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AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG POLICY DEVELOPMENT
PRACTICES OF JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARDS OF
EDUCATION, SCHOOL BOARD EFFECTIVENESS, AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Robert Downing Sommers, M.S.

The Ohio State University
1998

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Graduate Program in Agricultural Education
The purpose of this study was to improve understanding about school board policy development and its relationship to school board effectiveness and school district performance.

This was an exploratory study in the areas of school board policy development and the relationship of board policy development to board effectiveness and school performance. School board policy development rates, school district performance, and school board effectiveness were analyzed in the study.

Joint vocational school districts performed well on all performance indicators. There was no correlation between school board policy development rates and student performance.

The school boards studied seldom worked on school board policy development. When they were not acting on administrative matters, they were acting on their own board operations. Very few actions resulted in direction setting policy. Board actions related to school district performance, superintendents' evaluations, and staff compliance with board policy were scarce.

Boards generally considered themselves effective. They did see challenges in the areas of acquiring information, self-evaluation, and member development. Board members were generally pleased with their work, regardless of their school's performance. There was no statistically significant correlation between school district performance and school
board effectiveness ratings. There was no statistically significant correlation between board policy development and student performance.

The study recommended that (a) school boards should establish clear student performance expectations and policy adherence guidelines for their school districts and, in turn, devote significant attention to monitoring these areas on an ongoing basis, (b) school boards should view the effectiveness of their schools to produce student performance results as a key indicator of their own effectiveness, (c) school boards should engage in formal evaluation processes guided by the literature on quality board work, (d) school boards need to focus more time and action on linking with the community, and (f) the evaluation of superintendents should be an annual process.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to Roxann, Lorraine, and Robert
My family, my life, my friends

and

to Robert and Elizabeth
My parents and eternal supporters

iv
I wish to thank my advisors Dr. Kirby Barrick, until his departure to Illinois, and Dr. N. L. "Mac" McCaslin for their professionalism, perseverance, and commitment to excellence. They gently brought me through the labyrinth of the doctoral process with grace and sanity.

I thank Dr. G. James Pinchak and Dr. Darrell L. Parks for their belief in my abilities and for their encouragement to begin this journey.

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Thank you to all of the board members and superintendents who participated in the study. Their commitment to public education can never be questioned, their tasks are daunting, and their rewards purely personal.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff who provided quality instruction, good structure, and valuable assignments, as well as, assistance with the "bureaucratic" side of the process.
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FIELDS OF STUDY
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................ii
Dedication...........................................................................................................................................iv
Acknowledgments ...............................................................................................................................v
VITA ............................................................................................................................................................vi
Table Of Contents ..............................................................................................................................vii
List Of Tables .....................................................................................................................................xi
List Of Figures ...................................................................................................................................xiii

### Chapters

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................................1
   1.1.1. Importance of School Board Governance ..............................................2
   1.1.2. Understanding of the Role of the School Board .........................4
   1.1.3. Reactive Nature of School Boards ..................................................7
   1.1.4. Devolution of School Governance ...............................................9

1.2. Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................10
1.3. Purpose and Objectives ..........................................................................................12
1.4. Significance of the Study .......................................................................................13
1.5. Limitations ................................................................................................................14
1.6. Assumptions .............................................................................................................15
1.7. Definition of Terms .................................................................................................15

2. Review Of Literature ...........................................................................................................18
   2.1. Joint Vocational School District Structures and Operational
        Characteristics ............................................................................................18
   2.2. Definition and Classification of Board and Administrative Policy ........21
   2.3. Determination of School Board Effectiveness .................................29
       2.3.1. Understanding and Representing the Owner's Expectations .......30
       2.3.2. Envisioning the Future .................................................................38
2.3.3. Acquiring Information ................................................................. 40
2.3.4. Establishing Educational Priorities .............................................. 43
2.3.5. Measuring School District Progress .............................................. 46
2.3.6. Board Operation and Self-assessment ......................................... 49
2.3.7. Member Development ................................................................. 53
2.3.8. Summary ..................................................................................... 55

2.4. Definition and Quantification of School District Performance
       Adjusted for Socioeconomic Factors .................................................. 56
2.4.1. Student Performance Measures ................................................... 57
2.4.2. Demographic Variables Impacting Student Performance ............... 59

3. Methodology ...................................................................................... 64
3.1. Type of Research ............................................................................ 64
3.2. Population and Sample ................................................................. 65
3.3. Instrumentation ............................................................................... 65
       3.3.1. Policy Classification Process .................................................. 65
       3.3.2. School Board Effectiveness ..................................................... 66
       3.3.3. School Performance ............................................................... 67
3.4. Methods of Data Collection ............................................................ 69
       3.4.1. Policy Classification ................................................................. 70
       3.4.2. School Board Effectiveness ..................................................... 72
       3.4.3. School Performance ............................................................... 74
3.5. Analysis of Data ............................................................................. 74
       3.5.1. Policy Classification ................................................................. 75
       3.5.2. School Board Effectiveness ..................................................... 75
       3.5.3. School Performance ............................................................... 75
       3.5.4. Correlation Between Board Percentage of Effort and Board
              Effectiveness ............................................................................... 75
       3.5.5. Correlation Between Board Policy Development and School
              Performance ............................................................................... 76

4. Findings ............................................................................................. 77
4.1. Determine the Extent to Which Joint Vocational School District
       Boards of Education Engage in School Board Policy Development ....... 77
       4.1.1. Ends Sought ............................................................................. 79
       4.1.2. Executive Limitations ............................................................... 80
       4.1.3. Board-Executive Relations ..................................................... 81
       4.1.4. Board Process ......................................................................... 82
4.1.5. Administrative........................................................................................... 83

4.2. Determine Joint Vocational School District Boards of Education Effectiveness .................................................. 84

4.2.1. Understanding and Representing Owner's Expectations................. 84

4.2.2. Envisioning the Future Generally and the School's Role in this Expected Future...................................................... 85

4.2.3. Acquiring Information for Decision Making........................................ 88

4.2.4. Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff ...... 88

4.2.5. Measuring School Performance and Staff Policy Adherence......... 91

4.2.6. Board Operation and Evaluation........................................................... 91

4.2.7. Member Development.............................................................................. 94

4.3. Determine the Relationship Between the Level of Joint Vocational School District Boards of Education Policy Development and Board Effectiveness ................................................................................. 97


4.4.1. Student Placement Rate ................................................................. 97

4.4.2. Ohio 9th Grade Proficiency Passage Rate ..................................... 99

4.4.3. Student Attendance Rate ............................................................... 100

4.4.4. Instructional Expenditures Rate ......................................................... 101

4.4.5. Disadvantaged Student Rate ............................................................ 102

4.4.6. Ninth Grade Proficiency Passage Rate Prior to Program Entry... 104

4.5. Determine the Relationship Between the Level of Joint Vocational School District Boards of Education Policy Development and School Performance ................................................................................. 105

5. Summary, Conclusions, And Recommendations.................................................. 108

5.1. Statement of the Problem ............................................................................. 109

5.2. Purpose and Objectives .................................................................................. 110

5.3. Methodology .............................................................................................. 111

5.4. Findings ....................................................................................................... 112

5.5. Major findings.............................................................................................. 113

5.6. Conclusions ............................................................................................... 115

5.7. Recommendations ....................................................................................... 116

5.7.1. Theory............................................................................................... 116

5.7.2. Practice............................................................................................... 117

5.7.3. Further research..................................................................................... 119
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Internal consistency of each section of the school board effectiveness survey</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Return rates for the board effectiveness survey</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by number of board actions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of ends sought actions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of executive limitations</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of board-executive relations</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of board process actions</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of administrative actions</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding understanding and</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>representing owner's expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding envisioning the future</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>generally and the school's role in this expected future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding acquiring information</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions establishing educational</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priorities for the school and its staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding measuring school</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>performance and staff policy adherence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding board operation and</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Frequency of board responses to questions regarding member development</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Board effectiveness ratings</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by placement rate......99
18 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by 9th Grade Proficiency Test passage rates.................................................................100
19 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by student attendance rates.................................................................................................101
20 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by instructional expenditure rates......................................................................................102
21 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by disadvantaged student rates .........................................................................................103
22 Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by 9th Grade Proficiency Test passage rates prior to program entry.................................105
23 Statistically significant correlations between performance, adjustment, and board policy development rates.................................................................107
LIST OF FIGURES

1 Carver Governance Model .............................................................. 27
School systems are complex entities operating within the social fabric of communities. The connection between school systems and communities are school boards. School boards operate between these two distinct, but interrelated, human enterprises.

School boards are the representative owners of school systems (Baker & Carey, 1992). They are chosen, either by election or appointment, to represent the communities interest in educating their population (Baker & Carey, 1992). Therefore, they are a political body responsible for setting the direction and demeanor of the performance of school systems.

The local school board is an American institution (Cistone, 1975). Its existence began with the first public schools in America and continues today. The role of the school board, in theory, has been to provide local democratic control of the nation's school districts (Baker & Carey, 1992). Lay responsibility for public education is a cherished American tradition (Usdan et al., 1986). Theory and practice often do not match perfectly but school boards have been viewed as the ultimate authority in the governance of schools (Governance, 1992)

The 49 joint vocational school districts (JVSD) in Ohio are school systems with a specific purpose -- to provide high quality work force education to students from associate schools (Sanders, 1994). The more focused purpose of these select school districts makes
them at once unique, yet very similar to other school districts. They have boards of education, just like other school districts. They deal with students, teachers, and communities. Yet they focus their efforts on one portion of the educational experiences of a student. They work with multiple and sometimes very different communities (Legislature, 1996).

Because of the important role the school board plays in the success of school systems, it seems appropriate to research questions about board effectiveness and operation (Usdan et al., 1986). Because of the unique nature of joint vocational school district boards of education, it seems especially important to explore operational processes they use to fulfill their board responsibilities (Legislature, 1996).

Importance of School Board Governance

School boards are major players in school governance (Cunningham, 1985). Governance is the process of keeping the organizational "ship" afloat, headed in the right direction, and moving with due speed (Gardner, 1990). Theoretically, when a school board does its job correctly, the school administration and staff are clear about their responsibilities to results and to process (Carver, 1995). Because mission, vision, and accountability have been so important, the group that establishes them, oversees them, and nurtures them has also been important (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). School boards by law and by understanding have been charged with this responsibility (Carver, 1990).

Mission, vision, and accountability for results have often been nebulous subjects that have been difficult to see and feel and therefore focusing on them has also been difficult. This difficulty has been compounded when school board constituents have been more concerned with administrative and teaching staff activities on a daily basis than they
have been with the overall mission of the school (Carver, 1990). Consider parents, often they have been more concerned about their child's lunch experience than where the school's social responsibility rests. School boards have been forced to confront these daily activity issues or be viewed as unresponsive to the people that elected them.

Given the vagueness of larger policy issues like mission and given the clarity of daily activities, it has not been surprising to find that school boards drifted toward daily school activities and abdicated their responsibility for governance. As a result, school boards left their role of governance and entered the role of administrator, teacher, custodian, or coach. The majority of school boards were either occasionally or often involved in administrative activities (Holifield, Dickinson & Hunter, 1993). School board policy manuals were full of administrative policies and were often so unwieldy that they were useless in the governance of school districts (Carver, 1990).

The problem has been that these issues buried boards and left no time for real governance issues. The following statement captures the sentiment of much of the literature on the importance of governance:

More [board] time should be spent on educational issues and less time on administrative responsibilities and what the public perceives as trivial matters (Usdan et al., 1986, p. 76).

Another example of this problem was captured in the following statement.

The most extensive study of school boards ever conducted (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974) has recently concluded that the prevalent view among contemporary students of educational politics is well founded: school boards have largely ceased to exercise their representative and policy-making functions; for the most part they do not govern, but merely legitimate the policy recommendations of school superintendents (Cistone, 1975, p. 103).
Carver (1990) stated that efforts must be made to improve the understanding of governance by school board members. Holifield et al. (1993) described this view in terms of relationships.

Defining and describing what embodies policy making and what differentiates it from administration appear to be significant tasks in achieving proper symbiotic school board/superintendent relations (p. 62).

Holifield et al. (1993) found superintendents were very interested in helping their boards understand what constituted governance versus administration. The same interest was held by board members (Usdan et al., 1986).

Understanding of the Role of the School Board

The role of the school board has changed over the decades. Originally, the school board was responsible for day-to-day management of the schools. In fact, the first superintendent was not hired until 1837 in Buffalo, New York (Hentges, 1984). As late as the early 1900s school boards could be found legitimating administering final exams to graduating students. In urban centers, school boards were often quite large and were directly involved with hiring and contracting. Board membership was often considered a political spoil of municipal government and board members wielded considerable power. They often were corrupt, hiring their friends and building buildings for their own profit (Hentges, 1984).

With the advent of larger schools and the emergence of the superintendency, school boards were transformed to policy making bodies. As early as 1895 the Draper Report, commissioned by the National Education Association, called for the school board to be the "legislative" branch of education. This coupled with an increasing state and federal
presence changed the role and nature of school boards. Today, it has been generally accepted that school boards are the governance body of school districts, deriving their power from the state (Baker & Carey, 1992). There has been no apparent disagreement, in theory, about the governance role of the school board (Baker & Carey, 1992; Cunningham, 1985; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).

The role of the school board, however, has been a complex one. Usdan (1986) noted the following factors affecting the role of the school board: (a) state constitutions, (b) state statutory provisions, (c) court decisions, (d) attorney general opinions, (e) rules and regulations of state boards of education, (f) board member expectations, (g) relationships with teachers [and teacher unions], (h) superintendent strength, (i) voter behavior, (j) educational expectations of parents and communities, and (k) the media. The people behind these factors typically placed a diverse set of demands upon school boards (Eliot, 1959). A parent's concern for the safety of a school crossing, a teacher union's concern for wages, a citizen's concern for morality, a state's concern for work force development, a superintendent's concern for facilities improvements, and a board member's concern for a new curriculum all came together in the board room (Freeman, Underwood & Fortune, 1991). Each issue competed for time, energy, and understanding. Some of them were legitimate governance issues and some were not. Some may have had a governance issue involved, but may also have contained administrative issues.

Clarifying the most critical role of the school board and operationalizing that role would benefit school board members and the constituents that place demands upon them. Some parts of the role of school boards have already been well defined. For example, it has been clear that board members cannot act on their own, but only through board policy and vote (Baker & Carey, 1992). But little has been done to operationalize the clarity of governance purpose or policy development.
School board members and the public both have problems with understanding the governance role of school boards (Heim, 1990; Usdan et al., 1986; Zald, 1969). The problem of understanding is particularly pronounced in the area of policy development versus policy administration. The clearest manifestation of this problem is the board–superintendent relationship. According to Baker and Carey (1992):

The superintendent is the chief executive officer for the board and school district, while the board of education is the legislative body of the school district (p. 17).

This has been a commonly held belief that has not been disputed in any of the literature and yet in practice this division of labor rarely existed (Carver, 1990; Cistone, 1975; Governance, 1992; Holifield et al., 1993). School boards have become involved in administration and have abdicated their responsibility for policy development to the administration. On the later issue, it was noted:

Even with these substantial resources at their disposal, school boards do not emerge as the dominant power in all school districts. Several reasons have been suggested why this is so. The role of the school board member is often poorly defined and ambiguous. It is ‘...simply an accretion of customs, attitudes, and legal precedents without much specificity. Many school board members...move in a sea of confusion about their powers.’ Most board members are limited in their resources of time and information (Hentges, 1984, p. 52).

The literature suggests that most schools would benefit from a clearer understanding of the role of the school board, especially as it relates to interaction with the superintendent in developing and implementing policy (Hentges, 1984; Usdan et al., 1986). The literature also suggests most schools would benefit from understanding what actions and behaviors constitute an effective board (Cistone, 1975).
Reactive Nature of School Boards

School board members by virtue of position, should be primary initiators of educational improvement and reform (Cunningham, 1985). After all, they have been the elected "owners" of the educational enterprise -- who better to bring about improvement. School board initiated educational reform and improvement, however, has been rare. Most reform efforts have come from other sources, such as state departments of education, the federal government, universities, and education professionals (Usdan et al., 1986). Irrespective of the causes, school boards seem to have been relegated a reactive role in the educational reform process.

At the local level, school boards have often reacted to administrative or community recommendations instead of identifying problems and initiating efforts to correct them. According to a Rand study of six major city schools that had improved performance, school boards were seldom the motivating factor or inventors of the changes that improved performance (Governance, 1992).

School boards seem to have become the passengers rather than the drivers of educational decision making and policy development. Hentges (1984) noted:

Even though school boards are endowed with formal and legal authority for making policy decisions for the school district, they often do not emerge as the dominant power. There is evidence that superintendents and their bureaucracies govern educational decision making (p. 56).

The reactive nature of school boards has resulted from misplaced priorities and a lack of understanding of role responsibility. For example, a study of West Virginia school boards found that only 5% of their time was spent on educational policy development, policy implementation oversight, and curriculum (Carver, 1991) even though these same board members indicated they were highly involved in educational decision making. Administrative issues and micro-management consumed the remainder of the time.
Without a clear focus on policy development and oversight, school boards have found it difficult to move from administration to governance.

At the state level, school boards also have been absent from the educational policy debate. Indictments like the following have typified the status of school boards in the state policy development arena.

But in no state did boards or superintendents, acting collectively through their state associations, put forth a reform agenda, produce a cogent analysis of the issues, or seriously question the structure, processes, and content of public education (Governance, 1992, p. 30).

The pattern of local school boards playing a reactive role to state policy making continues (Governance, 1992, p. 65).

According to Usdan et al. (1986),

Board agendas historically, however, have not displayed a major concern with issues that dominate the current state policy agenda: 1) teacher assessment, 2) curricular quality and coherence, 3) economic competition, 4) enhancing school building leadership (p. 113).

The absence of school board input and leadership in the state level policy development arena has been especially perplexing when one considers the impact of state and federal policy on the daily work of the typical school board. In fact, one of the major complaints from school boards has been the intrusion of state policy into the heretofore domain of school board decision making (Freeman et al., 1991).

The impact of a reactive stance on the part of the school board to educational reform has placed the school board in peril. According to the authors of Facing the Challenge: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on School Governance (1992),

The newfound activism of states stems from a loss of confidence in the ability of many local districts to provide high-quality education (p. 63).
This loss of confidence has not only been confined to state leaders, but permeates local publics as well. Usdan et al. (1986) reported that:

The public seems to be dissatisfied with the way local control has impacted educational policy. They have become disillusioned at the inability of local control to improve education (p. 75).

In essence, school boards have needed to either exercise their governance power or lose it. Establishing a clear sense of what governance policy is, what impacts on effective boards, and defining policy development that will lead to proactive leadership should help correct the reactive nature of boards.

**Devolution of School Governance**

Home schooling, vouchers, site-based management, downsizing of state and federal education bureaucracies, teacher empowerment, school councils, and building-based parent boards are all changes that have been occurring in education (Boggs, Vedder & Eckes, 1992). Together they have constituted a major shift in governance of education from centralized decision making to grass roots control (Chubb & Moe, 1990). The devolution of school governance has had, and will continue to have a profound effect on the school board and its role in educational reform.

The shift of decision making away from federal and state level agencies has been promoted by the current political agenda (Governance, 1992). This shift has occurred at the same time that states are exerting an ever increasing control over schools through accountability measures, legislation, and court findings. School boards could have been well positioned to provide leadership in this new environment.
The leadership of boards is critical to the success of reforms such as those of the second wave that require basic organizational change, devolution of or at least broadened participation in education decisions, a shift to greater accountability for student achievement, further rigor in the curriculum, linkages to agencies providing other essential human services, methods of easing the transition into the world of work, and greater equity in access to quality education (Governance, 1992, p. 37).

Working with more diverse decision making systems, however, has required school boards to be confident in their role within the system (Cunningham, 1985). It has also required boards to be proactive, aggressive bodies focused on the improvement of educational performance (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Finally, it has required boards to be good partners, capable of doing their jobs without meddling in the jobs of other partners (Dykes, 1965).

According to the authors of Facing the Challenge: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on School Governance (1992), the prospects are good that school boards will continue as the primary local governance structure. This has meant they must be better equipped to make educational policy decisions and must be motivators of education improvement. These prospects would have improved if school boards would have had clearer methods of determining board quality.

Statement of the Problem

Research on the teaching and learning process, teacher capabilities, educational technology, and administrative designs abound, but research on the governance of public schools is shallow and of limited use (Association, 1975; Governance, 1992; Usdan et al., 1986; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). The authors of Facing the Challenge: Report of the
Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on School Governance (1992) sum up the position of the literature reviewed when they noted:

There are very few extensive studies of school boards (p. 69).

The lack of research has gone beyond the issue of quantity, a problem that was never refuted in the literature. There has been a lack of research linking the function of governance to school performance. Board research has shed little light on the question of school board impact. This has left the research community with little understanding of the role of school boards in school effectiveness and student performance (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). With the increasing concern by non-educators for results and performance-based school operation, the lack of research linking effective school boards to student performance leaves educators no indication as to the usefulness or importance of school boards. In fact, Cistone noted as early as 1975, without substantive improvement in linking school board work with effectiveness of schools the

...viability of school boards is very much in question (p. 265).

Dismissals of school boards in Cleveland and Chicago showed the immediacy of the school board relevance issue.

The lack of research has also provided few answers about ways to improve the school board–superintendent relationship.

We agree with Bidwell that the division of labor between board and superintendent is a neglected and crucial area of research (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974, p. 9).

This view was reinforced in later literature and was expanded to include the issue of policy making (Lyman, 1993). Because the theoretical role of the school board was policy
development and the theoretical role of the superintendent was administration of policy, research on the division of labor between these two entities naturally dealt with policy development and administration (Carver, 1990). However, research has seldom dealt with this important, albeit, complex issue.

School board literature has been clear about the theoretical role of school boards. School board practice has rarely matched this theoretical role. School board research has done little to help boards clarify the difference between governance policy development and policy deployment. School boards have had little evidence of their impact on student performance, the emerging benchmark of choice for educational advocates and critics for determining what changes need to occur in educational systems.

Joint vocational school districts are responsible for policy development (Legislature, 1996). These policies have been to guide the school districts operation and should have impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of the school district. Information on what activities and what types of policies impact on school district effectiveness was not available. This study addressed this problem by responding to the basic question — How can joint vocational school district boards of education determine when they are engaged in governance activities that are positively correlated with board effectiveness and school performance?

**Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to improve understanding about school board policy development and its relationship to school board effectiveness and school district performance.
The objectives that guided this study were to:

1. Determine the extent to which joint vocational school district boards of education engage in school board policy development.
2. Determine joint vocational school district boards of education effectiveness.
3. Determine the relationship between the level of joint vocational school district boards of education policy development and board effectiveness.
5. Determine the relationship between the level of joint vocational school district boards of education policy development and school performance.

**Significance of the Study**

If school boards are to respond to society's demand for improved education and if they are going to assert themselves as useful agents of school governance, they will need better methods for evaluating their own policy development performance and will need to know what types of policy development is associated with effective board operation and student performance.

School boards need to be able to efficiently determine when they are engaged in board level governance activities versus administrative management. Further, school boards need some indication of what actions positively impact student and school performance. This study tries to address these two problems.

In Ohio, local school boards have been granted considerable power of governance by the constitution and the legislature (Baker & Carey, 1992). They have had the authority to establish budgets, make personnel decisions, and directly control all aspects of school
district policy unless otherwise dictated by state law, standard, or court decree. The extent to which school boards exercise this authority, delegate it, or ignore it has been the center of debate for decades (Hentges, 1984).

Research that will lead to a better understanding of the governance role of school boards and how this role may affect school board effectiveness and school performance is important. This importance can be defended from several perspectives including: (a) a lack of research regarding school governance, (b) the importance of the school board in school governance, (c) the need for general understanding the role of the school board in effective schools, (d) the importance of school boards to be proactive in school improvement, and (e) the emerging devolution of school governance.

Limitations

This study was an exploratory study that analyzed information from a selected group of school boards and their respective schools. The findings were limited to the population of the study.

The methods employed to determine board effectiveness included survey instruments that measured each board member’s perceptions of board effectiveness. These instruments may have measured the most recent sense of board effectiveness of the respondents rather than the long term effectiveness actually achieved by each school board. This could have resulted from recent problems or recent important successes that had masked the regular operations of the board. Without a longitudinal study within each of the school districts, it was impossible to compensate for this limitation.
The study relied on performance and financial information provided by the Ohio Department of Education's education management information system. Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the data, but the volume of data and the multiple sources of the data could have created inaccurate source data.

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions were used by the researcher while completing this study.

1. Board members were sufficiently familiar with their operations and their school districts to have an opinion about their board's effectiveness.
2. School district personnel followed state guidelines and definitions when they reported performance and demographic data.
3. The student performance measures collected by the Ohio Department of Education accurately reflected the joint vocational school districts' mission.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of terms will be used.

**Board policy** - Board policy was defined as the policies that meet three basic criteria. First, they dealt with one or more of the following categories: (a) ends sought, those policies that establish results sought by the school; (b) executive limitations, those
policies that establish prudent and ethical limits on the choices staff may take in accomplishing the ends sought; (c) board-executive relationships, those policies that establish the manner in which power is passed to the administration and the assessment methods used to determine if the power is properly used; and (d) board process, those policies that establish the way in which the board will operate. Second, they were policies that defined and enhanced the decisionmaking capacity of the school administration and staff. Third, they were developed in a logical progression from the broadest treatment of one of the above policy areas to the most narrow treatment of the same issue. (Carver, 1990; Carver, 1995)

**School board actions** - For the purposes of this study, school board actions were used to determine board policy development. They were limited to those items that appeared in minutes as votes or as presentations to the board on meeting agendas. School boards acted through school board vote and policy (Baker & Carey, 1992). Whether or not school boards used their authority to govern schools depends on what they committed to vote and to policy statement. School board members carried out various activities individually or collectively that could impact on school operations, but the only official actions of the board and presentations to the board were considered within the scope of this study.

**Staff policy** - Staff policy was considered all policy that was not board policy. In practice, staff policy included those policies necessary for a school district administration to effectively and efficiently carry out board policy plus those policies required by law, standard, or court action.

**Disadvantaged student rate** - The percentage of students attending a school district that are economically or academically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged students come from families with annual incomes less than the federally established poverty level. Students are identified as economically disadvantaged if they are eligible for free or
reduced lunches or come from families receiving aid to dependent children welfare aid. Academically disadvantaged students are at least one grade level behind their cohort group in school.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to complete the research, the following areas were investigated through a review of the literature.

1. Joint vocational school district structures and operational characteristics.
2. Definition and classification of board and administrative policy.
3. Determination of school board effectiveness.
4. Definition and quantification of school district performance adjusted for socioeconomic factors.

These areas were used to present the summary of the literature.

Joint Vocational School District Structures and Operational Characteristics

The Ohio Legislature passed ORC 3311.16 in 1963. This law required school districts to provide at least 12 different vocational programs in at least 20 different classes to every high school student. Exceptions were provided to schools with unusually large numbers of students attending college upon graduation. Major city districts and some larger suburban districts were able to comply with the law with their own programs. A few smaller schools, especially in suburban areas formed consortia to comply with the law.
The remaining small schools were provided the option to join with other school districts to form joint vocational school districts. Thus the joint vocational school districts (JVSD) were created. Ohio has been divided into 95 vocational education planning districts, each complying with the legal mandate for vocational education in one of three ways: (a) provide all programs within a single district (n = 28), (b) provide programs through legal contracts in several different districts (n = 18), or (c) provide vocational education using a joint vocational school district (n = 49) (Pinchak, 1994).

The 49 Ohio JVSDs were created as legally recognized independent school districts to provide vocational education to schools insufficiently large to provide such programs for themselves. JVSDs have been primarily rural in nature, however, several now serve major suburban areas due to population changes since their creation. JVSDs are physically separate facilities located within the boundaries of the associate schools they serve.

Although the result of decisions made by voters in regular school districts, the JVSDs have been autonomously governed and financed. JVSDs could and did levy taxes on property within all of the associate school districts that created them. JVSD boards made decisions regarding the JVSDs curriculum, staffing, mission, and facilities just as any other Ohio school board. JVSD financing has been independent of associate schools. State and federal funding has gone directly to JVSDs for the programs they operate (Pinchak, 1994).

JVSD school boards have been made up of representatives from either associate school boards or county school boards. Either method of school board creation produced two unique characteristics of JVSD boards. First, no JVSD board members has been specifically elected to serve on a JVSD board. They have been elected to serve on another school board and then were appointed by these board to the JVSD board. Second, all JVSD board members have represented the interests of the school districts making up the JVSD (Legislature, 1996).
JVSD school boards have been larger than other Ohio school district boards. They have ranged in size from 5 to 33 members (Pinchak, 1994). The variation in size has been due to the desire to have representation from all associate school districts. For example, the largest number of associate school districts being served by a single JVSD district has been the Great Oaks Joint Vocational School District in southwestern Ohio. Its board has been made up of one representative from each of the 33 associate schools (Pinchak, 1994). All JVSD boards have been smaller than 33, usually ranging from 5 to 9.

As noted earlier, some JVSD boards use the county school board to represent all associate schools served by the county board. In these cases, the associate schools representation has not come directly from its own board of education, but has come from its connection with the county school board (Legislature, 1996).

JVSDs have not provided sports activities or transportation. These and other non-vocational services have been provided by the associate school. Students attending the JVSD have not been considered students of the JVSD for graduation purposes, but remain students of the associate school (Legislature, 1996). JVSDs have normally provided required academic coursework and have only recently expanded non-vocational services provided the students attending their schools for vocational education. Some JVSDs have provided counseling, remediation, career information, and satellite vocational program services to associate schools for students not attending the JVSD (Pinchak, 1994).

JVSDs normally have served students enrolled in their associate schools as juniors or seniors, although recent trends have shown an increase in services to freshman and sophomore students who are at least 16 years of age (Pinchak, 1994). In 1994-95, JVSDs served approximately 38,000 students using approximately 3,300 staff members. (Sanders, 1994) In addition to secondary enrollment, JVSDs served adult students. Adult students have often outnumbered secondary students, but their class tenures varied significantly.
In summary, the 49 JVSDs have been legally recognized independent school
districts specifically created to provide vocational education to students enrolled in schools
too small to comply with the 1963 legislative requirement for vocational education access.
JVSD school boards have been made up of representatives from the communities they
serve. JVSD school boards have normally been larger than other Ohio school district
boards. JVSDs have served a range of students from youth to adults. JVSD boards have
operated in the same environments and under the same legal authority that other school
boards have.

Definition and Classification of Board and Administrative Policy

The school board has been the legal governance body of a school district. They
have derived their power from the state and the community (Baker & Carey, 1992). The
state has granted school boards sweeping decision making powers while limiting their
ultimate control through law, standard, and budget. The community has granted the school
board decision making authority through election. Boards have operated through vote and
policy statement. Every school district has maintained a set of board policies as either a
separate document or embedded in the minutes of the board.

School board policy has, in theory, dealt with any issue left to a board to decide
upon by law, standard, or court decree (Baker & Carey, 1992). In other words, board
policy has really been anything a board wanted it to be (Heim, 1990). Practically,
however, any board must prioritize its work. For example, a Tucson, Arizona school
board was so deeply involved in day-to-day school affairs that it convened 173 meetings in
one year (Toch, 1994). This was clearly beyond the expectation of board membership in most communities.

A board must also recognize the importance of administrative expertise in fulfilling the goals of the school.

A board should not attempt to manage an institution except in the rarest of circumstances. Administrators, including poor ones, cannot logically be held accountable for operations if their managerial duties and authority have been taken over. Poor management should be improved or the administrators replaced (Seitz, 1994, p. 74).

Finally, a board must recognize its own limits of intellectual capacity. The following demonstrated the importance placed on policy as a prioritization tool.

Know the difference between policy and administration. You sit on the board to make policy and insure that policy is carried out. You are not an administrator (Wiles and Bondi, 1985, p. 34).

Defining the difference between policy and administration was less clear than the call for such a distinction to occur in positive board-superintendent relations. While the literature was consistent in its view that there should be a difference between policy development and administration of this policy, it was rare to discover proposed ways to define the difference clearly.

Some authors questioned whether or not a clear separation of the responsibilities could actually exist. Although rare, the following statement captures the sentiment of a portion of the literature on the topic of policy/administration separation.

The superintendent, as was noted above, is responsible for making policy recommendations to the board while avoiding interference in the policy decisions of the board. Can these expectations be considered dichotomous? Where does one draw the line between the role expectations of superintendent and school board (Hentges, 1984, p. 54)?
Arguments along the same line were made that no clear demarcation between the policy and the executive functions. These arguments supported the notion that superintendents were substantially involved in the policy making process and boards continued to delve into the executive functions (Pitner, 1978).

The greater portion of the literature, however, championed the efforts of boards to differentiate between policy development and deployment. One of the most critical questions before boards was "How do boards differentiate between the board's policy making role and the superintendent's administrative responsibilities?" (Usdan et al., 1986).

Wiles and Bondi (1985, p. 7) suggests the following are the major duties of boards: (a) the selection of the superintendent, (b) the establishment of procedures and policies for program offerings and educational services, (c) the establishment of policies related to planning improvements and accountability, (d) the purchasing and maintaining property, (e) the financing public schools, (f) the personnel policies, and (g) the evaluation of school performance. These major duties did not clearly differentiate the roles of boards and administration. They defined areas of responsibility, but although Wiles and Bondi encouraged a separation of policy and administration, the areas of responsibility were not defined in those terms. For example, purchasing and maintaining property clearly included policy issues and administrative issues.

Wiles and Bondi (1985) suggested the following definitions as a way of distinguishing between policy and administration.

Board policies are general principles which give the board and administration direction in managing the school system. Board rules generally refer to the structure of the board itself and the way it operates as well as describing general duties of certain administrative officers. Board regulations generally involve certain guidelines and procedures for the governance of the school system. Both rules and regulations contain board policy (p. 40).
This definition was somewhat problematic because it defined board policy as a set of issues and then indicated each of these issues "contain" board policy. Attempting to clarify the difference between board policy and administration has often resulted in more confusion than clarity.

The American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association (Administrators & Association, 1984) were equally elusive about the difference between policy development and policy administration when they noted:

...the textbook definition of where the board's role ends (policy making) and the administration's role begins (policy advice and implementation) is alive and well. The two jobs are probably not absolutely distinct in any school district; but there are legal and practical reasons for continuing to strive toward the textbook ideal (p. 9).

Once again there was a desire to differentiate without a clear method to do so.

A more definitive line of demarcation was noted in the following:

A policy is a guideline which the board adopts officially to direct a course of action or make a statement of fact. A rule gives the detailed procedure for putting a policy into practice. Generally, rules are developed by administrators..... (Seitz, 1994, p. 49).

This definition described the difference between policy and administration to be in the level of decisions. Policy has generally been portrayed as those writings, actions, or edicts that help clarify the purpose and direction of the administration. The general sense of the literature was to consider administrative actions to be those that require an understanding of the details of the circumstances, whereas policies were actions that require an understanding of a desired state (Gardner, 1990; Seitz, 1994).
Baker and Carey (1992) suggested the following as a way to separate policy development and deployment.

After policies have been adopted, administrative procedures are established. The board should then depend upon its superintendent to implement these policies, goals and objectives through the agreed-to procedures (p. 18).

Within this separation scheme was the continuing theme of levels of decision making. The board defined the broad range decision and the administration filled in the details beneath this umbrella.

Usdan et al. (1986) attempted to clarify the proper policy making role of the board when he and his fellow authors provided a potential list of policy roles for school boards.

- Defining and advocating for the education and related needs of students.
- Setting standards and adopting policies for personnel selection, evaluation, and professional development.
- Appraising curriculum in terms of district needs, goals and objectives.
- Continuous goal setting, policy development and appraisal for the system.
- Raising community aspirations for educational excellence.
- Working for school system and community focus on access and equity for students.
- Providing visible leadership for public education in the community.
- Maintaining system and community focus on student achievement and improving student achievement.
- Expanding the number and types of constituencies that support and actively participate in public education.
- Providing leadership for financial support of the school system and allocation of resources to support the goals and objectives of school districts.
• Capitalizing on the national education reform momentum and initiating reforms appropriate to local needs and goals.
• Translating state legislation and regulations for local needs and goals.

This list contained indications of a different type of policy role for boards, community interaction. The list also continued the focus on the level of board decisions versus administrative decisions.

The only definitive governance model found in the literature review was by Carver (1995). His system was the only attempt at defining and operationalizing a comprehensive governance model that focused board activities on specific issues and administration on other issues. The model began by defining the role of the board to be purely policy development and community representation. Carver's model defined the role of the board to be leadership through progressive policy and communication in the following areas:

1. **Ends**: The organizational "swap" with the world. What human needs are to be met, for whom, and at what cost. Ends policies define the results to be sought by the institution including the performance factors necessary to operationalize these ends. Ends policies also define the impact the institution will have on the community.

2. **Executive Limitations**: Those principles of prudence and ethics that limit the choice of staff means (practices, activities, circumstances, methods).

3. **Board-Executive Relationship**: The manner in which power is passed to the executive machinery and assessment of the use of that power.

4. **Board Process**: The manner in which the board represents the "ownership" and provides strategic leadership to the organization. Board process policies must especially define how the board will find out what the community really wants from their institution (the ends sought) (p. 38)
Carver proposed a multistage "test" for determining what was and was not legitimate board policy. These tests were as follows:

1. Does the proposed topic fit within one of the four policy areas (e.g. executive limitations)?
2. Will a decision on this topic improve the capacity for the administration and staff to make decisions? A converse test can be: Will a decision on this topic remove all decision making capacity from the administration?
3. Have decisions about this topic been made from the broadest possible interpretation to the narrowest interpretation without missing any intervening steps?

Figure 1: Carver Governance Model
Carver's governance model was consistent with other literature on the role of boards. It also embodied the general view of the literature regarding the activities most important to boards (Administrators & Association, 1984; Dykes, 1965; Seitz, 1994). Carver's governance model was consistent with the view that the board works from the largest issues to the narrowest, passing the final minutia to the administration. The Carver Model was also consistent with the view of Usdan, et al (1986) regarding the role of the board in community outreach and understanding. Finally it was consistent with Baker's premise regarding policies as a definition of what a board wants from the administration (Baker & Carey, 1992).

An interesting twist in the policy development-deployment debate was legislation. Many times the decisions boards make were required in law. These laws were often targeted at very specific administrative methods of accomplishing education. For example, defining the items to be found on emergency information cards for school district students. The board had to deal with these mandatory decisions regardless of whether they were logically board responsibility or administration responsibility. Many such decisions that were required by law for Ohio school boards have been documented. These laws have created perplexing circumstances for boards trying to avoid meddling in administrative activities (Baker & Carey, 1992).

In summary, school boards have been legal governance bodies which work within the constraints of law, standard, and court decree. When functioning correctly, they have prioritized their work and have recognized the difference between policy and administrative operations. The difference between policy and administration, however, has not been as clear as the desired. The literature showed several attempts at clarifying this line of demarcation through identification of the major duties of a board, defining the circumstances surrounding good board policy, or defining policy areas within which a
board should work. However, the only comprehensive system of defining policy and administration was the Carver Governance model. The model defined the types of policies; ends, executive limitations, board-executive relationships, and board processes; and it defined the circumstances and levels appropriate for boards to operate within. The one twist in the clarification of board policy and administrative action was legislated decisionmaking. The legislature has regularly moved administrative issues into the board's responsibilities.

**Determination of School Board Effectiveness**

School board effectiveness has been determined by how a board discharges its responsibilities. Although diverse, school board responsibilities can be grouped as follows:

1. understanding and representing the owners expectations for the school district,
2. envisioning the future generally and the role of the school district in this expected future,
3. acquiring information for decision making, especially ensuring independent sources of information,
4. establishing educational priorities for the school district and its staff,
5. measuring the progress being made toward achieving the educational priorities established by the board including superintendent evaluations,
6. operating school boards and conducting self evaluation, and
School boards have been elected or appointed to oversee the operation of school districts. Their power has been granted them by the state legislature who garnered its authority to provide public education from the state constitution (Baker & Carey, 1992). Within this state granted authority, the school board has attempted to guide the school district on behalf of the community (Baker & Carey, 1992; Eulau & Prewitt, 1973; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Therefore, ownership of schools has been squarely placed with the community, whether it be the statewide community or the local community. Understanding and representing the owner's expectations has required a board to be able to understand community ownership, assure two-way communication with these owners, and represent the owners wishes in decision making.

Understanding Community Ownership All organizations, either private or public, exist for some purpose. This purpose, at some point, was established by the owners of the organization. School districts are defined as organizations (Legislature, 1996). As such, they have had to identify their reason for existence and the exchange they were to provide with the community within which they reside. There has been a general agreement in the literature that school district ownership is the community at large (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Lineberry & Sharkansky, 1978; Lyman, 1993; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Community at large is not considered synonymous with parents of children in school (Carver, 1990). Community has been defined as the total population of the community (Legislature, 1996). At the turn of the century, education professionals made some attempt
to define public school ownership as the educators operating the schools (Hentges, 1984). Some teacher education professors and state superintendents viewed education too important for lay control. They made their case for professional ownership on the basis of expertise. They postulated that education was a great deal like medicine where the medical professionals established the policies and operational procedures for hospitals. Some boards actually accepted this view, but Cistone (1975) found that professional educational technologies were not sufficiently developed to substantiate this claim of professional prerogative.

This raises an additional question, one to which some tentative answers have been slowly forthcoming. If there is no technology of education, why does the representative role of board members contribute to a habitual deference to expertise? Why, of all the units of local government, does the school board tend to 'reverse' the 'normal' representative role? that is, why do school boards represent the views of the superintendent to the public, rather than representing the views of the public to the superintendent (p. 6)?

Overt ownership by the education establishment was never widely endorsed, but it has had a profound influence on the subtleties of board-superintendent relationships.

School district ownership began with the legal authority granted by the state to a community to elect a school board and to make certain decisions about their own schools (Baker & Carey, 1992). Ownership for most boards of education has been further operationalized through the political voting process. Even appointed boards have traced their appointment back to some form of politically elected appointing agent (e.g., mayor, city council, associate school board). Ownership finally has been operationalized by financial support which comes from local, state, and federal sources (Wiles & Bondi, 1985).

Although there has been universal agreement that school districts are community property at some level (e.g., local, state, or federal), actual practice has not always followed suite. A 1974 study of school boards noted:

31
Although the school board has uncontested formal authority over local educational systems, evidence indicates that the leadership over educational policy rests as much or more with the superintendent. This disparity between authority and leadership violates a fundamental principle of democratic institutions. Democratic theory stipulates that a representative body must be responsible to the public for decisions that emanate from the representatives (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974, p. 126).

Zeigler, as referenced in Cistone (1975) went on to note:

The most extensive study of school boards ever conducted (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974) has recently concluded that the prevalent view among contemporary students of educational politics is well founded: school boards have largely ceased to exercise their representative and policy-making functions; for the most part they do not govern, but merely legitimate the policy recommendations of school superintendents (p. 103).

When a board has ceased to exercise its ownership responsibility for policy development, it has defaulted on its ownership and, in effect, has turned the school district ownership over to the superintendent.

Usdan et al. (1986) indicated that ownership clarity has been lost in school board operations because they are not integrally connected to the greater community political infrastructure.

School boards too often are isolated from general government and except in the small percentage of school districts where boards are elected through political parties, they are isolated from mainstream political party structures (p. 23)

This isolation has removed a key link to the community ownership and has tended to focus board discussions toward staff agendas versus community agendas.

Boards have been less prone to succumb to ownership loss to education professionals when they were better connected to the legally, financially, and culturally defined ownership, the community. Cistone (1975) noted:
To better pursue the overseeing function, and as another means of balancing off the staff’s advantages in expertise and control of information about the school system, school boards—and especially those confronting the dilemmas of complexity and competing demands endemic to large districts—might wish to more actively emulate Congress’ usage of hearings and investigations as techniques for legislative overseeing (p. 125).

Several factors have been found to increase the ability of school boards to resist ownership shift. These factors have included socioeconomic factors in the community, a political orientation of board members as opposed to an educational orientation, elected board membership, electoral competition for board positions, intra-board cohesion, board-superintendent congruency, and political issues (Hentges, 1984).

Actual ownership control does seem to eventually return to the community, either by board control or by default. Even in school districts where the board has forgotten its ownership was the community, the range of acceptable behaviors and perspectives of the community on policy alternatives have ultimately controlled approval possibilities for educator initiated ideas (Cistone, 1975).

Many communities become dissatisfied with the ability of the board to control education policy. They become disillusioned to the point they are willing to accept state leadership and intervention (Usdan et al., 1986). The best defense of a board against outside takeover (unseating of board power) has been to produce, enforce, and evaluate local policy that meets the needs of the entire community (Usdan et al., 1986).

Whether a school board has properly exercised its responsibility of ownership has determined its basic effectiveness. If a board has not exercised this ownership authority and if the board has not clearly maintained school ownership for the community at large, it has ceased to function as required by its democratic selection. Eulau and Prewitt (1973) eloquently describe this condition as follows:

"For, in a democracy, the degree to which the governors are responsive to the preferences of the governed is the sine qua non of whether democracy in fact exists (p. 24)."
Communicating with Ownership  School boards are representatives of a larger ownership (Baker & Carey, 1992). Communication has been necessary to link the school board to the larger ownership, the community. It has also been necessary to link the community to the school board and, in turn, to the school.

The communications between the school board and the community has needed to be on issues of ownership (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand & Usdan, 1985; Seitz, 1994). This differs from communication about services provided. The latter is a consumer, not owner issue. According to Carver (1995), the difference is significant.

The most ardent consumerist would not argue that a customer should have the right to tell General Motors it should sell hamburgers (p. 9)

Ownership communication deals with what role the school district will play in the community. It has dealt with broad policy issues such as mission, educational outcomes, and fiscal integrity.

Customer communications, on the other hand, have dealt with the quality and quantity of services provided. School boards have been required to tell the difference between these two types of communication. Customer communication has been primarily the responsibility of the school staff. The only time boards should have dealt with communications regarding service quality has been either during performance evaluations or when the administration has failed to accomplish their tasks (Carver, 1995; VanAlfen, 1993)

Staff communications are not ownership communication. When a staff speaks to the board or when the board speaks to the staff, the communication are dealing with the relationships and the power shared between these two groups (Stapley, 1952).

In practice, school boards have been less than effective at communications with the community. Several problems are well documented including confusing consumer, staff,
and ownership communications, inadequate quantity of communications, and incorrect communication purposes (VanAlfen, 1993).

Often, school boards have mistaken board meeting discussions for community interaction. Most board meetings have involved discussion of staff issues and have been replete with staff input. Also well represented at board meetings have been unhappy customers who wish to take their case to a "higher authority." Many boards have been more than willing to deal with these types of communication rather than to reach out to the larger community on ownership issues (Freeman et al., 1991; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).

School boards often have found themselves approving staff decisions and then "selling" these decisions to the community (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Selling the public on what schools should be about is the opposite of what an ownership representing board should be about. It represents the condition found in Iannaccone and Lutz's 1970 study of school boards.

He [the superintendent] emerges as the servant who manipulates his board, selects his master, and educates them to their responsibilities" (p.231).

In theory, the board should have sufficient communication with the community to determine what their expectations for schools are and, in turn, transmit these expectations to the staff. The staff then is positioned to provide the desired services and is responsible for service quality and effectiveness.

Boards that did not have a solid relationship with the community and did not communicate effectively with the community could not garner the political clout necessary to improve schools (Usdan et al., 1986). Hentge (1984) found similar results when he noted:

School boards are intended as the mechanism by which the professional staff and the educational bureaucracy are supposed to be made responsive to those they serve. Presently they do not appear to fulfill adequately that function (p.340).
School boards who viewed their responsibility as transmitters of the will of the community to the school staff were patently different than boards that viewed their responsibility as protective buffers between the staff and the community. The former was much more responsive to community, in other words ownership, desires (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).

Seitz (1994) noted that effective boards did many things, but most importantly they fulfilled their responsibility for ownership preservation in the institution and perpetuated the distinctive purposes for which the organization was formed as determined by the ownership. Effective governance models have forced an external focus which has been more interested in the guarantee of market-like, external responsiveness than it has been of the organizational mechanics of the school (Carver, 1990).

**Representing Ownership** School board members generally recognized their ownership responsibilities, but fulfilled them in different ways. Two approaches to the board member role seemed most prevalent in the literature. The first was the concept of trustee. The second was the concept of delegate.

Trustees perceived they have an obligation to make decisions based on their own conscience and best judgment (Hentges, .984). They have viewed their constituent concerns on specific matters as secondary, because they considered their election or appointment as one of selecting a competent individual to be entrusted with personal decision making prowess. Board members that viewed themselves as trustees normally did not seek owner input, nor did they base their decisions on polls, presentations, or pressure. They have often sought board membership on the basis of overall philosophies (e.g., conservatism) and assumed the owners, the community, generally accepted their viewpoints as synonymous with their own.

Delegates have perceived they have an obligation to understand the communities wishes as they fulfilled their decision making capacity. They have been more prone to seek
input from community members in all matters. They have also expended more efforts in communicating their decisions to the community. Polling information, public hearings, and open dialogue forums are examples of delegate based information gathering processes (Hentges, 1984).

Effective board members should be representatives of their communities, both in their general philosophies and their attempt to communicate to and with the community (Campbell et al., 1985). Hentges (1984) found just the opposite to be the norm.

School board members tend to be skewed toward a trusteeship view of representation versus a delegate role. Trustees perceive that they have an obligation to make decisions based on their own conscience and best judgment and their constituent concerns are secondary. The delegate role perceive constituent interests most important (p. 49).

The trusteeship view of the typical board member has been corroborated in the literature. Usdan et al (1986) found communities were dissatisfied with their boards of education. The dissatisfaction stemmed from special interest group pressures and lack of communication and input.

Effective board members have seemed to subordinate their personal interests to those of the institution and the ownership (Seitz, 1994). Carver (1995) suggested the first responsibility of the board was to represent the ownership at the decision making table. Further, he noted board members cannot perform their tasks unless they have carefully heard and analyzed considerable community input.

Representation of the community has required board members to view their responsibility from a delegate perspective. Carver further pointed to the need to understand all constituents within the community, not just the loudest or most obvious ones. Usdan et al (1986) reinforced this view when he noted:
...many of the growing numbers of older, economically comfortable majority group citizens without children in the schools are more interested in social security, Medicare, and local tax rates than in supporting education (p. 36).

Incorporating all constituents into the decision making mix and communicating with this same group on the efforts of the board to represent them has been critical to successful boards.

Envisioning the Future

A school district board of education is charged with the responsibility for envisioning the future and the role a school district will play in shaping and/or adapting to this future (Baker & Carey, 1992; Eliot, 1959; Stapley, 1952; Zald, 1969). Envisioning the future, and adapting to it, have required school board members to be knowledgeable of societal conditions; broad historical, judicial, political, legal, and social trends; and the capacity of education to prepare students for this ever changing world. Effective boards have been able to recognize the important levels of decision making, the highest level being knowledgeable of these trends.

Board decision making can be viewed as levels of decision making. The following are listed from low to high:

Level 1: Knowledge of routine board procedures; i.e., committee functions, bylaws
Level 2: Knowledge of the institution, its qualities and functions; i.e., organizational structure, history.
Level 3: Knowledge of the field of operation; i.e., history, legislation, trends, issues
Level 4: Knowledge of relevant societal conditions, broad historical, judicial, political, legal, and social trends (Seitz, 1994, p. 15).

Because of the unique position of the school board, above the day-to-day operation of the school district, envisioning has become an important part of its operation. Usdan (1986) found effective boards spent significant amounts of time in short and long range
planning. He recognized the importance of the board dealing with current issues, but found effective boards structuring their work to provide sufficient time for policy, planning, and evaluation. The planning portion required the board to receive information about the world generally, the community specifically, and educational reforms that fit well with the world they envisioned.

Envisioning activities may or may not have included extensive professional educator input. Most educator input has come in the form of explaining educational reforms and their potential impact on students. This information coupled with external information about the social future students will face has allowed the board to make choices among several alternative policies. Complete reliance on educational staff control of the envisioning process has not been related to effective board action (Cunningham, 1985).

If a board superficially addresses its institution's future, planning will be left almost entirely to the discretion of the chief administrator and any team of assistants he or she might assemble (Seitz, 1994, p.41).

Leaving long range planning and analysis to staff abdicates the responsibility of the board to determine overarching school district direction (Michener, Underwood & Fortune, 1993). Effective control of this important school board responsibility has required deliberate collection of information on larger social issues. Seitz (1994) noted the importance of this process.

Effective boards are provided professional development in the areas of general trends in the institutions operation and in the fields of education, society, and politics. Understanding the general trends of the education business and society generally are critical to good decision making (p.15).

Seitz reinforced the need for diverse information sources, another important school board responsibility.

Envisioning also has required periodic review of mission and philosophy statements (Seitz, 1994). Review of these foundation statements has assured their currency
and reinforces the importance of all school board members and school district staff having a working knowledge of them. Hentges (1984) noted the importance of good, current, and known mission and goals statements in the following concern for special interest group control of the schooling process.

As long as organizational goals and criteria are not shared among all participants, the use of power and influence is inevitable in pursuing special interest demands (p. 165).

Interestingly, school boards have not seemed to spend much time with long range planning and visioning activities. No mention has been made of the broader issues of social trends and interconnectedness among governmental agencies in most school board development programs (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Carver (1990) found few boards with deliberate plans for envisioning the future or preparing their schools for this future.

Board members do not spend their time exploring, debating, and defining these dreams. Instead they expend their energy on a host of demonstrably less important, even trivial, items. Committee agendas are likely to be filled with staff material masquerading as board work. Even when programs and services are on the agenda, discussion is almost always focused on activities rather than intended results (p. xii).

Ziegler and Jennings (1974) also found school boards less than regularly engaged in long range planning. Ziegler also found school boards particularly isolated from greater social issues and particularly inept at linking with other governmental agencies.

Acquiring Information

School board decisions require information. Regardless of the type of decision, quality increased with an increase in the clarity and diversity of information at the disposal of decision makers (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). Considering the varied stakeholders and
the complexity of issues school boards have been faced with, it seems critical they have equally varied and complex information sources. As Usdan et al. (1986) noted:

"Information is power in any policy making situation (p. 123)"

School boards have had several different sources of information and have relied upon different types of information. Major sources of information have included the educational staff, the community, and independent consultant sources external to the immediate school or community (Association, 1975).

Within the educational staff, the most common source of information has been the superintendent (Holfield et al., 1993). Superintendents often have provided the sole source of information on major decisions. This single source of information has been to the benefit of the superintendent, but has assured the board a skewed view of the world (Pellegrin, 1965; Pitner, 1978). Regardless of the direction of the skewness, a single source of information has been inevitably unilateral.

In dysfunctional board-superintendent relationships, the board has often developed internal educational staff sources of information (Usdan et al., 1986). These information sources have provided a different perspective on situations, but often have been used to upstage the superintendent instead of making well informed critical decisions. Internal sources of information in positively functioning board-superintendent relations often have been passed through the superintendent. In either case, if the educational staff has been the only source of information, the board has been left with a narrow perspective on issues and conditions.

Usdan et al (1986) found effective boards clarify the board member-staff information exchange process through discussion and dialogue. The understanding included the type and amount of information and the protocol used to obtain information.
Community sources of information are considered critical to an effective ability of the board to relate to its ownership and to understand the social, civic, and economic environment within which the school district operates (Lineberry & Sharkansky, 1978). The methods used to gather community input must have been formalized in policy and included the complete diversity of the community if it was to be an effective source of information for decision making (Carver, 1995). Without this formal process and a deliberate attempt to engage a variety of community input, the public has failed to understand the information the board used to make its decisions. Usdan et al. (1986) noted:

The public generally believes that boards make decisions based on anecdotal information and not on systemic information (p. 24).

Effective boards have avoided a general public perception of distance and disinterest by engaging the public in regular dialogue.

Effective school boards also have engaged in independent information seeking processes such as member development, input from state education professionals, university teacher educators, and other social environment experts (Freeman et al., 1991; Kask, 1990). These types of external, independent sources of information have significantly diversified the sources of information the board uses in the decision making process.

School board information topics also have played an important part in their effectiveness. Early school boards were of sufficient size and school districts were sufficiently small to allow the school board to supervise the operation of the school district. This supervision process required board members to understand the inner workings of the school district. School districts and educational programs have become far too complex for a board to understand fully what is going on.

The local school board was initially conceived of as a representative institution through which the public could govern its schools. As school
systems grew and issues became more complex, the resources of the lay
school board were insufficient to cope with the variety of problems involved
in the overall supervision of district schools (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974, p.
13).

As Carver (1990) has noted, even if a full understanding of the school districts
operation were possible, it would be undesirable. School boards have hired staff to
supervise and administer the schools. Boards have needed to focus their information
gathering processes on the critical environmental issues facing the school system and on the
evaluative information necessary to assure school district performance and policy
compliance (Carver, 1990; Carver, 1991; Governance, 1992).

School boards typically have not gathered information in an organized fashion and
they have tended to rely on the superintendent and educational staff for most of their input.
School boards also have seemed to rely on reactionary community groups for information
more than they do the community in general (Wagner, 1992). In addition, boards have
understood their need for member development, but have failed to fully engage in a
rigorous, organized approach to the effort (Kask, 1990).

Establishing Educational Priorities

Establishing institutional priorities has been a critically important process. School
district educational priorities, in theory, have driven all other decisions made about how to
operate a school, the programs offered by a school, and the performance expectations
monitored for a school. Educational priority setting has been viewed as a uniquely school
board responsibility (Baker & Carey, 1992; Campbell et al., 1985; Carver, 1990;
Cunningham, 1985).

Although the board, in theory, has been the sole entity responsible for educational
priority setting, establishing educational priorities has been a complex process involving
regular interactions between the ownership represented by the board and the educational staff represented by the superintendent. Often this interaction has been a power struggle for control of the mission and direction of the school district.

But in the main the school board and the public pass upon the alternatives proposed by the administration. They rarely initiate proposals themselves. On a long-run basis, those who initiate the proposals will be the top figures in the educational power structure (p. 138).

Effective boards have been more prone to advance the processes used to arrive at the educational priorities of the school district, to offer broad priorities of their own, and to include superintendent recommendations into their decision making process (Dykes, 1965; Lineberry & Sharkansky, 1978; Seitz, 1994). Dykes (1965) noted:

The degree to which the superintendent shall participate and the role he will play as a participant are, in the final analysis, dependent upon board wishes and desires." (p. 152)

The literature repeatedly found effective school district operation required a strong board-superintendent relationship (Administrators & Association, 1984; Governance, 1992; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Seitz, 1994). Usdan et al (1986) puts this relationship into perspective when he noted:

The quality of the relationship between the superintendent and the school board affects the overall effectiveness of a district's schools (p. 15).

The strong board-superintendent relationship must have been built on mutual respect, not dominance by one entity (Administrators & Association, 1984). School boards have brought important resources to the educational priority setting table. These resources include formal authority, ability to hire and fire the superintendent, and popular community support (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). The extent to which boards have used these powers to establish educational priorities on behalf of the community, in strong
measure established their effectiveness (Zald, 1969). Interestingly, these powers do not seem to have prevailed over the powers of the superintendent of educational expertise and agenda establishment (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Hentges (1984) found that superintendents tended to dominate the board-superintendent relationship, especially when it came to decision making. He found superintendents to be generally confident they would prevail in situations where the board and the superintendent disagree.

Several factors have contributed to a strong board presence in the educational policy establishment process including:

1. Non-meeting interaction between board members and business and industry - the higher the interaction, the less superintendents tend to dominate.

2. Board member involvement in other politically related activities - the higher the interaction, the less superintendents tended to dominate.

3. The diversity of information sources - the greater the diversity, especially somewhere beyond the superintendent, the less superintendents tended to dominate.

4. Political competition for school board seats - the more spirited the competition for board positions and the more recent incumbent defeats, the less superintendents tended to dominate (Hentges, 1984).

Critical to the educational priority setting process for school boards has been the focus on broad goals versus program operations (Baker and Carey, 1992; Carver, 1995). Often school boards have become involved in day-to-day management issues and abdicated the priority setting process to the superintendent.

If a board meets well over one hundred times in a year, insists on approving all district administrator appointments, and has agendas filled with operational/administrative items, it does not require controlled research to know that such a board is spending too little time on education policy, policy oversight, and leadership for public education, and that the board will have increasing problems in its relationship with the superintendent (Governance, 1992, p. 70).
Baker and Carey (1992) noted the superintendent and board should be able to assume that each would do their jobs including boards setting priorities and the superintendent administering. In fact, this has rarely been the case and boards have dealt with management issues instead of larger issues. Usdan (1986) found effective boards were more prone to deal with education and educational outcomes, spending substantial time on policies related to student performance standards, quality of the teaching force, and provisions for effective educational leadership. Ineffective boards spent considerable time in administrative issues (Carver, 1991).

Measuring School District Progress

As the owners of the school district, the school board has had the responsibility for measuring the progress of the school district toward its educational and community goals (Baker & Carey, 1992). This responsibility has been the evaluation component of the goal establishment responsibility. Evaluation of the school district has fallen into two categories: (a) institutional performance including student performance and (b) employee performance, best described as policy compliance (Seitz, 1994).

The ultimate measure of the success of a school district has been the success of its students. Student success has normally been defined in the policies of the school district regarding student performance outcomes. Although sometimes difficult to measure, effective boards have attempted to quantify school district impact on student performance. External testing services, internal measures of student performance, and general community satisfaction have been regularly used to determine student performance (Seitz, 1994).

Because student performance has often been difficult to define and has been subject to influence from forces and factors outside the control of the school district, Sietz (1994)
suggested effective boards have also evaluated other aspects of institutional performance. He suggested the ultimate measures of institutional strength have included: (a) services - curricular and extracurricular, one measure has been range and the other has been quality; (b) facilities - quality and adequacy of buildings and grounds; (c) personnel - quality and quantity to meet the needs of students; (d) finances; (e) management - ability to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate; and (f) students - ability to recruit or retain.

The preferred approach to student and institutional strength assessment has been to look at data and compare it internally (longitudinal) and externally (competition) (Seitz, 1994). This approach to assessment has reinforced the importance of effective boards to rely on internal and external data sources as they have governed school districts. Effective school boards have been more prone to use data during evaluation and to avoid reliance on anecdotal evidence as the only source of assessment (Seitz, 1994).

Effective school boards also have developed their evaluation criteria in advance and methodically sought out information based upon these criteria (Seitz, 1994). These criteria are a part of the board’s evaluation criteria and must have been clearly shared with the staff and community to be effective (VanAlfen, 1993).

The evaluation of employees has been another important function of the school board. School boards have delegated individual employee evaluations to the superintendent, reserving the evaluation of the superintendent and the treasurer to themselves (Baker & Carey, 1992). Thus employee evaluation, from a board perspective, has been an evaluation of the superintendent.

Superintendent and, in turn, staff evaluation has been based upon compliance with board policy (Carver, 1990). Therefore, the evaluation of the superintendent has stemmed from school board policy. Effective boards have relied on their policy manuals as the basis of developing fair superintendent evaluations (Gardner, 1990). Policy has been put in place to induce a group to take action according to the purposes of the board. Adherence to
policy has become a measure of adherence to board purpose, which should equate to community purpose (VanAlfen, 1993).

Usdan et al. (1986) found ineffective boards were not well equipped to evaluate policy compliance by their staff.

Structures for oversight and monitoring board policies are glaringly absent (p. 22).

The lack of structured oversight and evaluation of board policy compliance has made it difficult for a board to fulfill its role of superintendent evaluation. This has reduced the effectiveness of the board because the selection, hiring, and evaluation of the superintendent is one of the most important tasks the board has done (Usdan et al., 1986). It has been one of the key power factors at the disposal of the board.

The three major factors that school boards bring to bear to maintain power over the bureaucracy are: the formal and legal authority to make policy, the control of the budget, and the ability to hire and fire the superintendent (Hentges, 1984, p. 51).

The lack of clear policy oversight and evaluation structures also has lead to difficult superintendent-board relations because the superintendent is unclear as to the evaluation criteria that will be used. Unclear expectations have lead to mistrust and inefficient second guessing. As Seitz (1994) noted, the basic rule of superintendent evaluations has been to never subject the superintendent to an evaluation that the evaluator would not want in similar circumstances. Most people have preferred clear objectives and evaluation criteria.
Board Operation and Self-assessment

School boards have needed to establish clear processes for doing their work. These processes must be committed to writing and adhered to with rigor. Boards must have dealt with the operation of the board as a whole and individual behavior of members.

Boards should establish their own operating rules. Some areas of importance are:

- Types of meetings - formal, informal, emergency
- Meeting notice requirements
- Decisionmaking procedures to be used
- How and who keeps minutes
- Public participation in the meeting
- News media procedures
- Follow-up procedures

The operating procedures of the board have established the framework within which board work is accomplished. The quality and completeness of these procedures have impacted on the quality and completeness of the work of the board.

Particularly important among these operating processes has been the collection of information from the school district staff. Board members have needed information about the school district and community in order to make informed decisions. However, constant intrusion into the daily activities of the school district to acquire information have disrupted the school system. Seitz (1964) found effective boards have rigorous controls on interaction with staff.

Board members should always work through the board chair and the superintendent to interact with institutional employees. This is an important factor in effective boards (p. 36).

Effective boards have prepared for their meetings with care. Some of the more important guidelines for meeting preparation have included: (a) plan with the audience in mind, (b) keep all meetings short, (c) pull no surprises on fellow board members or the
administration, (d) put useful items on the agenda, (e) watch timing among the agenda items, and (f) limit the number of items dealt with during the meeting (Administrators & Association, 1984).

Critical to good meetings has been proper agenda development. The process of agenda setting has been controlled by the board with substantial input from the superintendent. Hentges (1984) noted:

Agenda building is a significant part of the power process. Those who participate in the development of agendas often define the direction of organizational efforts (p. 46).

Effective boards typically have had a strong board president who could work effectively with the superintendent and other board members to establish mutually agreeable agendas that resulted in policy development and avoided administrative trivia (Seaton & Fortune, 1992). In addition to the agenda setting process, effective board presidents have been good at the following roles:

- Presiding over meetings including: keeping them focused, maintaining order, and building consensus.
- Facilitating the work of the board to assure timely and high quality completion including motivating board members.
- Maintaining communication between the superintendent and the board as a whole.
- Speaking fairly and accurately for the board when required to present the views of the board to the public.

The community has provided a self-assessment of individual board members by the voting process, but elections have not occurred throughout the board year and they have seldom captured the nuances of board operation. This has made it necessary for boards of education to evaluate themselves. This evaluation must have dealt with the operation of the
board as a body and must have dealt with individual member behavior (Administrators & Association, 1984).

Evaluation of the board as a whole has been an assessment as to the extent to which the board adheres to its established rules of operation (Administrators & Association, 1984). Effective boards have established regular procedures for evaluating the boards operation (Seitz, 1994). These procedures have included a regularly established time frame within which evaluations occurred and a predetermined evaluation instrument. The more frequent the evaluation, the easier it has been to make adjustments to problems that may arise. Effective boards often evaluate each meeting upon completion through general discussion of the meetings results or through formal evaluation forms (Seitz, 1994). However, Seitz found the following:

Excepting the occasional informal assessment, analyses of board performance seem to be woefully neglected (p. 101).

This finding was corroborated by Usdan et al. (1986) who found that less than 33% of all boards perform any formal evaluation of their effectiveness or provide opportunity for superintendent feedback.

Boards that have failed to evaluate themselves have become incapable of providing leadership to a school district. Seitz (1994) found the following:

In referring to following policy by administration and staff -- The body [board] which acts contrary to its own policy (and there have been such) will surely inspire a loss of confidence among staff and faculty (p. 46).
Individual board member evaluation has been the second self-assessment responsibility boards have completed. Good board members have exhibited the following characteristics:

1. Is legally a board member only when the board of education is in session. No one person, unless authorized, should speak on behalf of the board.

2. Avoids administrative decisions or attempts to second-guess the administration. The superintendent is the chief administrator and the board has no administrative functions.

3. Is well acquainted with school policies.

4. Should vote at all times in the best interest of children of the school district.

5. Is flexible and realizes there are times when changes must be made, when tradition cannot be honored, and when pressure must be ignored.

6. Remembers that board business often requires confidentiality, especially in processes involving personnel, land acquisition, negotiations, and need for security.

7. Is interested in obtaining facts, but remembers also that the administration has the responsibility for operating the schools rather than spending full-time making reports to the board or an individual board member.

8. Is a good listener at board meetings, on the street corner, in the church, but never commits himself, the board, or the administration.

9. Knows that the reputation of the entire school district is reflected in his behavior and attitude.

10. Has a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at himself when things look bleak.

11. Is able to sift fact from fiction, to sort out rumors from realism and to know the difference. A gullible board member is ineffective.
12. Is able to support a decision when it is made (Baker & Carey, 1992, p. 31). Effective boards have regularly accessed each board member’s abilities to be productive and have provided member development activities in those areas of need (Usdan et al., 1986). Effective boards have used regularly scheduled processes to help individual board members evaluate their contribution to the board and the school district.

Individual board member evaluation also has required a board to be willing to carry out disciplinary actions and censorship of inappropriate board action. Most boards have failed to carry out this role and therefore have been regularly confronted with the actions of a rogue member affecting overall board efficiency and effectiveness (Cistone, 1975).

Member Development

School board service has been a complex process that combines the need to understand legal issues, educational issues, governance issues, personnel issues, and interpersonal communication issues. Most individuals who have joined a board of education have some of these qualities or they would not have been in a position to be selected for board membership (Michener et al., 1993). However, very few individuals have come to board membership completely prepared for quality service. Therefore, effective boards of education have provided member development as a part of their responsibilities (Kask, 1990). Usdan et al. (1986) noted:

Board members generally agreed they lacked preparation for board service (p. 36).

School board member development has naturally segmented into an orientation phase and a continuing education phase. The orientation phase has dealt with assimilating a new board member into the stream of board operation. It has normally involved a great
deal of local updating, information sharing, and cultural transfer. It has also dealt with the basic legal aspects of being a school board member (Kask, 1990).

Especially critical to the orientation of board members and to some degree reminders to continuing board members has been the nature of the relationship between the board and the superintendent. Board-superintendent conflicts have been a common reason for superintendents to leave their jobs and for communities to become dissatisfied with board operations (Hentges, 1984). Board member orientation and professional development has been one method for keeping this relationship stable and productive.

...method for keeping the board-superintendent relationship clear and ready for board meeting business is to establish a good orientation program for new board members and provide periodic professional development opportunities for the board as a whole (Administrators and Association, 1984, p. 10).

Continuing professional development also has been important for effective board operations. The changing nature of society and schooling and the uncanny way in which bad habits entered into board operations have required continuing member development (Kask, 1990). Board members have regularly acknowledged their need for professional development, but member development has been normally ignored in the board process.

School boards' neglect of their performance and development has been well documented... (Freeman et al., 1991, p. 35)

There has been little evidence that state board associations have provided significant member development opportunities in areas of importance to effective board operation. State associations seem to have spent most of their member development time on issues of more importance to superintendents and administration than on issues of importance to governance and board members (Cistone, 1975; Usdan et al., 1986; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).
Summary

School board effectiveness has been based on the ability of a board to accomplish its responsibilities. School board responsibilities have included (a) understanding and representing the owners' expectations, (b) envisioning the future, (c) acquiring information, (d) establishing educational priorities, (e) measuring the progress of the school in performance terms, (f) operating within rule and evaluating itself, and (g) developing its members.

Understanding and representing the owners' expectations has involved understanding community ownership versus staff ownership, assuring two-way communications which has led to delegate versus trusteeship leadership, and representing the owners' wishes in decision making. Through the political process and good connections with the legal, financial, and cultural expectations of the community this role has been fulfilled.

Envisioning the future has required the constant analysis of societal conditions; broad historical, judicial, political, legal, and social trends; and the school's capacity to deal with these issues. Envisioning required a board to independently study its cultural and political environment and to scan the horizon of change.

Acquiring information has mandated school boards to be linked to the larger educational and political environment through channels other than the superintendent. It also has required careful inquiry and proper procedures for information gathering within the school system. It also has required a prioritization of information with a focus on policy impacting information, not operational information.

Establishing educational priorities has required a close link with the community and a solid understanding of the capacity of the school district. It has required a close working
relationship between the superintendent and the board and it has required the board to think broadly, not programmatically. Measuring the performance of the school district has required the board to clearly define its information needs, not to be given them by the school district staff. Multiple sources of performance information have been necessary including ways to compare performance internally (longitudinal analysis) and externally (competitive comparison).

Managing its own operations and developing its members has required boards to discipline their own, to exert energy toward self-improvement, and to evaluate its own actions honestly. Good meeting agendas and clear operational procedures have added to the board's effective operation. Self-assessments with input from the community and staff have helped the board recognize improvement areas.

Continuing professional development in the areas of operation, policy development, interpersonal skills, teamwork, educational issues, and social issues have assured board members the capacity to meet the challenges of board service. Collectively these factors have contributed to the effectiveness of boards.

Definition and Quantification of School District Performance Adjusted for Socioeconomic Factors

School district performance, as determined by student success, has begun to emerge as the educational "evaluation tool" of the 90s. Historically, school districts were evaluated on process factors such as the quality of their buildings, the number and credentialling of their staff, and the quiet of their classrooms. More recently however, the general public and legislators have called for evaluation of the results of schools (Boggs et

Standardized tests have become a pervasive fact of life in American schools (p.1).

Chubb and Moe (1990) in their landmark study of student performance also captured the modern “measure of quality” when they used student test data to analyze and compare public and private school efficacy and efficiency.

Student performance has been affected by many factors, only a few of which are school related. An analysis of student performance, therefore, has had to deal with demographic factors that influence it. Two issues emerged as critical to understanding school district performance: (a) student performance measures and (b) demographic variables impacting student performance.

Student Performance Measures

Student performance measures have reflected the educational goals of the community. In Ohio, several educational goals were defined by the larger state community. The first of these goals were operationalized in a series of proficiency tests and were expectations for all students graduating from Ohio’s schools, including students who attend joint vocational schools (Legislature, 1996). The second of these goals were operationalized in a set of core standards and performance measures for all students completing a vocational program (Pinchak, 1994).

The ninth grade proficiency tests included the following areas: (a) mathematics, (b) reading, (c) citizenship, (d) writing, and (e) science. Each test area was assigned a “passing” performance level. The performance level was used to determine students who
have passed the portion of the proficiency test and were considered competent in each area. Acquiring competence in all five areas was required for a student to graduate from an Ohio school (Legislature, 1996).

The ninth grade proficiency tests were based upon state-wide curriculum models in each of the disciplines recognized in the tests. These curricula have been accepted by the State Board of Education. The proficiency tests were the result of legislative action requiring them for graduation (Legislature, 1996). Therefore, the ninth grade proficiency tests have carried the weight of state law and were strictly enforced on all students except exempted special education students (Legislature, 1996).

Vocational programs have had additional performance expectations resulting from their mission of workforce preparation (Pinchak, 1994). The ninth grade proficiency tests have continued to apply, but placement rates of program completers, results on Ohio Competency Analysis Profile assessments, results on the ACT Work Keys assessments, and program completion rates were also required student performance measures (Pinchak, 1994). These additional performance expectations were collectively identified as core standards and performance measures.

The core standards and performance measures were required by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (1992). The actual measures used in Ohio were determined by the State Board of Education with legally required advice from a state Committee of Practitioners made up of representatives from teaching, parents, administrators, and state staff. The core standards and performance measures did not directly affect student graduation or program completion. The core standards were applied on a program by program basis to determine program performance quality. No direct action occurred as a result of poor performance, but the core standard and performance measure results were used during program improvement efforts statewide and locally (Pinchak, 1994).
Based upon business and industry expectations, student performance was defined in terms of attendance rates. Often a student's attendance was considered a more critical factor in hiring choices than skills or academic prowess (Pinchak, 1994).

The ninth grade proficiency tests, the core standards and performance measures, and attendance have served as basic measures of educational goal attainment that were applied to all schools operating vocational programs. Locally, additional performance measures have often been established to monitor school district performance.

Demographic Variables Impacting Student Performance

Student performance has been influenced by many factors, only a few of which have been under the jurisdiction of schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Although school districts have accounted for these influences and have produced programs that have effectively overcome them, these variables have detracted from an attempt to isolate the impact of school boards on schools. Several researchers have attempted to build predictive models which define those demographic variables that account for student performance.

Boggs et al. (1992) reported on attempts to determine the impact of school funding on student performance. Boggs reported several factors which collectively accounted for approximately 60% of the student performance variation among Ohio schools. The factors included (a) expenditures on instruction (as opposed to administrative expenditures), (b) non-administrative support expenditures such as bussing and janitorial services, (c) vocational education expenditures, (d) special education expenditures, (e) average family income within the district, (f) percentage of students receiving aid to dependent children (ADC) resources, (g) minority population percentages (h) student attendance at school, (i) district size, and (j) administrative expenditures. The results of Boggs' work indicated a
positive correlation between instructional expenditures, vocational education expenditures, family income, and school attendance and student performance on the ninth grade proficiency tests. He found a negative correlation between student performance and special education expenditures, school district size, non-administrative support expenditures, percentage of students receiving ADC, and administrative expenditures. He also found little correlation between student performance and minority population percentages. The demographic factors he found to be most correlated to student performance were family income and percentage of students receiving ADC, both indicators of family wealth.

Jones and Davis (1995) analyzed factors affecting student performance in their 1995 series on school performance. They used the ninth grade proficiency test results as the basis for student performance determination. They went on to study several demographic factors correlated to student performance and the result was a predictive model accounting for 58% of the variation in student performance. Using these factors, they found that many schools considered poor performers actually did quite well considering the social environment within which they operated. Jones and Davis noted the following:

The analysis found that factors related to families and economic opportunity - and not school districts - account for nearly 58 percent of the difference in test scores from district to district. These factors include poverty, parents' education level and the percentage of renters in the district - a measure of how often families move (p. 1-A)

The results of the Jones and Davis analysis showed the following factors had the following predictive power: (a) poverty (42%), (b) parents education (13.8%), (c) extracurricular activities (1.3%), (d) salaries of teachers (.5%), (e) education level of teachers (.4%), (f) renters (1.7%) and (g) unknown (40.3%).

Davis (1996) noted additional analysis of the data showed some changes in the correlation between poverty rates generally and the poverty rates of parents with children in
schools. He found this changed the predictive results of school district scores because in some Cleveland suburbs, wealthy parents placed their children in private schools leaving less wealthy students to be served by an otherwise wealthy “looking” school. The more selective analysis of parent socio-economic status (SES) made a difference compared to a general analysis of community SES (Davis, 1996).

Chubb and Moe (1990) studied the following factors in an attempt to explain student performance differences between schools.

**Student ability** - The HSB data offer a suitable measure of student ability in the sophomore achievement test scores. The tests in reading, writing, vocabulary, mathematics, and science attempt to measure raw aptitude, basic skills, and acquired knowledge. (p. 116)

**Family background** - To gauge the influence of family background, we use the index of family SES that...distinguishes high and low performance schools most sharply. (p. 118)

**Peer influence** - Now we add to the model a measure of the family background of the other students in each student’s school. This measure is the average of the SES index scores for each student in a given school. (p. 119)

**School resources** - Based on these observations (as well as factor analyses of various resource measures), we constructed an index of economic resources using expenditure levels and staffing ratios. (p. 120)

They used these factors to try to isolate the possibility that school organization caused changes in student performance.

Chubb and Moe found school organization to have a direct effect on student performance. School organization was defined as follows:

**Goals** - The index includes two indicators of the academic emphasis of school goals: an index of high school graduation requirements in the five major academic fields...and a measure of the priority that the school attaches to academic excellence.

**Leadership** - The index then includes two indicators of leadership: the principal’s motivation...and the esteem in which principals hold their teachers.

**Personnel** - The third component of the index is composed of two indicators of personnel: teacher professionalism...and staff harmony.
Practice - This part of the index includes an indicator of the aggressiveness of academic tracking: the percentage of sophomores in an academic program. It also includes all of the most promising indicators of effective classrooms: the amount of homework assigned daily, the amount of time devoted to administrative routines, and the fairness and effectiveness of disciplinary practices. (p. 122)

Chubb and Moe (1990) found the following to be the major contributing factors to student performance.

It leaves us with three major causes of student achievement - student ability, school organization, and family background - in roughly that order of importance. (p. 140)

The literature indicated several factors which seemed to be correlated to student performance. The literature was nearly void of analyses of student performance in areas other than core academic subjects, however, there was consistency in the factors affecting this singular performance area. The factors included: (a) student ability when entering school (either from prior schooling or natural ability), (b) family socio-economic status (SES), and (c) instructional expenditures (as evidence of community support).

In summary, school district performance has been the educational “evaluation tool" of the 90s and beyond. Historic analysis of school district performance based on inputs has been slowing disappearing. Student performance has been affected by the school district and by other factors not within the control of the school. Effective schools have adapted programs to meet the factors affecting student performance, but for analysis purposes some weighting of these factors is necessary.

Student performance measures have reflected the educational goals of the community. For JVSDs the following factors were recognized statewide as connected to their educational goals: (a) ninth grade proficiency passage rates, (b) program retention, (c) placement rates, (d) Ohio Vocational Competency Assessment results, and (e) ACT Work Keys results.
Factors influencing a school district's performance on these performance factors included: (a) family socio-economic status, (b) school organization, (c) instructional expenditures, (d) family mobility, (e) student ability upon entering the school, and (f) district size. Some of these factors were within the control of the school district, some were not. Because of the recency of focus on student performance, limited research was available to define demographic factors impacting on student performance.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The following procedures were used to identify the population of this study, to define the data to be used for the study, to collect the necessary data, and to analyze the data. These procedures were followed to meet the studies purpose and to achieve its objectives.

Type of Research

This was an exploratory study in the area of school board policy development classification. The study examined the relationship of board policy development to board effectiveness and school performance. As indicated in Chapter 1, several prominent school board researchers suggested more research needed to be done in the area of policy development and in the association between school board actions and school operations. The lack of research in this area was a major factor in conducting this study.
Population and Sample

The population for this study was 49 joint vocational school districts. Nine joint vocational school (JVSD) districts were not included in the study because of inadequate data. The final population for which the results of the study applied was 40 JVSs.

Instrumentation

Instruments were used to collect information for policy classification purposes, school board effectiveness determination, and school performance analysis. They included a policy classification form, a school board effectiveness survey, and a performance data collection form. The following describe these instruments.

Policy Classification Process

The policy classification process was completed using a researcher-developed instrument (Appendix A). The “Policy Classification Coding Form” was based on the Carver Governance Model. It provided the process for classifying board actions and board agenda items. The instrument collected information about the number of items classified. The form also collected information about any special circumstances surrounding the classification process. The instrument consisted of a series of boxes, each under one of the Carver Governance Model areas of policy development plus an administrative area. Within
each Model area, the boxes were subdivided by categories. These categories were also based upon the Carver Governance Model. The instruments inter-rater reliability was checked by having the raters classify a common set of randomly selected board minutes and agendas. The inter-rater reliability was .88.

The validity of the instrument was based upon the fit of the instrument to the Carver Governance Model as determined by a panel of experts (n=3). The validity of the coding process was reinforced by the criteria set prior to coding and by the use of multiple raters. The criteria addressed the three aspects of the Carver classification system: (a) category of policy, (b) enhancement of staff decisionmaking ability, and (c) appropriateness of the level of policy development.

School Board Effectiveness

School board effectiveness was measured using a Likert-type questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument measured the construct of board effectiveness as determined by the literature review.

Instrument validity was determined by a panel of three policy development experts (Mueller, 1986). Changes were made in the instrument to reflect recommendations made by the panel.

The internal consistency of the instrument ranged from .62 to .93. The final internal consistency results for each of the survey sections are listed in Table 1. Reliability was determined by administering an instrument to board members and superintendents from three school districts (Mueller, 1986). These boards were not a part of the study population. The test-retest reliability of the instrument was $r = .92$. 

66
Table 1: Internal consistency of each section of the school board effectiveness survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of the survey</th>
<th>Cronbachs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and Representing Owner’s Expectations</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisioning the Future Generally and the School’s Role in this Expected Future</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring Information for Decision Making</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring School Performance and Staff Policy Adherence</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Operation and Evaluation</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Development</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School performance and demographic data were collected with a researcher completed data collection instrument (Appendix C). The following performance data elements were collected from the sources identified.

1. **9th Grade Proficiency passage rate** - The percentage of fiscal year 1996 program completers who had passed all four parts of the Ohio 9th
grade proficiency test. The source of this data element was the superintendent of each JVSD in the study.

2. **Placement rate** - The percentage of program completers in the fiscal year 1996 completer class who were employed in the civilian work force, employed in the military, or attending postsecondary education. The source of this data element was the placement records maintained by the Division of Vocational and Adult Education and reported on form VE-23 by school district staff.

3. **Student attendance rate** - The average daily attendance of program enrollees during school year 1996. The source of this data element was the Educational Management Information System maintained by the Ohio Department of Education and reported by school district staff.

The following demographic data elements were collected from the sources identified.

1. **Instructional expenditure rate** - The instructional expenditures per pupil in fiscal year 1996. The source of this data element was the Educational Management Information System maintained by the Ohio Department of Education and reported by school district staff.

2. **Proficiency passage prior to entry** - The percent of fiscal year 1996 program completers who had passed all four parts of the Ohio 9th grade proficiency test prior to entering the JVSD. The source of this data element was the superintendent of each JVSD.

3. **Disadvantaged student rate** - The percentage of fiscal year 1996 program enrollees who were identified as disadvantaged. The types of disadvantage included economic or academic disadvantages as determined by school district staff using federal definitions for disadvantaged. The source of this data element was the Educational Management Information System.
The validity of the instrument was based on expert analysis of data element definitions. Reliability of the instrument was determined by cross checking data reported with actual data source information where available. The Educational Management Information System data is used to determine school district funding and therefore was subject to regular audits and verification of data accuracy.

Methods of Data Collection

As previously noted, there were several data collection phases in this study. Each data collection phase is described in the following sections, as well as the steps affecting all data collection efforts.

The researcher contacted the superintendents of each of the 49 Ohio joint vocational school districts by phone and arranged a personal meeting with them at their school district office. During the visit, the researcher explained the major responsibilities of the superintendent for the study including the following: (a) duplicate and provide to the researcher one set of board agendas and minutes from the school districts 12 regular 1996 board meetings, (b) complete a board effectiveness survey, (c) coordinate their school board's completion of a board effectiveness survey, and (d) provide some student performance data for their school district. All 49 JVSD superintendents agreed to participate in the study. The student performance data and the board minutes and agendas required of the superintendents were requested at the meeting.
Of the 49 JVSs to begin the study, nine were removed because they were unable to provide sufficient information. Three of the nine were eliminated because they could not provide performance data and six were eliminated because of low response rates on the effectiveness survey.

Policy Classification

The superintendents submitted, via mail, their school districts' board minutes and agendas. The researcher reviewed the minutes and agendas, numbering each board action and each board agenda item not directly related to a board action. Every motion of a school board was counted as one action. Roll calls, executive sessions, adjournments, and welcomes were excluded from the action numbering. Consent agendas, a series of related items grouped together for a single board vote, were treated as a single action. Updates provided to the board by the superintendent were considered one item unless there was clear evidence of multiple, exclusive issues.

The researcher convened three school board experts (see Appendix D) and trained them to use the “Policy Classification Coding Form.” The school board experts were briefed on the Carver Governance Model and were provided an opportunity to ask questions about the model until the researcher was confident they understood the concepts behind the model.

The researcher briefing covered the salient points of the Carver Governance Model as follows:

1. Clarification of the various types of board policy including: (a) Ends, (b) Executive Limitations, (c) Board-Executive Relationships, and (d) Board Process.
2. Determination of board policy versus administrative policy or operation using the three stage "test" including: (a) Does the proposed topic fit within one of the four policy areas?, (b) Will a decision on this topic improve the capacity for the administration and staff to make decisions? (A converse test - Will a decision on this topic remove all decision making capacity from the administration?), and (c) Have decisions about this topic been made from the broadest possible interpretation to the narrowest interpretation without missing any intervening steps?

3. Review of the classification form.

The experts then classified a series of board agenda items and action items. This process continued until the experts developed consistency in their classification process. Upon completion of this training session, a set of board minutes and agendas were provided to the raters and they classified the set independently of each other. These classifications were used to establish the inter-rater reliability coefficient. The inter-rater reliability was .88.

The school board item classifiers were given the board agenda and board action items from the 40 JVSDs. Two classifiers received 13 sets each and one classifier received 14 sets. The sets were assigned to the classifiers on an alphabetical basis. The classifiers used the "Policy Classification Coding Form" to tabulate each item in its appropriate box. Each classifier worked independently over a four-week period. Upon receipt of the tabulations from each rater, the researcher compiled the data and produced percentages for each policy classification area.
School board effectiveness data was collected from members of the JVSD school boards and from the JVSD superintendents. A Likert-type survey instrument developed around the construct of board effectiveness as determined by literature review was used to collect the effectiveness information (Appendix B). The scale ranged from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being uncertain, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree. The survey was subdivided into seven sections including:

1. Understanding and Representing the Public’s Expectations
2. Envisioning the Future Generally and the School’s Role in this Expected Future
3. Acquiring Information for Decision Making
4. Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff
5. Measuring School Performance and Staff Policy Adherence
6. Board Operation and Evaluation
7. Member Development

The majority of the questions were stated such that a rating of 5, strongly agree, would indicate a board is effective. The following questions were stated negatively so that a rating of 1, strongly disagree, indicated effectiveness.

1. Understanding and Representing the Public’s Expectations - 7 and 10
2. Acquiring Information for Decision Making - 2 and 7
3. Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff - 10
4. Member Development - 10

The survey instrument was mailed to each JVSD superintendent with a return address envelope for each survey instrument. The superintendents were instructed to distribute the survey instruments at their next regular board meeting. They were instructed
to have the board members complete the instruments at the board meeting and to avoid board member interaction during instrument completion. Each board member and superintendent then used the return envelope to seal their responses and mail them directly to the researcher thus assuring confidentiality. A few JVSD superintendents, in agreement with the board members present, collected the sealed envelopes and mailed them in bulk. Each instrument was coded to facilitate non-response follow-up on a JVSD basis. Two weeks after receipt of a JVSDs first instruments, a follow up reminder, see appendix B, was sent to the JVSD superintendent indicating the percent of surveys returned to date and a request to encourage board members to complete their surveys. Low return rate JVSDs were then contacted via phone to further encourage instrument completion and return. A 78% return rate was achieved for the JVSDs in this study. Table 2 shows the frequency of return rates experienced by the JVSDs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Return Rate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Return rates for the board effectiveness survey.

73
School Performance

School performance data came from two sources, the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) maintained by the Ohio Department of Education and each JVSD superintendent. Two forms of data were collected, school performance data and demographic data the literature identified as having an impact on student performance.

Placement rates, instructional expenditures per pupil, disadvantaged student rates, and attendance rates were collected from the EMIS. Passage rates for the 9th grade proficiency test and 9th grade proficiency passage rate prior to entry into the JVSD were collected from each JVSDs local records.

The EMIS data was extracted by the researcher from internet reports provided by the Ohio Department of Education. The data was compiled for each JVSD into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

The information collected from each JVSD was gathered by the local superintendent using the definitions provided by the researcher. Some assistance from the Division of Vocational and Adult Education's vocational information service staff was used to compile the data.

Analysis of Data

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed to respond to the study objectives. The following analysis procedures were used.
Policy Classification

The policy classification report form was tabulated and the resulting counts were converted to percentages by classification category. Those actions considered by the raters as administrative were totaled and divided by the total number of actions for each JVSD to get an administrative actions rating for each school district.

School Board Effectiveness

The school board member surveys were recorded and the mode of all responses for each JVSD was used as the JVSD response for each question. The results from all questions for each JVSD were added together to produce a board effectiveness rating.

School Performance

A multiple regression was computed for the performance and adjustment measures to determine any significant correlation between the six variables.

Correlation Between Board Percentage of Effort and Board Effectiveness

A Pearson r correlation coefficient was calculated between the board administrative actions rating and the final board effectiveness rating.
Correlation Between Board Policy Development and School Performance

A multiple regression was performed using the six performance and adjustment factors and the administrative actions rating to determine if there was any relationship between school board policy development and school performance.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are organized according to the study objectives.


The frequency distribution of board actions is presented in Table 3. The joint vocational school district boards of education in this study (n=40) completed 8,220 different actions during their 12 regular meetings in 1996. An action was either a board vote, a major presentation, or other formalized action by or for the board as evidenced in board minutes or agendas. The mean number of actions per board was 205.5, with a standard deviation of 73.07. The least number of actions by a board was 54 and the most number of actions by a board was 388.
Board actions were classified according to the Carver Governance Model plus an administrative action classification for actions not considered a part of the model. The Carver Governance Model classifications included (a) Ends sought -- Ends policies define the results to be sought by the institution including the performance factors necessary to operationalize these ends. Ends policies also define the impact the institution will have on the community, (b) Executive limitations -- Those principles of prudence and ethics that limit the choice of staff means (practices, activities, circumstances, methods), (c) Board-executive relations -- The manner in which power is passed to the executive machinery and assessment of the use of that power, and (d) Board process -- Board process policies must especially define how the board will find out what the community really wants from their institution (the ends sought).
Eeads Sought

The frequency distribution of ends sought percentages is presented in Table 4. Very few board actions were classified as ends sought. The mean percentage of board actions classified as ends sought was 2%, with a standard deviation of .02. The least percentage of ends sought actions by a board was 0% and the highest percentage of ends sought actions by a board was 6%. Thirteen JVSDs completed no ends sought actions during 1996.
Executive Limitations

The frequency distribution of executive limitations percentages is presented in Table 5. Executive limitations actions occurred almost as infrequently as ends sought actions. The mean percentage of board actions classified as executive limitations was 3%, with a standard deviation of .02. The least percentage of executive limitations actions by a board was 0% and the highest percentage of executive limitations actions by a board was 8%.

Table 5: Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of executive limitations actions
Board-Executive Relations

The frequency distribution of board-executive relations percentages is presented in Table 6. Board-executive relations actions rarely occurred in board meetings in 1996. The mean percentage of board actions classified as board-executive relations was 1%, with a standard deviation of .01. The least percentage of board-executive relations actions by a board was 0% and the highest percentage of board-executive relations actions by a board was 4%.

Table 6: Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of board-executive relations actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid observations</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81
Board Process

The frequency distribution of board process percentages is presented in Table 7. Board process actions occurred regularly throughout all boards. The mean percentage of board actions classified as board process was 16%, with a standard deviation of .07. The least percentage of board process actions by a board was 7% and the highest percentage of board process actions by a board was 43%. The number of items classified as board process varied only slightly between boards, however the percentage of actions classified as board process varied significantly because of varying numbers of actions total.

Table 7: Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of board process actions
The frequency distribution of administrative percentages is presented in Table 8. Administrative actions represented the majority of actions taken by the boards. Administrative actions were so classified because they were not legitimate board actions according to the Carver model. The mean percentage of board actions classified as administrative was 79%, with a standard deviation of .08. The least percentage of administrative actions by a board was 55% and the highest percentage of administrative actions by a board was 89%.

Table 8: Frequency distribution of boards by percentage of administrative actions
Joint vocational school board effectiveness was determined by administering an effectiveness survey to all JVSD board members and superintendents. The results were compiled on a district by district basis. The questions on the survey prompted each respondent to rate their agreement to a statement indicating a positive attribute about the respondent’s board’s operation. The effectiveness survey was a Likert-type scale with the following ratings:

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

The instrument was subdivided into 7 major areas, each containing 10 questions. These areas included: understanding and representing owner’s expectations, envisioning the future generally and the school’s role in this expected future, acquiring information for decision making, establishing educational priorities for the school and its staff, measuring school performance and staff policy adherence, board operation and evaluation, and member development.

Understanding and Representing Owner’s Expectations

Table 9 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to understanding and representing owner’s expectations. Boards were generally positive about their understanding of owner’s expectations. They agreed to statements such as: The board has clearly defined the school district’s community constituent groups...... They agreed they worked well with other political entities within their communities. They agreed they responded to community concerns. Boards were uncertain regarding whether they effectively communicated with their communities. They tended to disagree with statements
like: The board invites community representatives to board meetings..... Many agreed they made decisions about school policy based on personal beliefs and convictions.

**Envisioning the Future Generally and the School's Role in this Expected Future**

Table 10 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to envisioning the future generally and the school's role in this expected future. Boards agreed they were knowledgeable of the societal conditions existing within their communities. They also agreed they were knowledgeable of state and national educational trends and political issues. Most boards agreed they did long range planning. There was less agreement about the involvement of community members in school planning and about their involvement in evaluation of school district performance.
1. The board has clearly defined the school district’s community constituent groups, such as parents, senior citizens, ethnic groups, business, or agriculture.

2. The board communicates with the political bodies operating within the school district such as county commissioners, mayors, city councils, or township trustees.

3. The board invites community representatives to board meetings to provide information about their views of the school district.

4. The board refers complaints from the community about the school district’s operation to the superintendent.

5. The board addresses concerns from the community regarding the mission of the school district.

6. The board seeks input from the various community constituent groups through activities such as surveys, town meetings, presentations to the board, hearings, fact finding investigations, or some other formal input process.

7. The board bases its decisions about what the community wants solely on the input provided by community members choosing to attend board meetings.*

8. The board represents the community at large when making decisions.

9. The board informs the school staff about the community’s expectations for the school district.

10. Most board decisions are based on individual board members’ personal beliefs and convictions.*

* Negatively worded question. Ratings were inverted when summated.

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 9: Frequency of board responses to questions regarding understanding and representing owner’s expectations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board is knowledgeable of the societal conditions existing in the school district community.</td>
<td>0 0 0 34 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The board is knowledgeable of the political trends in the state.</td>
<td>0 0 0 27 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board is knowledgeable of the legislative trends in educational policy.</td>
<td>0 0 0 33 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board is sufficiently familiar with major educational reform initiatives to determine their relevance in meeting the community's educational expectations.</td>
<td>0 0 2 36 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board spends time on long range planning for the school district.</td>
<td>0 2 3 25 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The board seeks input from local, state, or national experts on social, political, legislative, and educational trends.</td>
<td>0 2 9 27 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The board allocates time to dialogue about trends affecting the school district such as societal, legislative, or educational policy trends.</td>
<td>0 0 5 35 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board reviews the school district's mission and philosophy statements to assure that board actions are consistent with these statements.</td>
<td>0 0 7 28 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board engages community members in an analysis of the school district's mission, philosophy, and long range plans.</td>
<td>0 1 9 24 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The board regularly evaluates the school district’s role in the larger governmental system within the community.</td>
<td>0 3 16 19 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summated score**

Mean 39.65  Range 15  Standard deviation 2.88

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 10: Frequency of board responses to questions regarding envisioning the future generally and the school's role in this expected future.
Acquiring Information for Decision Making

Table 11 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to acquiring information for decision making. Boards indicated they regularly sought information from sources other than superintendents. On the other hand, many boards indicated the superintendent was the primary source of information about educational issues. Boards were generally uncertain whether they had policies about collecting information from the community. Boards seemed to use factual data to inform decisions, but seemed less likely to cultivate new data sources through inservice activities. Boards also seemed less likely to engage information collection related to day-to-day operations. Boards were mixed as to whether they offset special interest group information with community-wide information gathering activities.

Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff

Table 12 depicts the frequency of responses for each question establishing educational priorities for the school and its staff. Boards generally believed they placed priority on the educational opportunities made available by the school district. They also believed they initiated proposals from staff to create needed changes. On the other hand, many boards indicated they reviewed and approved proposals generated from the staff and superintendent. Boards were mixed in their response as to whether they controlled their own agenda development. They were also mixed as to whether they control the process for setting educational priorities. Boards generally believed they interacted with business and industry leaders and other political entities.
1. The board seeks information about educational issues from sources independent of the superintendent.  
   0 0 2 36 2
2. The superintendent is the primary source of information about educational issues.*  
   1 0 4 31 4
3. The board has established policies defining the processes to be used to acquire information from the community.  
   0 2 21 17 0
4. The board makes decisions on factual data and research, not on individual stories or single experiences.  
   0 0 1 27 12
5. The board regularly engages in member development activities which expose members to new sources of information.  
   0 2 12 23 3
6. The board has received information from presentations or publications produced by state department of education professionals or university teacher educators.  
   0 1 2 33 4
7. The board focuses its information collection processes on the day-to-day operations of the school district. Examples of this type of information is the number of field trips students take, the specific activities in which teachers are involved, or the status of equipment or supply inventories.*  
   2 5 13 20 0
8. The board seeks information about critical issues facing the school district through external sources.  
   0 0 3 35 2
9. The board has policies defining the type of school district performance information (e.g., graduation rates, dropout rates, attendance rates) required of the superintendent each year.  
   0 0 10 22 8
10. The board balances information received from special interest community groups by formally collecting general community input.  
    0 3 14 22 1

**Summated score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board seeks information about educational issues from sources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent of the superintendent.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The superintendent is the primary source of information about</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational issues.*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board has established policies defining the processes to be</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used to acquire information from the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board makes decisions on factual data and research, not on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual stories or single experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board regularly engages in member development activities which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expose members to new sources of information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The board has received information from presentations or publications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>produced by state department of education professionals or university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher educators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The board focuses its information collection processes on the day-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to-day operations of the school district. Examples of this type of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information is the number of field trips students take, the specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities in which teachers are involved, or the status of equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or supply inventories.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board seeks information about critical issues facing the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district through external sources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board has policies defining the type of school district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance information (e.g., graduation rates, dropout rates,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attendance rates) required of the superintendent each year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The board balances information received from special interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community groups by formally collecting general community input.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summated score**

- **Mean**: 35.58
- **Range**: 13
- **Standard deviation**: 2.79

* Negatively worded question. Ratings were inverted when summated.

**Notes:**
- **1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree**

**Table 11:** Frequency of board responses to questions regarding acquiring information for decision making.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board prioritizes the educational opportunities to be made available by the school district.</td>
<td>0 0 4 29 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The board requests proposals for change from staff on critical issues facing the school district.</td>
<td>0 0 12 25 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board establishes its own meeting agendas.</td>
<td>1 19 5 10 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board manages the processes used to determine the educational priorities of the school district.</td>
<td>0 4 14 19 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board-superintendent relationship is based on mutual respect of each others' responsibilities.</td>
<td>0 1 0 8 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Board members interact with leaders of business and industry within the community on educational issues.</td>
<td>0 0 3 28 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Board members interact with political leaders within the community on educational issues.</td>
<td>0 0 6 29 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board uses performance data in establishing the educational priorities of the school district.</td>
<td>0 0 6 34 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board reviews the performance outcomes of the district.</td>
<td>0 0 2 33 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The board regularly reviews administrative proposals submitted by school staff, especially the superintendent.*</td>
<td>0 0 0 9 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summated score**

Mean 36.90  Range 12  Standard deviation 2.73

* Negatively worded question. Ratings were inverted when summated.

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 12: Frequency of board responses to questions establishing educational priorities for the school and its staff.
Measuring School Performance and Staff Policy Adherence

Table 13 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to measuring school performance and staff policy adherence. Boards generally believed they had student performance data systems in place and they believed they regularly received reports on this data. Many boards did not believe they had policies or procedures in place to be sure performance data were reported regularly. They were uncertain about how well they report student performance data to the field. Most boards indicated they had pre-determined performance expectations for next year.

Board Operation and Evaluation

Table 14 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to board operation and evaluation. Boards generally believed they had sound meeting operations, their board presidents ran orderly meetings, and that the majority's views were adhered to regularly. They also believed they accommodated the public and gave adequate time at meetings for reasoned decisionmaking. Many did not believe they controlled their own agenda development. Nor do they believe they did an effective job of evaluating their own performance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board has established a set of student performance measures that is consistent with the school’s mission.</td>
<td>0 1 4 27 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The board has established a student performance data reporting process.</td>
<td>0 2 8 25 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board reviews the results of internal school measures of student performance (e.g., attendance rates).</td>
<td>0 1 5 26 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board reviews the superintendent’s actions to be sure they are consistent with all board policies.</td>
<td>0 0 1 27 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board receives and analyzes reports on student performance that compare student successes from one year to the next.</td>
<td>0 1 9 28 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The board receives and analyzes reports on student performance that compare the school’s results to similar schools, state averages, or some other external comparison.</td>
<td>0 0 7 31 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The board has established, in advance of evaluation, the criteria for evaluating school district quality in areas such as facilities, services, or personnel.</td>
<td>0 1 7 28 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board communicates the school district’s performance to the community.</td>
<td>0 0 4 32 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board evaluates the superintendent’s performance on a regular basis.</td>
<td>0 0 0 9 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The board has clearly defined criteria for the superintendent’s evaluation.</td>
<td>0 0 0 14 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summated score**

| Mean 41.13 | Range 16 | Standard deviation 3.28 |

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 13: Frequency of board responses to questions regarding measuring school performance and staff policy adherence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board has clear policy on the types of meetings it will hold such as formal, informal, or emergency.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The board has stated policies regarding decision making procedures such as the methods of meeting operation, voting, and the role of the chairperson in the meeting.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board has policies which govern public participation at board meetings.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board works through the board chair or the superintendent to interact with school staff.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board plans its meetings to be sure the public is accommodated.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The board controls the development of the agenda with input from the superintendent.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The board president keeps meetings focused, orderly, and open to assure consensus building.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board president fairly represents the majority wishes of the board.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board plans its meetings to be sure the agenda is of such length as to allow reasoned decision making on each item.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The board regularly evaluates its own performance based upon its operating policies.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summated score

Mean 42.53  Range 13  Standard deviation 3.26

* Negatively worded question. Ratings were inverted when summated.

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 14: Frequency of board responses to questions regarding board operation and evaluation.
Member Development

Table 15 depicts the frequency of responses for each question related to member development. Member development was the lowest rated area of the board effectiveness survey. Boards generally indicated they received little member development, especially as new board members joined the group. Superintendents were identified as the primary source of member development, although, many boards indicated they attended conferences and inservice meetings on their own as well. Individual and board evaluations seemed to be rare. Boards were mixed regarding the routine evaluation of the relationship between themselves and the superintendent. Boards indicated their membership was sufficiently motivated to carry out their responsibilities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board engages in formal member development activities such as conferences, external speakers, and inservice meetings.</td>
<td>0 1 5 26 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The board has a prescribed orientation program for new board members.</td>
<td>0 17 9 10 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The board requires its members to continually engage in board member development activities.</td>
<td>1 19 11 7 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The board reviews the relationship between the board and the superintendent to determine its effectiveness.</td>
<td>0 1 8 28 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The board maintains a self-evaluation process that uses pre-determined criteria.</td>
<td>2 17 17 4 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individual board member evaluation is an integral part of the board's overall self-evaluation process.</td>
<td>3 18 14 5 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The board is sufficiently motivated to carry out its tasks.</td>
<td>0 0 0 30 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The board uses an external evaluator, such as the Ohio School Boards Association, to assess its performance.</td>
<td>6 19 14 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The board updates its members on the legal aspects of its role.</td>
<td>1 1 7 29 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The superintendent provides the board with all its member development activities either through personal presentation or meeting arrangements.*</td>
<td>0 0 7 25 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summated score

Mean 30.95 Range 18 Standard deviation 3.58

* Negatively worded question. Ratings were inverted when summated.

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree

Table 15: Frequency of board responses to questions regarding member development.
The frequency of board effectiveness ratings is presented in Table 16. Overall, board effectiveness ranged from uncertain to agreeing, meaning boards seemed to recognize they do quality work, but lacked in some areas, especially board evaluation and member development. The mean JVSD board reported a 266 out of 350 effectiveness rating, with a standard deviation of 17. The minimum rating received was 229 and the maximum was 305.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale equals 70 to 350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Board effectiveness ratings.
Determine the Relationship Between the Level of Joint Vocational School District Boards of Education Policy Development and Board Effectiveness.

There was no statistically significant correlation between board policy development and board effectiveness ratings. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between the percentage of actions identified as administrative and the effectiveness rating was -.19.

Determine Joint Vocational School District School Performance

Student performance within each JVSD was determined by using three measures: (a) student placement rates as defined by the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Vocational and Adult Education follow-up procedures, (b) Ohio 9th grade proficiency test passage rates of students upon completion of programs at the school district, and (c) student attendance.

Student Placement Rate

Each year, each joint vocational school district collected information from their program completers. Each student was classified by employment status and additional education status. Those students not seeking employment were considered different than those actively seeking employment. Military employment was a form of employment. The
information gathered from each student was compiled by each JVSD and the composite information was reported to the Ohio Department of Education.

The Ohio Department of Education analyzed the data received from the schools and reported a student placement rate. The student placement rate was the percentage of all vocational program completers who were either employed in the civilian labor force, in the military, or pursuing higher education nine months after program completion as compared to all status known completers. Those students who were not seeking employment, or who were unemployed reduced the student placement rate. The student placement rate was based on a secondary indicator from the Ohio Core Standards and Performance Measures (Pinchak, 1994)

Table 17 presents the descriptive statistics for placement rate. Placement rates varied from 58% to 100%. The mean placement rate was 84%, with a standard deviation of 10%. The JVSs had high placement rates. Three of the JVSDs achieved 100% placement rates.
Ohio 9th Grade Proficiency Passage Rate

The 1996 Ohio 9th Grade Proficiency Tests consisted of four parts: (a) Reading, (b) Writing, (c) Mathematics, and (d) Citizenship. Students were required to pass all four parts of the test before they could graduate from high school. Students with disabilities could be exempted from taking the tests if their individualized education plans provided for this exemption. The 9th grade proficiency tests were a basic test of academic performance.

The 9th grade proficiency passage rate descriptive statistics are presented in Table 18. The students completing vocational programs exhibited high passage rates on the 9th
grade proficiency tests. Students from eight of the 40 JVSDs had 100% passage rates on
the tests. The mean proficiency rate was 94%, with a standard deviation of seven percent.
Only six of the JVSDs had passage rates below 90%.

Table 18: Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by 9th Grade
Proficiency Test passage rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Valid observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Attendance Rate

The descriptive statistics for student attendance are presented in Table 19. Student
attendance rates at JVSDs were normally distributed around the mean. The mean
attendance rate was 91%, with a standard deviation of three percent. The highest attendance rate was 97%, the lowest, 83%.

Table 19: Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by student attendance rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Valid observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instructional Expenditures Rate

Instructional expenditures directly impact on the classroom. They include teachers' salaries, supplies, assessment, equipment repair, and other direct instructional costs. Each school district reported this financial information to the Ohio Department of Education through the Education Management Information System (EMIS).
Table 20 contains the descriptive statistics for instructional expenditures. The mean instructional expenditure percentage was 59%, with a standard deviation of 6%. One district spent only 40% of all expenditures on instructional costs, while three districts spent 70% or more. Instructional expenditure percentages were tightly grouped about the mean value.

![Instructional Expenditure Rates](chart.png)

Table 20: Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by instructional expenditure rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid observations</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disadvantaged Student Rate**

The definition for disadvantaged students was established by United States Department of Education guidelines in the areas of academic and economic disadvantages. Students were reported by each school district as either academically, those students who
are behind grade level or have educational disabilities requiring an individual education plan, or economically, those students coming from families who were living in poverty, disadvantaged. Students could have been reported as both academically and economically disadvantaged, but they never were counted as more than one student. The disadvantaged student rate was reported by the Ohio Department of Education for each school district. The rate was the ratio between the number of students identified as disadvantaged as compared to the total student population within the school district.

Table 21 presents the descriptive statistics for the disadvantaged student rate. Disadvantaged student rates varied considerably between JVSDs. The mean disadvantaged student rate was 26%, with a standard deviation of 17%. The least disadvantaged student rate was 0%, which was reported by two JVSDs. The highest rate was 80%, reported by one JVSD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Disadvantage Rate</th>
<th>Number of JVSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid observations</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by disadvantaged student rates
Ninth Grade Proficiency Passage Rate Prior to Program Entry

Students entering joint vocational school districts (JVSD) were normally in their third year of high school. All students entering a JVSD would have been given the opportunity to pass all parts of the Ohio 9th grade proficiency test prior to entering the JVSD. The ninth grade proficiency passage rate prior to entry is the ratio of students having passed all four parts of the test as compared to the total student population. Students exempt from taking the test because of an individual education plan were included in the number of students considered to have passed all parts of the test.

Table 22 presents the descriptive statistics for the 9th grade proficiency passage rate prior to JVSD entry. The mean passage rate on the 9th grade proficiency test prior to entry into a JVSD was 64%, with a standard deviation of 15%. The highest passage rate prior to entry was 90%, the least 37%.
Table 22: Frequency distribution of joint vocational school districts by 9th Grade Proficiency Test passage rates prior to program entry


A multiple regression was run to determine any correlations between the percentage of board actions identified as administrative and attendance rates, disadvantaged student rates, placement rates, final proficiency passage rates, proficiency passage rates prior to
entry into a JVSD, and instructional expenditures. Table 23 depicts the statistically significant correlations among these variables. Board policy development was slightly associated with disadvantaged student rates ($r = .31$), but had no statistically significant correlation with any performance measures. Instructional expenditures were moderately associated with proficiency passage rates prior to JVSD entry ($r = -.33$) and attendance rates ($r = .39$). Final proficiency passage rates were moderately associated with proficiency passage rates prior to entry ($r = .45$) into the JVSD.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative action rate (A)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance rate (B)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged student rate (C)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement rate (D)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final proficiency passage rate (E)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to entry passage rate (F)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional expenditure rate (G)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Statistically significant correlations between performance, adjustment, and board policy development rates.
School systems are complex entities that have operated within the social fabric of communities. School boards are to be the representative owners of school systems. Because they have been the ownership's representatives and because they have played a specific and critical role in the success of schools, it is imperative that they are effective. How have boards determined when they are effectively carrying out their duties such that school district performance is positively impacted? Little research into this question has been completed.

School board policy has been identified as one measure of an effective board. The quality of a board’s policy work was thought to translate into a smooth transfer of power to the school district superintendent and staff which, in turn, has carried out the day-to-day operations of the school on behalf of the board. Effective boards have carried out their work in seven major areas:

1. understanding and representing the owners expectations for the school district,
2. envisioning the future generally and the role of the school district in this expected future,
3. acquiring information for decision making, especially ensuring independent sources of information,
4. establishing educational priorities for the school district and its staff,
5. measuring the progress being made toward achieving the educational priorities established by the board including superintendent evaluations,
6. school board operation and self evaluation, and
7. member development.

Understanding and representing the owners expectations has involved understanding community ownership versus staff ownership, assuring two-way communications which leads to delegate versus trusteeship leadership, and representing the owners' wishes in decision making. Through the political process and good connections with the legal, financial, and cultural expectations of the community this role has been fulfilled.

Envisioning the future has required the constant analysis of societal conditions; broad historical, judicial, political, legal, and social trends; and the schools capacity to deal with these issues. Envisioning has required boards to independently study its cultural and political environment and to scan the horizon of change. Acquiring information mandated school boards to be linked to the larger educational and political environment through channels other than the superintendent. It also required careful inquiry and proper procedures for information within the school system. Additionally, it required a prioritization of information with a focus on policy impacting information, not operational information. Measuring the performance of the school district has required the board to clearly define its information needs, not to be given them by the school district staff.

**Statement of the Problem**

Research on the teaching and learning process, teacher capabilities, educational technology, and administrative designs abound, but research on the governance of public
schools is shallow and of limited use. Board research has shed little light on the question of school board impact. School board research has done little to help boards clarify the difference between governance policy development and policy deployment. The problem this study tried to address, therefore, was how joint vocational school district boards of education can determine when they are engaged in governance activities that are positively correlated with board effectiveness and school performance.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to improve understanding about school board policy development and its relationship to school board effectiveness and school district performance.

The following research objectives guided this study:

1. Determine the extent to which joint vocational school district boards of education engage in school board policy development.
2. Determine joint vocational school district boards of education effectiveness.
3. Determine the relationship between the level of joint vocational school district boards of education policy development and board effectiveness.
5. Determine the relationship between the level of joint vocational school district boards of education policy development and school performance.
Methodology

This was an exploratory study that examined the relationships among policy development practices of joint vocational school boards of education, school board effectiveness and school performance. The population studied included 40 of the 49 Ohio joint vocational school districts (JVSD).

School board policy development rates were determined by analyzing the minutes and agendas of JVSD school boards from one year of meetings. The board actions were classified using the Carver Governance Model.

School performance was determined by student passage rates on the Ohio 9th grade proficiency test — a graduation requirement, attendance rates, and student placement rates in jobs or higher education one year after high school graduation. Factors influencing performance were included in the analysis and consisted of the 9th grade proficiency passage rate of student prior to entry into the JVSDs, disadvantaged student rates, and instructional expenditure rates.

School board effectiveness was determined using a researcher developed Likert-type survey instrument consisting of the seven major areas of school board operations. Instrument validity was determined by a panel of three policy development experts (Mueller, 1986). The test-retest reliability of the instrument was $r = .92$. In addition to the test-retest reliability, an internal consistency reliability was determined using the first set of responses from this group to eliminate any items which were not consistent with the total score (Mueller, 1986). The internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .62 to .93. The effectiveness surveys were completed by school board members and superintendents.
Findings

The joint vocational school district boards of education in this study (n=40) completed 8,220 different actions during their 12 regular meetings in 1996. The mean percentage of board actions classified as administrative was 78.5%. Based on Carver's Governance Model, over three out of four board actions were not considered a part of the board's responsibility.

Board effectiveness ratings, as determined by board members and superintendents were generally high with a mean board rating of 266 out of 350. The areas of member development and acquiring information were the lowest performing areas. There was no correlation between board policy development rates and board effectiveness rates.

Joint vocational school districts performed well on all performance indicators. The mean student placement rate was 84%. The mean passage rate on the 9th grade proficiency test was 94% even though students entering the JVSD had a passage rate of only 64%. Student attendance rates averaged 91% with some JVSDs reporting attendance rates as high as 97%. These performance rates were achieved with students reporting an average disadvantaged student rate, either academic or economic, of 26%. There was no correlation between school board policy development rates and student performance.
Major findings

The data depicted some general observations. The following were the major findings from this study.

1. The school boards studied seldom worked on school board policy development as defined by the literature and operationalized by the Carver Governance Model. Most of their actions involved reviewing and approving administrative responsibilities and recommendations.

2. When they were not acting on administrative matters, the school boards focused their actions on their own board operations such as assigning committee memberships, approving minutes, and generally managing their meetings.

3. Very few actions from the school boards resulted in direction setting policy that assisted their superintendents and staff to make better decisions. Most of the actions were terminal decisions that prescribed exactly what was to be done by the staff.

4. Board actions related to school district performance evaluations, superintendent’s evaluations, and evaluation of staff compliance with board policy were scarce.

5. There was very little difference in the actions taken by the boards in this study. The percentage of actions in each of the policy classification areas were very similar across all boards.
6. Boards generally considered themselves effective. They were especially positive in the areas of ownership representation and envisioning the future. They were very positive about their legislative and educational knowledge. They did see challenges in the areas of acquiring information and member development. They also were cognizant of their lack of self-evaluation.

7. Board members were generally pleased with their work, regardless of their school's performance. Board members indicated a high degree of effectiveness in nearly all the schools in the study, yet student performance varied, sometimes dramatically. Boards indicated they analyzed student performance information regularly in the self-completed survey, but little indication of this review appeared in the formal minutes and agendas of the boards. There was no statistically significant correlation between school district performance and school board effectiveness ratings.

8. There was no statistically significant correlation between board policy development and student performance. The school boards studied showed very little variation in the amount of time spent on board policy development while their districts varied in student performance.
Conclusions

Upon review of the major findings several general conclusions were evident. The following were the major conclusions from this study.

1. Carver’s Governance Model operationalized the literature on quality boardsmanship. A board that followed Carver’s model in performing its duties would focus on what the literature suggested was important work of the board. Further, there was strong evidence in the literature that boards that focus on their role were less likely to become involved in administrative, day-to-day activities which by job description were the responsibility of a superintendent and a school’s staff. The school boards in this study devoted most of their effort to administrative actions. They had few actions in the areas of student performance evaluation, policy adherence evaluation, and direction setting policy. Because their actions were not correlated with student performance rates or board effectiveness ratings, the study supported the literature that indicated boards highly involved in administrative actions have not been effective in changing school district performance.

2. Board members did not seem to consider their district’s performance when assessing the quality and effectiveness of their own work. School boards from districts with poor student performance were just as likely to rate themselves as effective as their counterparts in high performing districts. This may have been because the board members were unaware of their school district’s poor performance or it may have been because they didn’t see a direct connection between their work and their school district’s performance.
3. School board operations were fairly homogenous across the state. Variations in board agenda items and actions recorded in the minutes were slight. The percentage of actions identified in each of the policy development categories would suggest boards are completing the same types of actions, regardless of school district circumstances or student performance.

Recommendations

Public education has been increasingly expected to produce high student performance while assuring highly efficient educational systems. Market share has become a growing issue for public education as more education providers have entered what was once a monopolistic environment. These rising expectations and rising competitors have suggested that school boards cannot afford to be anything but highly effective and value added partners in the public education enterprise. The elimination of the Cleveland and Chicago school boards has clearly demonstrated the importance of all school boards to be effective and to improve their effectiveness if they hope to continue to have a role in public education. Based on the findings of this study, the following actions are recommended.

Theory

1. The Carver Governance Model fits with the literature on quality board operations, however, it did not fit with actual practice. Because the school board actions in this study were not significantly correlated to school district performance, it suggests their mode of operation, which is contrary to the
Carver Governance Model, may be ineffective. This supports the need for boards to adopt a different operational model; however, the Carver Governance Model may be too theoretical for practical application to public school boards. A transition model should be developed that accommodates the realities of public pressure and legal requirements while focusing board action on important work.

2. The boards studied indicated difficulty with self-development and self-evaluation; however, they indicated real desire to be good board members. This dichotomy may suggest the system of school boards as policy makers is no longer a viable alternative. The theories suggesting elected school boards can effectively represent school district owners, the community, may be suspect given the overall failure of the school boards in this study to focus on policy development. Efforts should be made to research alternative forms of ownership representation. This research should create alternatives and provide existing school board structures with possible modifications.

Practice

1. School boards, with the assistance of the Ohio School Boards Association, should actively pursue efforts to reduce the number of administrative actions brought before them. School boards should take an active role in establishing their own agendas and include board policy development as a primary purpose for board operation.
2. School boards should establish clear student performance expectations and policy adherence guidelines for their school districts and, in turn, devote significant attention to monitoring these areas on an ongoing basis.

3. School boards should view the effectiveness of their schools to produce student performance results as a key indicator of their own effectiveness. School boards may require external assistance in developing effective student performance analysis processes. The Ohio Department of Education should work with school boards to improve their understanding of student performance data, to develop broader-based performance measures that fit with local community expectations of their schools, and to improve the communications systems necessary to provide school boards with timely, meaningful performance data.

4. School boards should engage in formal evaluation processes guided by the literature on quality board work. The Carver Governance Model may be a starting point for this evaluation process, but local and state refinements should be made to assure appropriateness. This should be done in conjunction with the Ohio School Boards Association.

5. School boards should focus more time and action on linking with the community at large, specifically the political process. Partisan elections for school boards would be an excellent start to this process.

6. School boards should seek external professional, such as the Ohio School Boards Association, to help with the agenda development processes.
7. The evaluation of school district student performance should be an annual, visible process that includes formal board action.

Further research

1. Different types of districts and their boards need to be evaluated using the Carver Governance Model or similar literature based evaluations. Some attempt should be made to find a more sensitive instrument for measuring school board operations to assure a more meaningful study.

2. A more rigorous analysis of school board member views of their own effectiveness when compared to student performance should be conducted. This area of study should attempt to determine the extent to which school board members value student performance results and determine the extent they think their actions affect these results.

3. Analyze school board members' views and understanding of student performance measures.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Policy Classification Collection and Coding Forms
Policy Classification Coding Form

School district code

Classification form number

Classifier name

Number of actions included in this analysis

Comments, special circumstances

Instructions: For each board action or agenda item provided to you, tally it once in the most appropriate area on the following pages.
E
ds sought: The organizational “swap” with the world. What human needs are to be met, for whom, and at what cost. Ends policies define the results to be sought by the institution including the performance factors necessary to operationalize these ends. Ends policies also define how the institution will impact on the community.

Student or curricular ends sought

Other

Administrative: Those actions that do not pass the following tests.
1) Does the proposed topic fit within one of the four policy areas (other areas within which you are tallying),
2) Will a decision on this topic improve the capacity for the administration and staff to make decisions? (A converse test can be: Will a decision on this topic remove all decision making capacity from the administration?)
3) Have decisions about this topic been made from the broadest possible interpretation to the narrowest interpretation without missing any intervening steps?

Required by law, statute, or court decree

General presentation to the board such as entertainment, demonstrations, etc.

Presentations of awards by the board

Other
Executive limitations: Those principles of prudence and ethics that limit the choice of staff means (practices, activities, circumstances, methods).

- Financial
- Personnel
- Facilities
- Curriculum
- Other

Board-executive relationships: The manner in which power is passed to the executive machinery and assessment of the use of that power.

- Communication
- Evaluation
- Other
Board process: The manner in which the board represents the "ownership" and provides strategic leadership to the organization. Board process policies must especially define how the board will find out what the community really wants from their institution (the ends sought)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community input</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority establishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of school district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
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<td>Information development</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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125
Appendix B

School Board Effectiveness Survey
School Board Operations Survey

Instructions

1. Please rate the statements in this booklet. Consider the following as you answer.
   - Your perception of how this school board generally operates.
   - A full year of board operation, not just the last meeting or two.
   - The actions of the full board, not just your actions.

2. Circle the appropriate number at the right of each statement indicating how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Please mark every item. Use the following response categories: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

3. Place your completed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope and place it in the mail.

Please note: All responses will be kept in strictest confidence. No individual results will be reported.
Understanding and Representing the Public's Expectations

| 1. The board has clearly defined the school district's community constituent groups, such as parents, senior citizens, ethnic groups, business, or agriculture. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. The board communicates with the political bodies operating within the school district such as county commissioners, mayors, city councils, or township trustees. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. The board invites community representatives to board meetings to provide information about their views of the school district. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. The board refers complaints from the community about the school district's operation to the superintendent. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. The board addresses concerns from the community regarding the mission of the school district. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. The board seeks input from the various community constituent groups through activities such as surveys, town meetings, presentations to the board, hearings, fact finding investigations, or some other formal input process. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. The board bases its decisions about what the community wants solely on the input provided by community members choosing to attend board meetings. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. The board represents the community at large when making decisions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. The board informs the school staff about the community's expectations for the school district. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Most board decisions are based on individual board members' personal beliefs and convictions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Envisioning the Future Generally and the School's Role in this Expected Future

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The board is knowledgeable of the societal conditions existing in the school district community.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The board is knowledgeable of the political trends in the state.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The board is knowledgeable of the legislative trends in educational policy.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The board is sufficiently familiar with major educational reform initiatives to determine their relevance in meeting the community’s educational expectations.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The board spends time on long range planning for the school district.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>The board seeks input from local, state, or national experts on social, political, legislative, and educational trends.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The board allocates time to dialogue about trends affecting the school district such as societal, legislative, or educational policy trends.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The board reviews the school district's mission and philosophy statements to assure that board actions are consistent with these statements.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The board engages community members in an analysis of the school district's mission, philosophy, and long range plans.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The board regularly evaluates the school district’s role in the larger governmental system within the community.</td>
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Go to the next page ==> 129
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

### Acquiring Information for Decision Making

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<th></th>
<th>The board seeks information about educational issues from sources independent of the superintendent.</th>
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<th></th>
<th>The superintendent is the primary source of information about educational issues.</th>
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<th></th>
<th>The board has established policies defining the processes to be used to acquire information from the community.</th>
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<th></th>
<th>The board makes decisions on factual data and research, not on individual stories or single experiences.</th>
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<th></th>
<th>The board regularly engages in member development activities which expose members to new sources of information.</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The board has received information from presentations or publications produced by state department of education professionals or university teacher educators.</th>
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<th></th>
<th>The board focuses its information collection processes on the day-to-day operations of the school district. Examples of this type of information is the number of field trips students take, the specific activities in which teachers are involved, or the status of equipment or supply inventories.</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The board seeks information about critical issues facing the school district through external sources.</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The board has policies defining the type of school district performance information (e.g., graduation rates, dropout rates, attendance rates) required of the superintendent each year.</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The board balances information received from special interest community groups by formally collecting general community input.</th>
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1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

### Establishing Educational Priorities for the School and its Staff

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The board prioritizes the educational opportunities to be made available by the school district.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The board requests proposals for change from staff on critical issues facing the school district.</td>
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<td>3. The board establishes its own meeting agendas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4. The board manages the processes used to determine the educational priorities of the school district.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The board-superintendent relationship is based on mutual respect of each others' responsibilities.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Board members interact with leaders of business and industry within the community on educational issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Board members interact with political leaders within the community on educational issues.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>8. The board uses performance data in establishing the educational priorities of the school district.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The board reviews the performance outcomes of the district.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The board regularly reviews administrative proposals submitted by school staff, especially the superintendent.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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**Measuring School Performance and Staff Policy Adherence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The board has established a set of student performance measures that is consistent with the school’s mission.</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board has established a student performance data reporting process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The board reviews the results of internal school measures of student performance (e.g., attendance rates).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The board reviews the superintendent’s actions to be sure they are consistent with all board policies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The board receives and analyzes reports on student performance that compare student successes from one year to the next.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board receives and analyzes reports on student performance that compare the school’s results to similar schools, state averages, or some other external comparison.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board has established, in advance of evaluation, the criteria for evaluating school district quality in areas such as facilities, services, or personnel.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board communicates the school district’s performance to the community.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board evaluates the superintendent’s performance on a regular basis.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The board has clearly defined criteria for the superintendent’s evaluation.</td>
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1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

**Board Operation and evaluation**

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<td>1</td>
<td>The board has clear policy on the types of meetings it will hold such as formal, informal, or emergency.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The board has stated policies regarding decision making procedures such as the methods of meeting operation, voting, and the role of the chairperson in the meeting.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The board has policies which govern public participation at board meetings.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The board works through the board chair or the superintendent to interact with school staff.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The board plans its meetings to be sure the public is accommodated.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>The board controls the development of the agenda with input from the superintendent.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The board president keeps meetings focused, orderly, and open to assure consensus building.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The board president fairly represents the majority wishes of the board.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The board plans its meetings to be sure the agenda is of such length as to allow reasoned decision making on each item.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The board regularly evaluates its own performance based upon its operating policies.</td>
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Go to the next page ==>
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

**Member Development**

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<tr>
<td>1. The board engages in formal member development activities such as conferences, external speakers, and inservice meetings.</td>
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<td>2. The board has a prescribed orientation program for new board members.</td>
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<td>3. The board requires its members to continually engage in board member development activities.</td>
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<td>4. The board reviews the relationship between the board and the superintendent to determine its effectiveness.</td>
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<td>5. The board maintains a self-evaluation process that uses predetermined criteria.</td>
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<td>6. Individual board member evaluation is an integral part of the board's overall self-evaluation process.</td>
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<td>7. The board is sufficiently motivated to carry out its tasks.</td>
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<td>8. The board uses an external evaluator, such as the Ohio School Boards Association, to assess its performance.</td>
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<td>9. The board updates its members on the legal aspects of its role.</td>
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<td>10. The superintendent provides the board with all its member development activities either through personal presentation or meeting arrangements.</td>
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Thank you for your participation in this study!
To: Superintendent

From: Robert Sommers

Date: May 24, 1997

RE: Last call for help!

My success is in your hands. This is your final written reminder of the information I need from your JVS to complete my dissertation. I hate to bother you with this request, but my work requires this information. Please call me if you need any help assembling the needed items. I am willing to travel to your school to help in compiling the necessary information. I know this is an extra burden on your part and I appreciate anything you can do to help. A copy of the original information request is included for your use.

Board operations survey

To date, I have received [Percent] of your board operations surveys.

One year’s agendas and minutes

The status of my receipt of your school’s agendas and minutes is [Copies of policies received].

Performance data elements

The status of my receipt of your school’s data elements is [Performance data received].

Thank you for your help to date. I will be calling you in about two weeks to check on any missing items. My work number is 614-644-6333 and my home number is 614-852-5286. I can also be reached at ve_sommers@ode.ohio.gov.
Appendix C

School Performance Data Collection Form
<table>
<thead>
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<th>JVSD name</th>
<th>Proficiency passage</th>
<th>9th grade Continuation passage proficiency ed</th>
<th>Instructional expenditures</th>
<th>% Proficiency disbursement</th>
<th>passage prior to entry</th>
<th>final military, per pupil</th>
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Appendix D

School Board Policy Experts
Dr. Gale Leimbach - retired superintendent from Pioneer Joint Vocational School and consultant to the Ohio School Boards Association.

Mr. James Stauffer - retired superintendent from Madison Plains Local School District

Mr. James Stickley - retired superintendent from Upper Valley Joint Vocational School
BIBLIOGRAPHY


