a sponsoring or authorizing agency which oversees the charter and its implementation at the local level. Sponsoring agencies may be traditional public school boards, universities, a department within state departments of education, state charter authorizers, municipalities, and most recently nonprofit organizations. Some charter school boards have chosen for-profit educational management organizations to operate their charter school. Studies have investigated the need for innovation to fulfill the charter school initiative but the need for efficiency for profit. Current legal challenges concern the use of public money paid to private management companies which hold closed meetings. In Ohio, the constitution mandates the state legislature to create a single common system of schools administered by public officials, not the two critics charge are
created by the addition of community/charter schools. Other legal challenges include that in Ohio many charter schools are in academic emergency and academic watch.

Boardsmanship

Without a well-developed and planned evaluation, progress and goal achievement cannot be measured. Through the evaluation process, improvement is facilitated; the team members are motivated to work for betterment of themselves and the school district (OSBA, 2003). Many school districts in the United States fall short of realizing their full governing potential in practice, depriving their districts of sorely needed leadership and their members of the satisfaction that participation in serious governing work can provide (Eadie, 2005).

The National School Board Association (NSBA) is the preeminent resource on public school governance. In the NSBA list of recommendations, as the book that provides practical strategies based on self assessment, is Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance by Eugene R. Smoley, Jr. (Smoley, 1999). The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is the authoritative resource on charter school governance. It promotes many tools that address the critical board building challenge. According to NASCA board assessment is not unlike school assessment in that it needs to be viewed as part of the commitment to continuous improvement of the board’s performance. If the goal of board assessment is improvement and not judgment, boards will find value in examining their performance. First on the NACSA list of recommended sources for self assessment is the Board Self-assessment Questionnaire contained in Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance by Eugene R. Smoley (Smoley, 1999). Smoley’s book is the same assessment tool that is recommended by the National School Board Association for public school board self evaluation.
Eugene R. Smoley, Jr. in his association with the Cheswick Center was fortunate to experience the work of innovators in the study of nonprofit boardsmanship in the work of Thomas P. Holland, Richard P. Chait, and Barbara E. Taylor. Their dedication to the concept that capable boards can make valuable contributions to the organizations they serve led them to the development of a self assessment tool. This tool was fashioned to help boards better understand the way they function and allow them to focus on developing aptitude in areas in which they were less effective.

**Holland, Chait, and Taylor Study**

In the late 1980s Holland, Chait and Taylor, with the backing of the Lilly Foundation and also supported by a grant from the United States Department of Education, set out to develop a framework for effective trusteeship that was systematically and empirically tested. The three-year study included interviews with over one hundred board members and presidents of twenty-two independent liberal arts and comprehensive colleges. Several acknowledged experts on college trusteeship were asked to identify the least and most effective boards that they had encountered but not to tell the researchers to avoid bias. In this study the researchers gathered first-hand descriptions of the actual behaviors of the boards of trustees through the process of a critical incident technique. Each team member independently analyzed the transcripts to define the board behaviors. These behaviors with their underlying skills and competencies were then combined into themes which they defined as dimensions. While the focus of much of the previous research had been prescriptive or focused on structure, Holland, Chait and Taylor chose to focus on the board as a group with its dynamics and processes. They found that there are six specific characteristics and behaviors that distinguish strong board from weak boards:
(1) Contextual Dimension: The board understands and takes into account the culture and norms of the organization it governs.

(2) Educational Dimension: The board takes the necessary steps to ensure that trustees are well-informed about the institution, the profession, and the board’s roles, responsibilities, and performance.

(3) Interpersonal Dimension: The board nurtures the development of trustees as a group, attends to the board’s collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness.

(4) Analytical Dimension: The board recognizes complexities and subtleties in the issues it faces and draws upon multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems and to synthesize appropriate responses.

(5) Political Dimension: The board accepts as one of its primary responsibilities the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships among key constituencies.

(6) Strategic Dimension: The board helps envision and shape institutional direction and helps ensure a strategic approach to the organization’s future.

Of the six dimensions, the contextual, educational, analytical, and strategic dimensions are essentially cognitive skills which allow the board to learn, analyze, decide and act. The interpersonal and political dimensions concern affective skills and are oriented more toward process than substance.

In the second phase of the study Holland, Chait and Taylor chose twelve institution sites that exhibited extreme scores both positive and negative on institutional indicators. The process of critical incident interviews was repeated and the overall scores were systematically associated with the institution’s performance indicators. They found a strong congruence between the board’s performance as measured against these competencies and some conventional
institutional financial performance indicators. While these associations were positive, the associations are not meant to indicate causality.

Although Holland, Chait and Taylor substantially revised the self-study questionnaire between the two phases of the study, the self-assessments were not as successful at measuring the effectiveness of the board. Self-assessment is simple, economical, efficient and anonymous but is notoriously suspect as a gauge of actual and perceived performance (Holland, Chait, & Taylor, 1989). In Holland, Chait and Taylor’s studies, the researchers discovered a marked difference in the board members’ responses when asked to describe the greatest mistake the board had made in the past two or three years. Members of the least effective boards were the least likely to identify a substantial mistake. Conversely, the members of the most effective boards described a significant mistake and consistently volunteered an explanation of the lessons learned and how it affected their future work. Susan Ashford (1989) in her study of self-assessments in organizations found that assessment data are frequently interpreted in a way to preserve one’s ego and self-esteem. Another caveat of the study was to suggest that study of public-sector boards may be even more difficult to study than private boards. Public sector boards are subject to open meeting rules and are less likely to be open about their performance. Public sector boards are more ephemeral than private boards so development is more difficult. Public sector boards are more political and subject to scrutiny.

The Model for Board Effectiveness (Holland, Chait, & Taylor, 1989) proved to be applicable to independent schools, hospitals, social service agencies and arts organizations. But Holland, Chait, and Taylor wanted to take it a step further to determine if boards of trustees could learn to improve and be more competent. The answer is based in the Trustee Demonstration Project which moved the theory into practice. Improving the Performance of
**Governing Boards** (Chait, Holland & Taylor, 1996) describes the five year process of furthering the initial research on board effectiveness. The University of Findlay (Findlay, Ohio) was one of six institutions chosen for the five-year study. The same process was followed as the first study with interviews and self-assessment to determine areas in need of improvement. A project site director worked with the organizations on tools and strategies and followed up with assessments twice a year until the internal coach felt comfortable with the process. In the later stages of the project, external evaluators were used to independently code the interview responses and score the self-assessment questionnaires. Concurrent with this project funded by the Lilly Foundation, Holland initiated a companion study that was funded by the Kellogg Foundation. The two projects were parallel in design except that the Kellogg project included social service and health care organizations as well as institutions of higher education. Based on the Trustee Demonstration Project, the researchers modified their ideas of the interpersonal skill set to deal more with equal opportunity to participate in the board as a whole with no inner circle rather than a need to have social relationships outside the boardroom. In the analytical dimension, the researchers felt that the dimension should include the acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty that leads to comprehensive and critical discussions. Chait, Holland, and Taylor concluded that their model works as a means to diagnose and analyze board behavior and to evaluate a board’s performance. The process is replicable to other organizations.

**Smoley Study**

Extending the concept of nonprofit board effectiveness to school boards was a natural outgrowth of discussions at the Cheswick Center, a research and education trust, whose senior fellows include Chait, Holland, Taylor, and Smoley. In 1993 Smoley began the School Board Effectiveness Project funded by the Good Samaritan Foundation. Using the critical incident
design of the precursor study of Holland, Chait, and Taylor, Smoley interviewed at least one board member from all but one of the districts in the state of Delaware. Two researchers were involved in the interview to allow for cross validation of the data. The interview text was coded and sorted by activity. This analysis allowed activities to be multicoded, tabulated, and organized by category. In a qualitative process, the code words were refined and then became the framework for the model (Smoley, 1999).

The Model of School Board Effectiveness describes the six categories of public school board action:

- Board decisions are rational, informed by data and full discussion
- Boards exhibit the characteristics of well-functioning groups: a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values
- Board members exercise their authority and stand firm when they must
- Boards connect with the community informally, as well as by an established formal process
- Boards work toward self-improvement, assist new members, reflect on their responsibilities, and seek assistance when they need it
- Board actions are strategic, matching long-term plans with immediate actions, focusing on results, and adjusting to new situations

These six elements are more simply stated as the following activities: (1) Making Decisions, (2) Functioning as a Group, (3) Exercising Authority, (4) Connecting to the Community, (5) Working Toward Board Improvement, and (6) Acting Strategically. These six activities are related to the dimensions of the Model of Board Effectiveness of Holland, Chait, and Taylor and form the theoretical frame for the present study. (See Table 2.)
Table 2

The Relationship between Smoley’s and Holland, Chait and Taylor’s Work on Board Effectiveness

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<tr>
<th>Smoley</th>
<th>Holland, Chait &amp; Taylor</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Making Decisions</td>
<td>IV. Analytical Dimension</td>
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<td>(2) Functioning as a Group</td>
<td>III. Interpersonal Dimension</td>
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<td>(3) Exercising Authority</td>
<td>I. Contextual Dimension</td>
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<td>(4) Connecting to the Community</td>
<td>V. Political Dimension</td>
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<td>(5) Working Toward Board Improvement</td>
<td>II. Educational Dimension</td>
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<td>(6) Acting Strategically</td>
<td>VI. Strategic Dimension</td>
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Institute for Educational Leadership Studies

There is much in the current literature on school board leadership that offers popular opinion, how-to guidebooks ranging from how to run an effective meeting to how to form a partnership with the superintendent. School board organizations, educational practitioners, and school board members have listed characteristics essential for effective boardmanship, but there is little quantitative data to support the lists that they propose. Much of the research that does exist was in response to the initial report on public school board governance of the Institute for Educational Leadership in the late 1980s.

In February 1985, the Institute for Educational Leadership, under the leadership of Jacqueline P. Danzberger, surveyed a representative sample (10%) of school board members. From this survey and other studies the Institute developed a framework which would make it possible to assess the effectiveness of public school board governance functions. This framework
provided fifteen indicators of an effective public school board (Carol et al., 1986). The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) indicators for an effective school board are:

1. An effective board addresses most of its time and energy to education and educational outcomes.

2. An effective board believes that advocacy for educational interests of children and youth is its primary responsibility.

3. An effective board concentrates on goals and uses strategic planning to accomplish its purpose.

4. An effective board works to ensure an adequate flow of resources and achieves equity in their distribution.

5. An effective board harnesses the strengths in diversity, integrates special needs and interests into the goals of the system and fosters both assertiveness and cooperation.

6. An effective board deals openly and straightforwardly with controversy.

7. An effective board leads the community in matters of public education, seeking and responding to many forms of participation by the community.

8. An effective board exercises continuing oversight of education programs and their management, draws information for this purpose from many sources and knows enough to ask the right questions.

9. An effective board, in consultation with its superintendent, works out and periodically reaffirms the separate areas of administrative and policy responsibilities and how these separations will be maintained.

10. An effective board, if it uses committees, determines the mission and agenda of each, ensuring coherence and coordination of policy and oversight functions.
11. An effective board establishes policy to govern its own policymaking and policy oversight responsibilities, including explicit budget provisions to support those activities.

12. An effective board invests in its own development, using diverse approaches that address the needs of individual board members and the board as a whole.

13. An effective board establishes procedures for selecting and evaluating the superintendent. It also has procedures for evaluating itself.

14. An effective board collaborates with other boards through its statewide school boards association and other appropriate groups to influence state policy and the way state leadership meets the needs of local schools.

15. An effective board understands the role of the media and its influence on public perceptions, develops procedures with the school administration for media contact and avoids manipulating media attention for personal gains.

Using the results of these findings, the Institute for Educational Leadership developed a self-assessment improvement project in sixteen states. Although the 266 districts were self-selected for the survey, they do provide data that was previously unknown. Included in the self-assessment study were 70 urban school boards, 75 suburban school boards, 121 rural/small town school boards and 128 superintendents from those districts (Danzberger et al, 1992). Activities were described in the fifteen areas of board effectiveness. These activities were rated on a six point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A score of 4.1 to 5 indicated a slightly to somewhat effective board, while a score of 5.1 to 6 indicated a generally effective board for each subscale or each item within the subscale.

I. Leadership – An effective board provides leadership for public education and is an advocate for the educational needs and interests of children and youth. (4 items)
II. Communications – An effective board has a comprehensive program for communications with its various constituencies, including policies and procedures for working with the media. (6 items)

III. Parent and Community Participation – An effective board seeks and responds to many forms of parent and community participation in the school system. (3 items)

IV. Influence on Others – An effective board works to influence policies of state and local governmental bodies and other organizations whose decisions affect children. (4 items on an inactive to extremely active scale)

V. Decision-making – An effective board encourages and respects diversity, deals openly and straightforwardly with controversy within the board and the community, and follows democratic decision-making procedures. (5 items)

VI. Planning and Setting Goals – An effective board uses strategic planning to set educational goals and determine the means for accomplishing them. (4 items)

VII. Resource Allocation – An effective board works to ensure an adequate flow of resources and achieve equity in their distribution. (2 items)

VIII. Policy Development – An effective board establishes and follows policy to govern its own policymaking responsibilities. (4 items)

IX. Policy Oversight – An effective board exercises continuing policy oversight of education programs and their management, drawing information for this purpose from many sources and knowing enough to ask the right questions. (3 items)

X. Selection and Evaluation of the Superintendent – An effective board establishes and implements procedures for selecting and evaluating the superintendent. (5 items)
XI. Working with the Superintendent – An effective board recognizes the dilemma of distinguishing policy from administration and periodically clarifies these separate areas in consultation with the superintendent. (5 items)

XII. Employee Relations – An effective board promotes constructive relations with its employees and works to create conditions that enhance productivity. (3 items)

XIII. Expectations for Board Member Conduct – An effective board establishes clear expectations for the conduct of its members. (6 items)

XIV. Board Operations – An effective board establishes and follows policies and procedures to manage its own operations. (7 items)

XV. Board Development – An effective board has procedures for self-assessment and invests in its own development, using diverse approaches that address the needs of the board as a whole, as well as those of individual board members. (6 items)

Twelve of the fifteen assessment areas have an item or items that relate to the work of Smoley (1999).
Table 3

The Relationship between Smoley’s and Danzberger, Kirst and Usdan’s Work on Board Effectiveness

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<tr>
<th>Smoley</th>
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<td>XV. Board Development</td>
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<td>(3) Exercising Authority</td>
<td>II. Communications</td>
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<td>XI. Working with the Superintendent</td>
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<td>(4) Connecting to the Community</td>
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<td>(5) Working Toward Board Improvement</td>
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<td>XV. Board Development</td>
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<td>(6) Acting Strategically</td>
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The literature review focused on context of the independent and dependent variables of the current study: the traditional public school board, the community/charter public school board,
and the effectiveness of board governance activities. The changing realities of modern society have caused society to elicit reform to the current mode of public education. The first section of the review focused on the traditional public school model of governance, which has been in existence since the first permanent school committee in Boston in 1721. Throughout the long history of the American public school board, there have been many changes to its composition and influence. It remained the only form of public school governance until the advent of the community/charter school movement in 1991. The second section of this review focused on the community/charter public school board. The community/charter public school board has added a new dimension to public school governance with appointed boards monitored by a sponsoring agency. Although in its infancy, the community/charter school governance system provides insights into one type of alternative governance system for public education. The last section concentrated on public school governance. The work of Chait, Holland and Taylor on the traits and activities of effective boards of trustees provided the foundation for Smoley’s work on the effective activities of the traditional K-12 public school board. These activities were corroborated with the work of the Institute for Educational Leadership and the public school board reform efforts of Jacqueline Danzberger. Smoley’s work defined six areas of effective board governance activities which are the framework for the current study.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe this study’s methodology. Included are discussions of the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

For the purpose of this study, the responses of the superintendents of the traditional public school district and of the community/charter public schools, to a survey on the activities of their boards, were analyzed to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two groups on measures of board effectiveness. These measures of board effectiveness were then compared with the model board behavior as defined by the work of Eugene R. Smoley, Jr. (1999).

The dependent variable was the effectiveness of the board based on activities described in the questionnaire developed by Smoley and inspired by the work of Thomas Holland, Richard Chait and Barbara Taylor. The independent variable was the type of school board: (1) traditional public school board or (2) community/charter public school board.

The items for quantitative analysis are addressed through the following research questions, also presented in Chapter 1:

1. Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Making Decisions as perceived by their superintendent?
2. Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Functioning as a Group as perceived by their superintendent?
(3) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Exercising Authority as perceived by their superintendent?

(4) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Connecting to the Community as perceived by their superintendent?

(5) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Working Toward Board Improvement as perceived by their superintendent?

(6) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Acting Strategically as perceived by their superintendent?

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of the superintendents of (1) the city, exempted village or local public school districts and (2) the community/charter public schools. Community/charter public schools in their first year of operation were not included due to the development of board cohesiveness in the first year of operation. In addition, online charter schools were not included. Students who attend online schools are in non-traditional forms of education and thus not subject to many of the governance issues involved in a brick and mortar school environment. Additionally, most of the online schools are not involved with an educational service area and cannot be geographically matched. The Ohio Department of Education lists 209 community/charter public schools that are not in their first year of existence and are not online schools in the State of Ohio. These 209 community/charter public schools
reside in 36 city/exempted village/local public school districts. In all, there were 245 superintendents of traditional public school districts and community/charter public schools included in the sample.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study is based on the Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire by Eugene R. Smoley, Jr. The tool is based on material originally developed by the Center for Higher Education Governance and Leadership, University of Maryland, College Park under funding of the Lilly Foundation. The original researchers were Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland and Barbara E. Taylor. The tool is currently part of the National School Board Association’s governance studies. The instrument was modified in focus but not content to be administered to the superintendents of traditional public school districts and community/charter public schools. This change was made based on the research of Chait, Holland and Taylor, which found that self-reporting was very unreliable. The survey consists of 73 statements to be rated Strongly Agree (3), Agree (2), Disagree (1) and Strongly Disagree (0) by respondents. Questions are grouped according to six activities: (1) Making Decisions, (2) Functioning as a Group, (3) Exercising Authority, (4) Connecting to the Community, (5) Working Toward Board Improvement, and (6) Acting Strategically. The community/charter public school board could be identified as advisory or policymaking through a check box. Additionally, a page was available for participants to include additional comments to allow for some open-ended discussion of the questions of the survey or about their particular board governance structure. A copy of the survey appears in Appendix A.

Validity

The 73 items in the survey each address an activity related to one of the six elements of
the Model for School Board Effectiveness (Smoley, 1999). These activities were based on the use of the critical incident methodology, based in the qualitative method that begins with the specific case and identifies universal themes. Smoley then developed universal themes from the activities described from the incidences of effective board behaviors gathered in extensive interviews with 40% of public school board members in the state of Delaware. Smoley’s interviews were conducted by two researchers to ensure accuracy.

Is effective school board activity what the survey activities describe it to be? The specific competencies can be assessed reliably and show validity with the interview process. A causal relationship cannot be proven but the data indicate that institutions that are strong in these competencies also perform well on other measures of institutional quality. The validity of this instrument is based on three elements: what school board members say, what experts with many years of consulting with school districts say, and the written accounts of researchers and journalists (Smoley, 1999).

The current study used the perceptions of the superintendent that worked with the boards to eliminate the bias of self-reporting that is known in the literature (Chait, Holland & Taylor, 1996). Smoley’s original work included all members of the board in the survey and their responses were averaged to present a balanced view of the board from the board’s perspective (Smoley, 1999). Content validity for use of Smoley’s Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire with public school superintendents was established during and after development. A panel of experts composed of the members of the researcher’s dissertation committee provided valuable feedback in the development, testing and administration of the survey (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). As part of the content validity, the researcher asked the panel to review the survey, comment on the clarity of both the instructions and the items in the instrument, as well as the
format. Relevancy of the items to the current study was considered. Members felt that the tool was appropriate in content and format. To further validate the tool in its use with superintendents, a pilot group of superintendents, not selected for the study but representative of the sample group, was administered the survey instrument. Each of the sample group members completed the survey. Each was provided the opportunity to review the survey and comment on clarity of instructions, survey format, clarity of the items, and relevancy of the survey items. The pilot group was also asked to provide any additional comments about the survey tool and to suggest revisions. All participants described the tool as easy to understand and relevant to the purpose of the study. The average time to complete the survey was fifteen minutes.

Reliability

Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) ran reliability tests on the selection of the board characteristics chosen for competency. These reliability tests showed consistency in the ranking among judges. Kendall’s coefficient of concordance showed $W = .88$ (p<.01). This result gave the researchers confidence that the activities and areas selected established a useful and trustworthy framework for studying board effectiveness. Brief Likert-type scales were drafted to measure each of the six competencies. Data from the university trustee respondents showed modest reliability estimates on the Cronbach alpha coefficients for each of the six: (1) Making Decisions cluster $a = .46$; (2) Functioning as a Group cluster $a = .68$; (3) Exercising Authority cluster $a = .74$; (4) Connecting to the Community cluster $a = .70$; (5) Working Toward Board Improvement cluster $a = .74$; and (6) Acting Strategically cluster $a = .74$ (Holland, Chait & Taylor, 1989). Reliability coefficients for the present study are presented in Chapter 4.

Collection

According to the Ohio Department of Education there are 209 community/charter public
schools that are not in their first year of existence and not online community schools in the State of Ohio for the 2005/2006 school year. These community/charter public schools are located in 36 traditional public school districts in the State of Ohio.

The survey, with an accompanying cover letter (Appendix A) was mailed to all participants (N=245) on May 8, 2006. The instructions requested a response on or before May 24, 2006. The cover letter was personalized for each superintendent and signed by the researcher. A stamped self-addressed envelope was provided to return the survey. Participants were assured that no respondent would be identified and only aggregate results would be reported. A copy of the finalized results was offered as an incentive for responding to the survey (Dillman, 2000, Groves, 2002). Survey respondents were provided with the email address and telephone numbers of the researcher and advisor. All materials for this study sent to participants were reviewed and approved by Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board.

As recommended by Dillman (2000), a reminder/thank you postcard was mailed to all potential participants on May 15, 2006, seven days after the original mailing date. On May 16, 2006, a second packet was mailed to all potential participants. On May 21, 2006, a second post card was sent to all potential participants. The final return date for the survey was May 24, 2006. The survey response rate was 48.2% for traditional public school district superintendents. The survey response rate was 28.2% for the community/charter public school superintendents. The overall survey response rate was 34.7% for all participants.

Data Analysis

Data from the surveys were entered into SAS for each item. The items were coded for the six areas of board behavior identified and coded by the type of board represented. The six research questions explore the differences between the two types of boards (traditional public
school board and community/charter public school board) on each of the six areas of board effectiveness. The data set was first analyzed using a one-way MANOVA for the six subscales. T-tests were used as univariate tests when significance was found with the MANOVA. The level of significance of the study was .05. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were used to assess internal reliability. Item analyses were completed to further explore the governance activities.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences in effectiveness of board activities in the areas of making decisions, functioning as a group, exercising authority, connecting to the community, working toward board improvement, and acting strategically between the traditional public school boards in which a community/charter public school exists and the community/charter public school boards in the state of Ohio as perceived by the superintendent. The community/charter public school board could be identified as advisory or policymaking through a check box. Additionally, a page was available for participants to include additional comments to allow for some open-ended discussion of the questions of the survey or about their particular board governance structure.

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses of the data. The first section of the chapter describes the participants of the study and any findings related to their participation and response rate. The second section analyzes the activities of traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards as perceived by their superintendents based on Smoley’s (1999) survey of effective board governance activities. These activities were grouped into six areas of effectiveness described in the research questions. The third section provides ancillary findings based on the additional responses provided on the supplemental open-ended comment page. Item analysis from the survey will be included as part of the discussion of the governance activities in Chapter Five.

Description of the Participants

The targeted population for this study consisted of superintendents of traditional public school districts that have community/charter public schools in their serving area (n=36) and superintendents of community/charter public schools (n=209) in the state of Ohio. The response
rate of superintendents from traditional public school districts was 48.2% (n=17). The response rate of leaders from community/charter public schools was 28.2% (n=59). Of the 59 community/charter public schools respondents, only 42.4% (n=25) indicated whether they were working with advisory or policy making boards. Of the 25 respondents to that particular item, 96% (n=24) marked that the board was a policy making board.

Eighteen respondents (23.7%) completed the optional information page, with 3 of the 18 representing traditional public schools (17.6% of the total traditional public school response) and 15 representing community/charter public schools (25.4% of the total community/charter public school response). One of the respondents felt that because of the nature of the governing board of the community/charter public school, many of the survey questions were not applicable to their situation. He completed all questions on the survey although, and was included in the response rate.

Overall response rate for all possible participants was 34.7% (n=85). There was one late respondent from the traditional public school sample that was not included. There were five late respondents among the community/charter public schools sample; they were not included in the analysis. There were three surveys returned that were not included because of incompleteness. Two nonrespondents indicated via email that a lack of time during the final month of school prevented their participation in the survey. In the end, the response rate of those included in the statistical analyses was 31% (n=76).

Instrument Internal Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha)

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of internal consistency were used to assess the internal reliability of the subscales of the six variables: Making Decisions, Functioning as a Group,
Exercising Authority, Connecting to the Community, Working Toward Board Improvement, and Acting Strategically. The coefficients ranged from 0.70 to 0.92. The results are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

*Internal Reliability Coefficient Scores for Governance Activity Variables (Cronbach’s Alpha)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Variables</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th># of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Decisions</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning as a Group</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising Authority</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with the Community</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Toward Board Improvement</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Strategically</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Analyses

The overall MANOVA test of differences in effectiveness of board governance activities across types of board, either the traditional public school board or the community/charter public school board, revealed a significant relationship between the two types (p = .0015). Since there was a significant difference between the governance activities of the two groups, univariate tests were run for each of the six subgroup activities. The results are presented in Table 5.
Table 5

Mean of Effectiveness of Board Governance Activities Scores by Board Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Traditional Public</th>
<th>Community/Charter Public</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Decisions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.86 .417</td>
<td>2.20 .387</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning as a Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.67 .438</td>
<td>1.94 .377</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising Authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.80 .247</td>
<td>1.96 .377</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting to the Community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.87 .474</td>
<td>1.98 .509</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Toward Board Improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.69 .534</td>
<td>1.83 .526</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.329</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Strategically</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.75 .500</td>
<td>2.07 .566</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The **bolded** information reports the p values for each significant difference between groups

Based on the results of the univariate analyses, we apply the findings to the research questions that led the research, with special mention that Smoley (1999), whose model defined the six board activities explored here, asserted that a score of 2.00 on each subscale/activity is representative of a model board:

(1) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Making Decisions as perceived by their superintendent?

Within the Making Decisions subscale, a significant difference was found between the perceived effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .003), with the community/charter school leaders rating their board’s decision-making activities as more effective than the traditional public school leaders rated their boards. The mean for the traditional public school board (M=1.86) on activities related to...
Making Decisions was less than that of Smoley’s model school board, while the mean for the community/charter public school was higher (M=2.20). The effect size for Making Decisions was 0.815.

(2) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools agencies differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Functioning as a Group as perceived by their superintendent?

Within the Functioning as a Group subscale, a significant difference was found between the effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .012), with the community/charter school leaders again rating their boards as more effective (M = 1.94) than the traditional leaders rated theirs (M = 1.67). The effect size for Functioning as a Group was 0.616. Despite the significant difference between the two groups, both means were lower than that of Smoley’s model school board. Of the six subscales explored in the present study, the lowest subscale mean for the traditional public school board as reported by its superintendent was in effectiveness of activities in Functioning as a Group.

(3) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Exercising Authority as perceived by their superintendent?

Within the Exercising Authority subscale, no significant difference was found between the effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .095). Both groups’ means were lower than Smoley’s 2.00 target, with the
mean for the traditional public school board at 1.80 and the mean for the community/charter public school at 1.96.

(4) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Connecting to the Community as perceived by their superintendent? Within the Connecting with the Community subscale, no significant difference was found between the effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .435). Both groups’ means were lower than Smoley’s 2.00 target, with the mean for the traditional public school board at 1.87 and the mean for the community/charter public school at 1.98.

(5) Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Working Toward Board Improvement as perceived by their superintendent? Within the Working Toward Board Improvement subscale, no significant difference was found between the effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .329). Again, both groups’ means were lower than Smoley’s 2.00 target, with the mean for the traditional public school board at 1.69 and the mean for the community/charter public school at 1.83. The lowest subscale mean for the community/charter public school board as reported by its superintendent was in effectiveness of activities in Working Toward Board Improvement.
Do members of governance boards of traditional public schools and community/charter public schools differ in the effectiveness of their activities related to Acting Strategically as perceived by their superintendent?

Within the Acting Strategically subscale, a significant difference was found between the effectiveness of the traditional public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent and the effectiveness of the community/charter public school board’s activities as perceived by its superintendent (p = .041). The mean for the traditional public school board (M = 1.75) on activities related to Acting Strategically was less than Smoley’s target of 2.00, while the mean for the community/charter public school was higher (M = 2.07). The effect size for Acting Strategically was .640.

Open-ended Responses

Traditional Public School District Responses

The extended responses from the superintendents of traditional public school boards reflect divergent board situations. One superintendent described a veteran board of four members that has welcomed and helped a novice member to understand his role as a board member and introduced him to the policies that the board has developed and supports. Another superintendent described the reflection process of completing the survey as a positive endorsement of the board and its emphasis on the vision, mission and programs of the district. The final respondent in this group described many of his or her board’s political machinations. According to this respondent, the board members act in a way that is politically advantageous for them personally; while the board dynamics have shifted to reflect a less political representation, the functioning as a group has been damaged by the divisiveness.
Community/Charter Public School Responses

The extended responses from the superintendents of community/charter public school boards overwhelmingly reflected the concerns of working in a new environment and the challenges of working in a startup environment. One superintendent had two volunteer boards in two years of operation due to the first board being overturned due to unwanted personal agendas. One superintendent reflected the good intentions of the board during its retreat in its formative stage, but the members’ lack of planning after startup. According to another respondent, while the school is successful and has strong community support, the board has failed to focus on creating a stable environment. Another superintendent expressed the problems of development of board members who have been recruited. One superintendent, who had previously worked with traditional school boards, saw the community/charter public school board as not typical of the traditional school boards. Another felt fortunate to have founding members on the board who are dedicated to the mission of the school through guidance and a focus on the big picture, not micromanagement.

Two respondents addressed concerns of Educational Management Organizations (EMOs). One superintendent expressed alarm at the actions of a locally appointed community/charter public school board when it hired an EMO. After hiring the EMO, the board acted as if they worked for the EMO and made decisions biased toward the EMO. Another superintendent suggested that a superintendent of a community/charter public school managed by a for-profit corporation has a different relationship with that board. Board members are recruited to rubber stamp the management company policy. This superintendent also observed that some community/charter public school boards try to return to local control and leave the
management company. However, management companies have taken steps to ensure that they monitor control of the board in order to maintain control of the school and its associated income.

Summary

From the results of the survey, there is no statistical difference in the effectiveness of board activities between the traditional public school board and the community/charter school board in the areas of Connecting to the Community, Working Toward Board Improvement and Exercising Authority. Statistical differences in the effectiveness of board activities exist between the traditional public school board and the community/charter school board in the areas of Acting Strategically, Functioning as a Group, and Making Decisions. The effect sizes of all the statistically significant findings are also defined as an important finding, where the effect size is greater than .50 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993).
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter five begins with a brief summary of the results for each research question. Following the results, the chapter contains a discussion and interpretation of the results and their implications for both theory and practice. The chapter provides direction for future research and examines limitations of the current research. Ultimately, the chapter draws some final conclusions about the work itself and its relevance to the theoretical framework of public school board governance.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if there are statistically significant differences in six areas of effective board behavior between traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards in areas served by the traditional school district in the State of Ohio. Superintendents of traditional public school districts with community/charter public schools within their boundaries and superintendents of community/charter public schools were asked to rate 73 items on a board governance survey relative to their board’s behavior. These items were subgrouped into six performance areas (Smoley, 1999). Behavior of the traditional public school board and behavior of the community/charter public school board, as perceived by their superintendents, were statistically compared to each other. Both boards were compared to Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness.

There was a significant difference found between the responses of the superintendents of the traditional public school boards and the superintendents of the community/charter public school boards on the 73-item survey. Among the six areas of effective board behavior, significant differences were found in the following three areas: Making Decisions, Functioning as a Group, and Acting Strategically. Board behaviors described by the superintendents of the
community/charter public school had significantly higher means on survey items in these areas than the board behaviors as perceived by superintendents of the traditional public school boards. Among the six areas of effective board behavior, no significant differences were found between the two types of boards in the following three areas: Exercising Authority, Connecting to the Community, and Working Toward Board Improvement. Based on Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness, there were only two areas of board activities that were “effective” by board type, based on achieving at least a mean score of 2.00. The community/charter public school board was effective in the area of Making Decisions and in the area of Acting Strategically. Although the community/charter public school board was rated significantly higher than the traditional public school board in the area of Functioning as a Group, neither board was “effective” based on the mean score of 2.00 in Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness.

Discussion of the Results

It is important to examine the differences in perceptions of board activities in areas that showed statistical differences between the two types of boards. It is also important to look at the work as a whole in relation to Smoley’s model of board effectiveness based on his quantitative and qualitative work with school boards in the state of Delaware (Smoley, 1999). These areas of board effectiveness were legitimized by the extensive work of Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) in their significant contributions to the field of governance in higher education. In the present study, neither board was “effective” in four of the six areas that were found to be essential for board effectiveness. The traditional public school board did not reach “effective” status in any of the six areas of board effectiveness. Research from the IEL study observed that superintendents’ responses rated their boards as well or slightly better than the boards rated themselves on governance activities. More importantly, the IEL study found that urban school boards generally
ranked themselves a point lower than other traditional school board members in the study (Danzberger, 1992). The boards in the current study represent urban environments and may not be reflective of traditional public school governance on the whole.

What do the data tell us about areas that need the most development for boards whether traditional public school boards or community/charter public school boards? One of most substantial sources of both criticism of and data for recent school board governance are the studies of the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) in 1986 and IEL’s follow-up survey in 1990. The survey of the IEL, under the leadership of Jacqueline Danzberger, was completed just as reform efforts were beginning to evolve in some of the early adopters of the charter school movement. While the IEL board effectiveness studies encompassed only the traditional public school board, items similar to those of the work of Smoley were part of this nationwide study. While IEL’s research data were not collected from a randomly selected sample, the sample included a diverse cross section of the nation, including large eastern cities, small rural communities and Ohio itself through the participation of schools in Columbus. Because Columbus was also a part of the current study, the IEL study has significant relevance as a comparison piece. Due to the significance of the IEL study in the literature of public school governance reform, it will be used as a measuring rod of effectiveness of governance in the traditional public school then, governance in the traditional public school now, and governance in the community/charter public school.

Through listing composite scores of each of the six areas of board effectiveness in the current study, Table 6 gives a synopsis of the differentiation in item responses for each of the board types. For example, the Making Decisions subscale contained 13 items. The superintendents of traditional public school districts rated their boards effective on three of the
items (a mean of 2.00 or greater), somewhat effective on eight of the items (a mean between 1.50 and 2.00), and slightly effective on two of the items (a mean between 1.00 and 1.50). Individual items will be reviewed to help focus on the strengths and weaknesses for each type of board. Items with extreme scores were reviewed in attempt to draw conclusions about the response or the survey item. As was shown in table 3 in chapter 2, the survey items of the IEL were classified throughout Smoley’s six categories of governance activities and thus will be addressed in the text of that activity and not in this table format. For a complete listing of the results of the IEL study, readers may refer to *Governing Public Schools: New Times, New Requirements* (Danzberger, Kirst & Usdan, 1992).
Table 6

Response Ratings Based on Governance Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Activity</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Slightly Effective</th>
<th>Not Very Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Decisions (13 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning as a Group (12 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising Authority (12 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting to the Community (12 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Toward Board Improvement (12 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Strategically (12 items)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Governance Activities (73 items)</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community/Charter</td>
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<td>24</td>
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Making Decisions

Traditional public school board members and community/charter public school board members were perceived to be the most dissimilar in the area of Making Decisions. The traditional public school board had a mean less than Smoley’s mean for his model for school board effectiveness but the community/charter public school board had a mean classified as “effective”. Smoley’s (1999) specific characteristic that defines effectiveness in the category of
Making Decisions is that board decisions are rational and informed by data and full discussion. Smoley’s research shows that boards are most effective when they can access and use relevant information, discuss deliberately, consider alternative actions and work toward consensus (Smoley, 1999). Both types of school boards were rated highest on item number 1 of the survey, which asks whether the board works to reach consensus on important matters. Superintendents in the IEL study found the traditional public school boards in the 1990 survey to be generally effective on an item relating to board consensus, and it was the item rated highest by the school board members and superintendents in the sample among all fifteen indicators in that study (Danzberger, 1992).

Survey results in the current study indicate that both types of school boards rate high on items that relate to consensus and receiving adequate information to make informed decisions. The boards scored lowest on items that related to asking to postpone decision making. This was particularly true of the traditional public school board and may be related to the number of items that face boards of larger districts at meetings.

A common mistake in board decision making is that boards make political decisions (Smoley, 1999). Despite the fact that most traditional school board elections are technically nonpartisan, politics can play a major role in the decision making of certain board members. A 2001 survey by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) found that more than 95 percent of traditional public school boards are elected (Hess, 2002). Despite accusations that school board elections are merely stepping stones for higher political positions, the NSBA survey found that the age, professional profile and time commitments of large and medium sized district board members make it unlikely that many are using school boards as political stepping stones. The boards, especially in the large school districts, appear to be dominated by retirees and people
in late middle age who may be more likely to have the time and interest in the board positions and less likely to be looking for further elective office (Hess, 2002). The boards of the community/charter public school are appointed in Ohio. Chait, Holland and Taylor (1991) in their study of effective board behavior chose to work with the governance of private institutions and not those of public institutions. They found that the board of the private institution saw its role as the guardian of the institution’s welfare or possessed a trusteeship orientation. The boards of the public institutions often saw their role as a partisan political advocate, a representative of a constituency or a public watchdog. The traditional public school board is about representing the rights and interests of all of the constituents. The community/charter school is about developing a new vision for those who choose to attend. One community/charter public school board superintendent commented on their board’s dedication to the mission of the school and the big picture. This trusteeship orientation or owner of the vision was integral to their success. Community/charter schools may recruit board members for their expertise and build a board to meet their needs through appointment. There are those that argue that appointed school boards are not consistently different or better performing than elected school boards (Boyd & Miretsky, 2003). And there are examples of appointed boards that have not been successful. Currently there is insufficient research that includes local variables to totally eliminate board selection procedures in their influence on board governance (Land, 2002).

Functioning as a Group

Smoley’s (1999) specific characteristic that defines effectiveness in the category of Functioning as a Group is that boards exhibit the characteristics of well-functioning groups -- a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values. Smoley’s interviews with board members defined five activities that are essential for boards to function effectively as a group:
operating with norms, demonstrating leadership, articulating cohesiveness, acting on values, and showing respect.

In activities related to Functioning as a Group there was a significant difference between the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board. While neither board’s mean reached Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness, both were in the “somewhat effective” category. The community/charter public school mean of effectiveness was significantly higher than that of the traditional public school boards. While the IEL study found that all sizes of school boards gave themselves high scores in decision making, they scored themselves fairly low in the abilities essential to decision making. In the Smoley study these abilities are included in the Functioning as a Group category. IEL’s school board governance study found that educators and the public alike thought that a board’s inability to work as a team hindered their ability to work effectively especially in urban districts. Chait, Holland and Taylor (1991) found that even in the non-public sector, much of the knowledge of governance or trusteeship is defined in conventional wisdom. There had not been methodically tested work to help trustees to understand the role that they were to play in the organization. Even though the board was composed of successful individuals, when performing as a group, the sum of the whole was less than the sum of the parts.

IEL’s study found one of the obstacles to school board effectiveness was the difficulty of developing a group of individuals into a policy making board. This is especially true when these members were elected (Carol et al., 1986). If creating a board is difficult for those in a non political environment, it is more difficult for those who must be reelected. In one open-ended response from a public school district in the current survey, the political aspirations of previous board members were cited. While the work of Hess (2002), presented in the section above on
Making Decisions, minimizes the impact of this aspect nationwide, its impact is intense when it does exist. The positive change in group dynamics that resulted from the election of a different board again points to the importance of the trusteeship model that Fullan and others promote and the problems of factionalized representation on a board. Nonprofits need a clear and functioning governance structure and will need to work hard on it. Land (2002) found a reform initiative that called for the election of a board as a whole. In working together for election, they would have created a unit that was functioning as a group prior to election. While this might seem appealing to have a group that works well with each other, it neglects the importance of history of the organization, its deep structure, and the continuity of the work that has begun. This problem is discussed also in issues related to Connecting to the Community.

The 1986 IEL study and the IEL 1990 board self-assessment found that a majority of the more effective school boards were in the more homogeneous suburbs (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992). Campbell (2001) found that participation was most likely to occur in a smaller setting of homogeneous members. Seats for school boards are often hard to fill in diverse communities as well as participation in the election of the members. The 2001 NSBA survey found that 56% of boards are elected at large instead of subdistrict. Medium-sized districts are more likely to elect board members districtwide than are large or small districts. Danzberger (1992) found that arguments for and against the at-large elections have not provided a clear solution for effective governance. Combinations of electoral representation may work best for larger cities but there is no method that is best for each community. Perhaps an extension of the mixed election between subdistrict and districtwide should be extended to include a mixed board of elected and appointed members. The mixture might weaken the political impact of the elected representatives and strengthen a trusteeship model of governance proposed by the original IEL
study. While lack of public participation in education may be part of the problem, IEL’s study also found that conflicts within groups were often based on a lack of definition for the board’s role in the organization. Smoley (1999), in his interviews with board members, found that a common mistake was that boards function without ground rules. Disagreement over procedural tasks, e.g., the way information is requested and shared, undermines trust and respect and keeps the board’s focus away from the bigger decisions that need to be made. The problem of lack of ground rules can also be related to the problems associated with activities of Working Toward Board Improvement discussed later in the chapter. Working Toward Board Improvement was one area of weakness for the community/charter public school boards.

Boards need to define themselves in the context of the school setting. A community/charter public school superintendent, through an open ended response in the survey, indicated problems in the development of board members who have been recruited. While the makeup of the boards may be more congruous than that of the traditional public school board if they follow common trends for charter school boards, many open-ended comments of the community/charter public school superintendents noted the inexperience of the board. This inexperience in working as a board and facing a new type of organization in the community/charter public school may contribute to their being less than “effective” in these activities. In addition to learning the roles and relationships, the novice board is also creating the structure within which to work. Sarason (1998) noted the complexity of this work. Community/charter public schools are in the process of developing institutional values, not living up to them. With experience, the community/charter schools in the current study should exceed Smoley’s mean for school board effectiveness.
Exercising Authority

Smoley’s (1999) specific characteristic that defines effectiveness in the category of Exercising Authority is that board members exercise their authority discreetly and stand firm when they must. In interviews with school board members in his qualitative study, Smoley’s participating board members described the balance between exercising authority and supporting the superintendent. From these interviews Smoley defined four activities of effective boards in Exercising Authority: acting with defined roles, taking initiative, overruling the superintendent, and resisting pressure.

In activities related to Exercising Authority there was no significant difference between the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board. While neither board reached Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness, both were in the “somewhat effective” category. In this category, the highest and lowest effectiveness items were the same for both the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board. Both boards rated higher than Smoley’s “effective” on the item related to the board being involved in decisions that are important to the future of education for their students. The lowest effectiveness item is discussed below.

The Exercising Authority subscale attempts to address one of Smoley’s six common mistakes of board activity, responding to coercion. The activity that was perceived as least effective asked whether the board often acts independently of the superintendent’s recommendations. From the response for both types of boards, the word “often” in the item might have been interpreted with negative connotations. A change of wording to “will act independently” may have better addressed the real issue of an independent yet collaborative relationship. Despite the fact that superintendents completed the survey for this study, the strong
wording of items that were low scoring may have influenced the response just as it would have for a board member.

While the response to the item on acting independently of the superintendent was negatively perceived as described above, items that reflect collaboration of the superintendent and board members before final consensus on a decision are rated favorably. This is in contrast to the IEL study of the 1990s. Danzberger devoted one of the fifteen sections of her 1990 survey on the working relationship of boards with superintendents. Her results showed that overall the boards found their relationship to be somewhat effective which was a relatively low scoring in her study (Danzberger, 1992).

One of the community/charter public school superintendents who responded to the open-ended question in the survey expressed concerns about educational management organizations (EMOs). Smoley found, in his interviews with members of boards that were denoted “effective” in relationship to the model for school board effectiveness, board members did not want to be labeled as rubber stamps but as members of an independent, informed policy making board. Nevertheless, the respondent felt that the community/charter public school board was a rubber stamp to the EMO. Good and Braden (2000) urged states to keep EMOs out of the chartering process and Kemerer (1999) warned legislatures that permissive laws would allow entrepreneurs and not educators to run the schools. The problems associated with community/charter public schools that are under the management of for-profit EMOs have been well documented in the works of Dykgraff and Lewis (1998), Willard and Oplinger (1999), Horn and Miron (2000), Fox (2002) and Miron and Nelson (2002). These studies document school board governance structures that are contradictory to the aspirations for charter school governance purported by
 Connecting to the Community

Smoley (1999) sees the board as the link between the school district and the community. The democratic tradition of local control promotes the community shaping the school and the schools becoming part of the community. The specific characteristic that defines effectiveness in the category of Connecting to the Community is that boards connect with the community informally as well as formally. In his interviews with board members, Smoley found five ways that boards can develop relationships that benefit both the school and the community: structure community involvement, obtain input, explain actions, facilitate information flow, and connect with the internal community. One of the common mistakes that boards make is not connecting to the community.

From the current study, in activities related to Connecting to the Community, there was no significant difference between the superintendents’ perceptions of the traditional public school board and the perception of the community/charter public school board. While the mean of neither board reached Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness, both were in the “somewhat effective” category.

Connecting with the Community was the highest ranked category for the traditional public school board in the current study. Traditional school boards have received criticism concerning their inability to connect to the communities they serve. The IEL survey found all boards, including urban, suburban and small town/rural were slightly effective but the urban boards as a group alone were not very effective (Danzberger, 1992). The results for the traditional public school boards in the current study were not at all like the findings Danzberger
found in her survey. The traditional public school board in the current study scored relatively high and was categorized as “somewhat effective”. Traditional school boards have defined procedures in place for connecting with the community. While individual schools are generally effective at communicating with their students, parents, staffs and neighborhood, recent federal initiatives like NCLB have made boards more sensitive to the overall input from the community. Individual items for traditional public school indicated more attention given to community concerns but less understanding of the impact of decisions on the community than Smoley’s model of school board effectiveness.

A surprising statistic from the current study was the lack of significant differences in the perception of the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board related to Connecting to the Community. It has been shown how the traditional public school board is not as close to its community as it once was (Meier, 2003). An NSBA survey in 2001 found that school boards generally include six to eight members. The thirteen and fifteen member boards that governed many large systems just a few decades ago are no longer in existence. But, the NSBA survey (Hess, 2001) found that 75% of traditional public school board members also serve on at least one other community board. Connections may be made to the broader community due to the traditional school board members’ participation on other like boards in the community. Nearly 50% of board members from large district boards served on at least three other boards in their community.

Campbell (2001) found that participation was most likely to occur in a smaller setting of culturally homogeneous members. Once, one of every five hundred citizens sat on a board; but today it is only one of every twenty thousand. The NSBA survey (Hess, 2001) found that 68% of large districts were required to have site-based management committees at the school level in the
traditional public school districts and 49% in medium-sized districts. Site-based management committees can provide closer ties to the communities the school district serves. Despite all the negativity about traditional public school boards and their effectiveness, Danzberger (1992) found that local citizens had deep support for their elected school board.

In a study in 2000, Berry and Howell found that the community felt that accountability of the educational system was achieved through local school board elections. Kirst (2004) argued that the public still holds the local board accountable to the community even with all the changes that have occurred with state and federal mandates. If publicly elected boards have lost control of educational policy, then citizens feel that they have lost their control to influence the education of their children (Howell, 2005).

The 1986 IEL study stated that community participation is particularly critical to the reform agenda (Carol et al., 1986). The community/charter public school board, if appointed from the school’s community, should relate more closely to the community/charter public school than the traditional public school board to the traditional public school district due to the size of the school itself combined with the appointment process. Some of the individual items that were slightly under Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness and less than that of the traditional public school board revolved around listening to the concerns of the community. The community/charter school board had more effective ratings for items dealing with the impact of its decisions and the way in which the decisions were reached. This trend may be related to the intimacy of a small community in a one school environment. And, because of recruitment, it may be because of the trusteeship orientation that allows board members to focus on the established mission of the school. The community/charter public school was perceived to be essentially effective in Connecting to the Community, according to Smoley’s model for school board
effectiveness. The item that was rated lowest for community/charter public schools pertained to the forming of ad hoc committees of staff, which may be unnecessary in the small single school environment of charter schools. This may be one item to which the respondent referred when he or she, in an open-ended response, specified that not all items in the survey related to the community/charter public school board. There was no definition of the items to which the comment referred.

In assessing the community/charter public school board’s relationship to their community, Cohen (2006) felt that EMOs have moved the decision making a step farther away from the community each school serves. Open ended comments from two superintendents of community/charter public schools reiterated Cohen’s concern. Differentiation of community/charter public schools managed by EMOs was not part of the current study, so results of the survey can neither support nor negate this observation.

Working Toward Board Improvement

Smoley’s (1999) specific characteristic that define effectiveness in the category of Working Toward Board Improvement are that boards work toward self-improvement, assist new members, reflect on their responsibilities, and seek assistance when they need it. Based on interviews with board members, Smoley found three self-improvement activities that were essential for growth of the board: cultivating leadership outside of the current board membership, assessing competence to improve current board effectiveness and obtaining assistance to develop governance skills. In the current study, in activities related to Working Toward Board Improvement there was no significant difference between the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board. While neither board reached the mean of Smoley’s model for school board effectiveness, both were in the “somewhat effective” category, with the
community/charter public school mean descriptively higher than the traditional public school mean.

Due to the apparent weakness of this category for both boards the researcher looked at items that were particularly effective or ineffective. While boards in the IEL study were rated slightly effective in providing training for new board members except in the urban districts, all boards were rated as not very effective in self assessment of the board and taking action to improve board performance (Danzberger, 1992). Boards in the current survey show similar findings with higher ratings for training new board members and obtaining knowledge and lower ratings for self assessment and developing the board as a corporate body. Land (2002) found that the traditional public school board allocates money for board training and brings in outside assistance, but the training seems to be directed at developing new board members.

The NSBA survey (Hess, 2001) showed that only 13% of traditional public school board members indicated that they had professional experience in education. For this reason, organizations like the National School Boards Association have supported preparation and training of board members. Twenty percent of the respondents to the 2001 NSBA survey indicated that they would like more training in student achievement and community collaboration. O’Donnell (2005) pointed out one chamber of commerce that recruited and helped train future board members in an elected school board setting. Boards in the current study are only slightly effective on items related to recruitment for the future. Recruitment could be beneficial due to the limited time that board members typically serve. For the community/charter public school board, the item with the lowest effectiveness rating illustrated that the community/charter public school board relied on the emergence of leaders rather than trying to
cultivate future leaders for the board. Recruitment for boardsmanship for appointed boards may be the role of the sponsor and not of the local board.

The traditional public school board falters in garnering feedback about its performance (Danzberger, 1992). The NSBA survey verified this trend, finding that respondents report that about half of all boards engage in an annual self-evaluation, and 25 percent do not conduct self-evaluations (Hess, 2001). Board assessment is not unlike school assessment in that it needs to be viewed as part of the commitment to continuous improvement of the board’s performance. If the goal of board assessment is improvement and not judgment, boards will find value in examining their performance (National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2006).

Training almost always improves a board but unfortunately, few boards make board development a priority (McAdams, 2003). Many school districts in the United States fall short of realizing their full governing potential in practice, depriving their districts of sorely needed leadership and their members of the satisfaction that participation in serious governing work can provide (Eadie, 2005). If public school governance remains constant then we must follow Thomas Jefferson’s advice and allow people to govern but inform them through education.

*Acting Strategically*

Smoley’s (1999) specific characteristic that defines effectiveness in the category of Acting Strategically is that board actions are strategic, matching long-term plans with immediate actions, focusing on results, and adjusting to new situations. Interviewees in Smoley’s study expressed the need for the following activities: addressing critical issues, planning, organizing, considering context, and evaluating.

In activities related to Acting Strategically, the community/charter public school board scored significantly higher than the traditional public school board scored. The traditional public
school board had a mean less than Smoley’s mean for his model for school board effectiveness, while the community/charter public school board would be classified as “effective”.

Smoley (1999) noted that boards tend to plan less than they should because results are not immediate. In his study, he observed that boards focused on the immediate problems of day to day operations. The greatest difference between the two types of school boards related to items for long range planning. The community/charter public school board was perceived to spend more time in prioritizing goals for the year, discussing where the school should be in five years and making explicit use of those long range plans in dealing with current issues. Yet, one community/charter public school superintendent reflected that the good intentions of the board in their retreat in its formative stage were lost in the members’ lack of planning after startup.

Sarason (1998) asserted that creating an educational setting is a very complex process and in the case of charter schools has only been superficially assessed. Leadership in charter schools often assumes that good will and strong motivation will be sufficient to overcome the substantive problems that are encountered. Fox (2002), in her study of Ohio community/charter public schools, found that establishing the governance structures of the schools was time-consuming and taxing for the community/charter public school leaders because of their inexperience. In the current survey a community/charter public school superintendent stated that while the school is successful and has strong community support, the board has failed to focus on creating a stable environment. In addition to autonomy, a strong organizational capacity is necessary to support the educational environment. Schools with weak organizational structures appeared to have the most difficulty in capitalizing on their self-governance (Wohlstetter and Griffin, 1997).
Usdan (2005), based on studies of San Diego’s school system, felt that if boards spent more time on educational planning, they might attract board members with a trustee orientation which is essential for effective governance. Fullan finds that moral imperative is essential to effective governance (Fullan, 1998). Compared to elected officials in state legislatures or city councils relatively few board members serve for extended periods. The 2001 NSBA survey found that few board members serve for extended periods of time: 11 percent less than two years, 41 percent from two to five years, 30 percent from six to ten years and 18 percent more than ten years. NSBA researchers proposed that the abbreviated time that members may serve limits the number of members able to offer institutional memory from long-term experience. A significant number, however, serve long enough to become familiar with issues.

Equally problematic is the number of years that superintendents are employed by a district. The NSBA survey found the length of time that current superintendents served a district was a mean of four years for large districts, five years for medium and six years for small. This was based on the responses of current superintendents and is not reflective of continuance. Respondents reported that 67 percent of superintendents were hired from outside the district. This may prove challenging for districts as they seek to sustain or foster continuity in programs or reform efforts. It may indicate that greater attention should be paid to leadership development within the district (Hess, 2001).

Danzberger, citing John Carver’s study on the effectiveness of local education governance in West Virginia that occurred in the late 1980s, found that although boards in her study had rated themselves highest in decision making, only three percent of their time was spent on educational policy. The results of the current study had participants rate themselves highest in decision making but the percent of time spent on educational policy was not documented. The
results of the current study indicate that the community/charter public school board focuses more on policy than does the traditional public school board. If the powers of the board are limited to issues of mission, the common practice of micromanagement that drains so much of current board members’ time would be eliminated (Hill, Warner-King, Campbell, McElroy, and Munoz-Colon, 2002).

Danzberger (1992) supported restructuring local school boards into local education policy boards. These boards would be relieved of true management functions and act as enablers for school based initiatives. Although Chubb and Moe (1990) promoted that each school be independent and responsible only to the state or to a national system of governance, Danzberger proposed to keep the local education policy boards at the local level. In larger local education agencies, the board would formulate policies for school based management. Decentralization could be supported and motivated by a central local board that held individual schools accountable for their site goals (Danzberger, 1992). This proposal could incorporate all public schools in a defined area and eliminate some of the problems that have been elaborated by Palmer and Gau (2005) in their studies of sponsoring agencies. It could incorporate some of the best practices of the charter movement as exemplified in the work of Budde (1998). Wells (1998) noted that educators and policy makers need to study which aspects of autonomy are most supportive of and important to education in order to create and support appropriate levels of autonomy at the school level. Cornell-Feist (2005) stated that in the charter school setting, effective governance is vital for delivering on promises made to students, parents and the community.

One of the most disappointing findings for the researchers of the IEL study was the boards’ self-assessment rating being the lowest in the area of influencing policies of state and
local governmental bodies and other organizations whose decisions affect children and youth.
Danzberger, Kirst, and Usdan (1994) felt that influencing policies was a primary task of board
leadership and expanded the roles of boards to be more relevant to the reform movement. This
aspect of board performance was not explicitly itemized in the Smoley survey. Smoley dealt with
board governance in the organizational context, while Danzberger, Kirst and Usdan added the
aspect of school governance in its political context. Because the state has the ultimate
constitutional power to oversee education in most states, they felt that a local board would need
to interact with the source of power for education in order to act strategically. Only by
influencing the ultimate source of control, can policy be shaped at the local level.

There are those who would suggest that change in governance is the wrong focus. Kirst
and Bulkley (2000) found that historically, changes in governance did not have much impact in
the classroom. Cuban (2003) finds no substantial evidence that changing governance will solve
educational problems. Cohen (2006) stressed that education is primarily about teacher and
student not governance. Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) suggested a compromise. If the
board duties were primarily focused on student achievement, you will attract people to the board
who are truly interested in education. For the present, educational governance is being tested
and all boards of education are faced with the challenges of providing an effective governance
underpinning to allow for the best learning opportunities for their students.

Practical Implications

Smoley’s board self-assessment tool was fashioned to help boards better understand the
way they function and allow them to focus on developing aptitude in areas in which they were
less effective. Both the National School Board Association (NSBA) and the National Association
of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) on their websites have recommended this tool for board
development with their memberships of the traditional public school boards and the
community/charter public school boards. The NSBA even offers the questionnaire online for
board members to assess their own effectiveness.

Smoley (1999) pointed out six common mistakes that public school boards of education
make in performing their duties as a public board: making political decisions – Making
Decisions, functioning without ground rules – Functioning as a Group, responding to coercion –
Exercising Authority, failing to connect to the community – Connecting to the Community,
eglecting self improvement – Working Toward Board Improvement, and taking fragmented
actions – Acting Strategically.

If we examine the responses to the survey in the current study, we find that these
activities are also areas that need improvement for both types of boards included in the study.
For both the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school board, the
two areas that have the lowest means for each board are the areas of Working Toward Board
Improvement and Functioning as a Group.

The rank order of means for the Traditional Public School was:

(1) Connecting to the Community
(2) Making Decisions
(3) Exercising Authority
(4) Acting Strategically
(5) Working Toward Board Improvement
(6) Functioning as a Group

The rank order of means for the Community/Charter Public School was:

(1) Making Decisions
(2) Acting Strategically

(3) Connecting to the Community

(4) Exercising Authority

(5) Functioning as a Group

(6) Working Toward Board Improvement

Governance boards of both the traditional public school board and the community/charter public school boards can use these rankings to prioritize their own professional development as board members. Traditional boards of education have a tradition and history (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger et al., 1992; Tye, 2000; Boyd, 2003). Yet, with the current average term of board members being six years (NSBA, 2001), self-examination and developing a group identity is essential to implementing and sustaining reform initiatives. In the case of the community/charter public school boards, where the work and the board structures are both new, these two areas of Working Toward Board Improvement and Functioning as a Group may work hand in hand. Working Toward Board Improvement may establish a foundation both for the existing young board and for those that are to follow.

Boards can use self-assessment data to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, enhance their strengths, improve areas of ineffectiveness, and develop a cycle of assessment and learning to improve effectiveness in all areas of their performance (Smoley, 1999). Consistent attention must be given by governance boards to their own training and development. The future of public school education may rely on the informed and collective action of a small group of people working to influence another small group of informed and prepared citizens. By working together to provide a community of learning for itself and the organization that it serves, the governance board may influence the ultimate goal of student learning.
The findings of the current study and those of IEL; Holland, Chait & Taylor; Smoley, IASB and others demonstrate a need for those concerned with governance functions to define areas of need for effective performance. “The measure of effective education governance is in the collective ability of board members to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities across the spectrum of responsible governing behaviors” (Danzberger, Kirst & Usdan, 1992, p. 82).

Recommendations for Future Research

The first recommendation for future research was received from one of the respondents to the open-ended question on the survey. One community/charter public school superintendent suggested a study of just the community/charter public school boards that compares the governance activities of schools run or operated by EMOs and the governance activities of locally controlled school boards. Such a study would have its related predecessors. For example, in light of the large percentage of charter schools that are operated by EMOs in the state of Michigan, Dygraff and Lewis (1998), Horn and Miron (2000), and Miron and Nelson (2002) have conducted studies of the functioning of the EMO charter schools in that state. Because EMOs are private for-profit organizations, they were often reluctant to share information with prospective researchers. Interviews with individual schools, site visits, attendance at board meetings, state accountability reports, and use of the freedom of information act were used to obtain data. Willard and Oplinger (1999) and Fox (2002) studied EMOs in Ohio. Twenty percent of the community/charter public schools in Ohio are managed by EMOs (Fox, 2002). In her qualitative study, Fox found less autonomy in the one community/charter public school under the management of an EMO than she found in the three more independent community/charter public schools in her sample. More importantly, she found few examples of policy or practice that established the community/charter public schools as a model of reformed educational practice as
urged by the proponents of the charter school movement. Has the community/charter public school separation fulfilled its theoretical promise especially in the case of community/charter public schools under the management of an EMO?

The current study only included traditional public school boards that have a community/charter public school in their district’s geographical boundary. A survey of board effectiveness among traditional public school districts that do not have community/charter public schools in their student population areas, traditional public school districts that do have community/charter public schools in their student population areas, and community/charter public schools would provide a broader view of governance in public education. In the current study the community/charter public school was perceived as being more effective in three areas of board governance. Danzberger (1994) found differences in the governance activities of large urban, urban, suburban, and rural/small town boards. In the current study, the traditional school boards represent only those areas where a community/charter schools exists. Theses areas tend to be the large urban or urban areas as described by Danzberger in her study and are not necessarily representative of traditional school boards as a whole. Are there significant differences between community/charter public school boards and those of the suburban and rural/small town boards? Is the community/charter school form of school board governance more effective than all other forms of school board governance in the state, or just those traditional public school boards in communities that also serve community/charter public schools? If community/charter public school governance is more effective than traditional school board governance, should the state consider implementation of the charter/community school model throughout the state? If not, why continue a dual system of public educational governance in the state of Ohio?
The current study only included the governance structure of the traditional public school district and of the community/charter public school. A study of the governance structure of a private school board would provide a look at the effectiveness of governance of the private board. The original study of Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) used the governance boards of private institutions and Smoley adapted their work for use with public boards of education in the K-12 setting. Smoley’s governance survey and qualitative questions should be an appropriate tool for use with private school governance boards. Ohio is currently providing 14,000 private school vouchers with public money to students now attending public schools. Currently 5.4% of the eligible students have applied for the vouchers, according to the Ohio Department of Education Office of Community Schools. If local taxpayers are supporting local students to attend private schools, do they not have an interest or a right to understand the governance effectiveness of those institutions? The issue of private organizations has been discussed both in the sponsorship by private organizations of community/charter public schools and the management of community/charter public schools by EMOs. If private school boards have effective governance structures, should those then be adapted to the public school setting as a means of reform efforts?

Smoley’s original work included a qualitative element. A recommendation for a qualitative study is to interview the board members of a traditional public school district and the community/charter public schools that exist within the traditional public school district’s student population area. The survey tool could be administered to all board members and Smoley’s guiding questions used in an interview setting could reveal more about the operating board (Smoley, 1999). Carol et al. (1986), Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989), and Smoley used qualitative data to both fashion their quantitative research and support its results. By quantifying
the responses to the qualitative data provided through interviewing techniques, these researchers provided a more in-depth analysis of survey results. Open-ended responses in the current study provided valuable insight into board governance activities. If new governance structures are to develop as Danzberger (1992) suggested, qualitative as well as quantitative support as she provided in the IEL studies of the late 1980s, is needed.

Although the traditional public school board is autonomous in its operation, the community/public school board is governed by a sponsor. This sponsor may or may not affect the operations of the community/charter public school. The effect of the sponsor on the governance of the community/charter public school needs to be investigated. Leading research on the role of sponsorship has been explored in the work of Palmer and Gau (2003), Bulkley (2001), and Bulkley and Wohlstetter (2004). Recent litigation in the state of Ohio has underscored the importance of the sponsor in the role of community/charter public school governance. Despite the fact that the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has a department to oversee the sponsors of community/charter public schools, the Office of Community Schools, the Ohio Department of Education relinquished its own sponsorship role in the State of Ohio in 2005. Some of the community/charter public schools formerly sponsored by ODE are now being sponsored by private organizations, which, like the EMOs in the Horn and Miron (2000) study in Michigan, are not required to provide information to the public or hold open meetings. Perhaps the community/charter public school is governed more effectively due to the oversight of the sponsoring organization and its board. A study could be conducted to compare the governance of community/charter public schools with sponsoring agencies and those without.

IEL, in its 1990 board governance survey, used a 6-point attitude scale. Smoley’s board governance survey used a 4-point scale. Future research might use the 6-point attitude scale
providing more specificity than Smoley’s 4-point attitude scale. This attitude scale continuum could best represent how respondents feel about the statements on the scale (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). The specificity of the 6-poing attitude scale allowed Danzberger to rank areas for board improvement and differentiate the multiple board responses. The IEL study also included both the responses of the presidents of the traditional public school boards and the responses of superintendents. The use of multiple viewpoints allowed a more balanced perspective of the board’s performance. Smoley (1999) used responses from all members of the traditional public school board and averaged them to create a composite board score thus eliminating bias of the board president as the chief elected officer of the board. Urban school board presidents generally ranked themselves a point lower than other traditional schools board presidents in the IEL study (Danzberger, 1992). Surveying both board members and superintendents would eliminate some of the issues that Holland (1989) cited for the problems of self reporting. Danzberger (1992) did observe that some superintendents identify their own performance with that of their board and thus skew a true perception of performance. In the IEL study of the 1980s, the superintendents’ responses rated the boards as well or slightly better then the boards rated themselves.

Some of the issues that have been raised reflect demographics that could differentiate other influences on board behaviors. These could include age, length of service, income, profession, sex, race, children in school, percent turn out for election, ward or at-large elections, etc. Land (2002) found that school members differ demographically from many of the people they serve. Iannaccone and Lutz (1994) questioned the ability of the “elite” to represent the interests of the people they represent. Conversely, are these well educated professionals more skilled in governance and actually an asset to their boards? As was evident in the current survey and those of the IEL, board training and development was less than effective for all types of
boards. NSBA survey results in 2001 indicated that questions of characteristics of board members have been of longstanding interest (Hess, 2001). Although the ethnic makeup of boards in that study was less diverse than the country as a whole, they were more diverse than most state and national elected bodies. Board members generally had an income that exceeded the national average and were significantly better educated than the American public as a whole. Districts with enrollment less than 5,000 students had the biggest percentage of professionals, 48.6 percent. Seventy-five percent of board members are between forty and sixty years of age with only 6 percent under forty years of age (Hess, 2001). Forty-three percent of board members reported that they did not have a child attending public school (Land, 2002). The 2001 NSBA survey found that all public school boards are not the same. Are there differences in the demographic makeup of traditional public school boards and community/charter public school boards that correlate with their governance effectiveness?

The current study included the dimension of an elected school board for the traditional public school board and appointed school board for the community/charter public school. Future studies might survey states where traditional public school boards are appointed to determine if the election of the board is a determinant factor in their effectiveness. Are the demographics of an appointed board different from those of the elected board? If so, can we correlate those attributes with the effectiveness of governance of the appointed board? Is there a demographic profile of an effective board that could be recruited? Are appointed community/charter public school boards representative of the students that they serve or are they chosen for their core governance skills which they have demonstrated in this survey? Anecdotal evidence from traditional public school superintendents suggests that when recruitment is a process in the traditional public school, specific attributes are sought. If a traditional public school board
member leaves mid-term, the superintendent or board may recruit a member, e.g., a businessman, who fits a desired demographic. Critics contend that there are not enough candidates who are willing to run for elected office and low voter turnout does not support a democratic process (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Appointment may solve some inherent problems of elections such as low voter turnout, at-large vs. subdistrict elections, political influence in election, and limited number of candidates (Carol et al., 1986; Moe, 2006; Meier & Juenke, 2005). Appointment may not support the idealized trusteeship ideology depending on who is responsible for the appointment (Danzberger 1994).

Limitations of the Study

Comments in the open-ended section of the survey highlighted some limitations of the study. One of the superintendents of a community/charter public school board talked about the school’s newness. The school was in its second year. While the board and superintendent were working toward some of the effective behaviors described in the survey, they had not always reached the level the superintendent thought they should have reached. But, the superintendent and board were always working in the interest of the children as their guiding principle.

One superintendent reflected that it was his/her first year as a superintendent of a community/charter public school. S/He was working in concert with the board to achieve effective behaviors but they both had work to do before they would reach their goals.

Differentiation was not made in this study of community/charter public schools that hire and/or are operated by an EMO. One superintendent of a community/charter public school offered that as a suggestion for a future study.

Online community/charter public schools were not included in the current study. The addition of governance boards of online community/charter public schools could have a
significant impact on the overall effectiveness rating of community/charter public school governance boards.

Most of the community/charter public schools in the study have a short history in comparison to that of the traditional public school board. No adjustments were made for the longevity factor.

In the current study the survey was administered to traditional public school districts with large student populations and multiple buildings, while the participating community/charter public schools were individual buildings within a similar student population area. The large urban district has been the prime target of criticism (Danzberger, 1992). Magnet, alternative or small schools within a larger district might provide a better match of governance activities to the community/charter public school since they would match a small school or program to one community school. Budde (1988) promoted the school within the school as the original school reform effort that eventually developed into the charter school movement.

The current study used the perceptions of the superintendent that worked with the boards to eliminate the bias of self-reporting that is known in the literature. Smoley’s original work included all members of the board in the survey and their responses were averaged to present a balanced view of the board from the board’s perspective. In the IEL study, both the board and the superintendent were surveyed. If responses were cross tabulated, a more accurate reflection of the activities defined could be achieved.

**Conclusion**

The governance of public education is changing. Whether the change occurs through a separation of traditional public school and community/charter public school, a redesign of governance for boards of urban districts, or a well defined information and board development
network, researchers need to assess its impact to provide a body of evidence to support change. Danzberger argued that governance function was central to improving the education system (Danzberger et al., 1992). The Institute for Educational Leadership attempted to demonstrate areas of weakness in school governance in its 1986 study and 1990 follow-up survey (Danzberger, 1992). The IEL survey found boards to be least effective in the core elements of governance. During this time period reform initiatives of school choice were emerging. As vouchers for private schools were being assailed from both the left and the right, the public charter school movement gained momentum. Works of Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) and Smoley (1999) demonstrated patterns of behavior of effective boards in both the private and public education sector. Smoley agrees that many school boards do not operate as effectively as they could. It is time to take the criticism seriously. Smoley has found through his works that replacing the governance structure is not necessary, but keeping and improving boards of education is in the best interest of the community and of the democratic way of life (Smoley, 1999).

The current study illuminates the areas of governance effectiveness of the traditional public school board and those of the community/charter public schools based on these works. Every day boards of education influence the education of their students. Cuban (2003) stated that local autonomy is critical for local school boards to adapt their schools to meet the needs of their local students. School boards need to be aware of the behaviors that allow them to be effective in their position as a school board member. Urban districts need strong leadership to face the difficult challenges that confront them. In order to govern, boards must continually examine their activities and develop a plan to address areas of ineffective behaviors through training and board development.
The governance of American public education is clearly on trial today. The future character of American education very much hangs in the balance. After decades of criticism and mounting discontent…both policymakers and the public are increasingly embracing radical measures to alter or reform the governance and operation of the education system. (Boyd, 2003, p. 1)

This study examines the effectiveness of governance activities of one of the educational reform initiatives in relationship to the governance activities of the traditional public school. The community/charter public school board in similar urban environments shows significantly higher effectiveness ratings in three of six areas of effective board activities. Governance activities are more like those of the model of board effectiveness. Both traditional and community/charter public school boards need to accept the challenges of governance and work toward board improvement. Moe (2001) finds that Americans like the public school system because it allows for local democracy. The American public thinks the public school board deserves our commitment and support (Rose, 2005).
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May 8, 2006

Dear (Personalized),

As a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, I am requesting your participation in completing a board governance survey for my dissertation. It is enclosed. This anonymous survey includes 73 statements with which you may strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

The purpose of my study is to assess the current functioning of public school and community school boards as governing units as interpreted by the superintendents. The results of the study will be used to provide boards with recommendations of areas of concentration for board development.

Each and every response is important for the study to be complete. Respondents, school districts and community schools will not be identified in my dissertation. Only aggregate data of the groups will be reported.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will have no impact on your relationship to your institution or Bowling Green State University in any way. The completion of the survey constitutes your consent to participate.

In order to ensure the anonymity of all responses, please do not put your name on the survey. After you have completed the survey, please return it in the provided envelope or before Wednesday, May 24, 2006.

If you have questions about this study, please contact me at 419-235-7369 or by email at cathyyw@bignet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Patrick Paucken, Bowling Green State University, at 419-372-2550 or pauckenp@bignet.bgsu.edu with questions concerning the study. If you have questions or concerns about the conduct of the study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Woodward
EDAS Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Patrick Paucken
Dissertation Chair
Board Governance Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey about the board with which you work. The following statements describe a variety of possible actions by boards. Some of the statements may represent your own experiences with your board, while others may not. For each of the items, there are four possible choices. Please mark with a check (✓) the choice which most accurately describes your experience for each statement. There are no right or wrong answers; your personal views are what are important. You may write additional comments on the last page of the survey.

In order to ensure the anonymity of all responses, please do not put your name anywhere on the form. After you have completed all of the items, please return it in the provided envelope on or before Wednesday, May 24, 2006. Thank you.

As you begin, please check if this is a ☐ public school board
☐ community school board
☐ advisory ☐ policy making

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<th>Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This board works to reach consensus on important matters.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>The board has participated in discussions about what it should do differently as a result of a mistake the board made.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>There have been occasions where the board itself has acted in ways inconsistent with the district’s deepest values.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>This board has formal structures and procedures for involving the community.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>I have been in board meetings where it seemed that the subtleties of the issues we dealt with escaped the awareness of a number of the members.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Our board explicitly examines the downside or possible pitfalls of any important decision it is about to make.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Usually, the board and superintendent advocate the same actions.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>This board is more involved in trying to put out fires than in preparing for the future.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>The board sets clear organizational priorities for the year ahead.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>A written report including the board’s activities is periodically prepared and distributed publicly.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>This board communicates its decisions to all those who are affected by them.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>At least once every two years, our board has a retreat or special session to examine our performance, how well we are doing as a board.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Many of the issues that this board deals with seem to be separate tasks, unrelated to one another.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>The board will sharply question certain administrative proposals, requiring the superintendent to reconsider the recommendations.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>The board is always involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in our district.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>If our board thinks that an important group of constituents is likely to disagree with an action we are considering, we will make sure we learn how they feel before we actually make the decision.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Board members don’t say one thing in private and another thing in public.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>This board and its members maintain channels of communication with specific key community leaders.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>This board delays actions until an issue becomes urgent or critical.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>The board periodically sets aside time to learn more about important issues facing school districts like the one we govern.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>This board relies on the natural emergence of leaders rather than trying explicitly to cultivate future leaders for the board.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>This board has formed ad hoc committees or task forces that include staff and community representatives as well as board members.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>This board is as attentive to how it reaches conclusions as it is to what is decided.</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>The decisions of this board on one issue tend to influence what we do about other issues that come before us.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Most people on this board tend to rely on observation and informal discussions to learn about their roles and responsibilities.</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>This board’s decisions usually result in a split vote.</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>When faced with an important issue, the board often “brainstorms” and tries to generate a whole list of creative approaches or solutions to the problem.</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>When a new member joins this board, we make sure that someone serves as a mentor to help this person learn the ropes.</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>I have been in board meetings where explicit attention was given to the concerns of the community.</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Board members rarely disagree openly with other members in board meetings.</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>The board has participated in discussions about the effectiveness of its performance.</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>At our board meetings, there is at least as much dialogue among members as there is between members and administrators.</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>A certain group of board members will usually vote together for or against particular issues.</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>34. I have participated in discussions with new members about the roles and responsibilities of a board member.</td>
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<td>35. The board will often persuade the superintendent to change his mind about recommendations.</td>
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<td>36. The leadership of this board typically goes out of its way to make sure that all members have the same information on important issues.</td>
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<td>37. The board has adopted some explicit goals for itself, distinct from goals it has for the total school district.</td>
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<td>38. The board often requests that a decision be postponed until further information can be obtained.</td>
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<td>39. The board periodically obtains information on the perspective of staff and community.</td>
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<td>40. This board seeks outside assistance in considering its work.</td>
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<td>41. Our board meetings tend to focus more on current concerns than on preparing for the future.</td>
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<td>42. At least once a year, this board asks that the superintendent articulate his/her vision for the school district’s future and strategies to realize that vision.</td>
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<td>43. The board often requests additional information before making a decision.</td>
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<td>44. Board members have never received feedback on their performances as members of this board.</td>
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<td>45. The board often discusses its role in district management.</td>
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<td>46. This board has on occasion evaded responsibility for some important issue facing the school district.</td>
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<td>47. Before reaching a decision on important issues, this board usually requests input from persons likely to be affected by the decision.</td>
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<td>48. Recommendations from the administration are usually accepted with little questioning.</td>
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<td>49. Board members are consistently able to hold confidential items in confidence.</td>
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<td>50. This board often discusses where the school district should be headed five or more years into the future.</td>
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<td>51. The board president and superintendent confer so that differences of opinion are identified.</td>
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<td>52. This board does not allocate organizational funds for the purpose of board education and development.</td>
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<td>53. I have been present in board meetings where discussions of the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>54. The board usually receives a full rationale for the recommendations it is asked to act upon.</td>
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<td>55. At times this board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have within our service community.</td>
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<td>56. Within the past year, this board has reviewed the school district’s strategies for attaining its long-term goals.</td>
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<td>57. We are not a “rubber stamp” board.</td>
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<td>58. This board has conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities.</td>
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<td>59. Board members are able to speak their minds on key issues without fear that they will be ostracized by some members of this board.</td>
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<td>60. This board tries to avoid issues that are ambiguous and complicated.</td>
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<td>61. The administration rarely reports to the board on the concerns of those the school district serves.</td>
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<td>62. I have been in board meetings where the discussion focused on identifying or overcoming the school district’s weaknesses.</td>
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<td>63. This board often acts independent of the superintendent’s recommendations.</td>
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<td>64. Values are seldom discussed explicitly at our board meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>65. This board spends a lot of time listening to different points of view before it votes on an important matter.</td>
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<td>66. The board discusses events and trends in the larger environment that may present specific opportunities for this school district.</td>
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<td>67. The board is outspoken in its views about programs.</td>
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<td>68. Once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out.</td>
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<td>69. All board members support majority decisions.</td>
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<td>70. This board makes explicit use of the long-range priorities of this school district in dealing with current issues.</td>
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<td>71. The board will reverse its position based on pressure from the community.</td>
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<td>72. Members of this board are sometimes disrespectful in their comments to other board members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>73. More than half of this board’s time is spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district’s long-range future.</td>
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</table>
Thank you for completing this survey.
Please return it in the enclosed pre-addressed, stamped envelope on or before Wednesday, May 24, 2006.
Thank you.