

Are School Boards Equipped to Govern Effectively

In the Era of Equity (2015 to Present)?

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the devoted school board members of the Independent School Districts of the state of Minnesota, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible.

And to my family who is always there for me, in person or in spirit. Je t'aime.

Abstract

School boards diligently strive to demonstrate their accountability amidst continual criticism, currently at a heightened level following the COVID-19 pandemic, with ensuing drops in student achievement. The responsibilities of a school board are often misunderstood by their community, and school boards themselves are struggling in this era of equity (2015 to present) to define effective school board governance, and to equip their board members to govern effectively. This quantitative exploratory research documented current school board member socialization experiences and found that school board socialization programs are narrow in scope, not comprehensive, and inconsistently implemented, creating risk for inefficient and ineffective governance. The study revealed that current school board governance effectiveness is inconsistently evaluated. School board socialization programs are rarely, if ever, monitored through school board policy monitoring nor periodically evaluated using a valid instrument. This research used a broadened aperture to view school board member socialization, from the time period prior to a member's board service through their exit from the board. The research found statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships between school board socialization practices with board member reported readiness to govern, and with perceived exhibited school board effectiveness characteristics. Implications of the study results for theory, research and practice are offered, and a preliminary model for a research-based, comprehensive school board member socialization program is proposed.

Keywords: *governance, school board governance, effective school board, equity, school board training, socialization, quantitative analysis, exploratory research*

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List of Acronyms, Terms and Concepts

Abbreviations and key terms used in this study are presented here to provide a basis for shared understanding of concepts. The abbreviations and terms are listed in alphabetical order for easy reference.

Acronyms

ESSA. The Every Student Succeeds Act 2015-present

MN DOE. Minnesota Department of Education

MSBA. Minnesota School Boards Association

NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act 2001-2015

Terms, Concepts

Equality in education

Equality in education remains an important component of high quality and effective education under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). Equality means that every student is provided with the same treatment, opportunity and access to resources and opportunities needed to reach common goals (Cramer, Little & Alvarez McHatton, 2018). “Equality focuses on what is fair *within* the group of students” (Latta, 2022). School boards are held accountable for ensuring that students are treated equally (MN DOE, 2018).

Equity in education

Equity in education has risen in predominance in the past decade as a way of addressing gaps in *each* student’s achievement. Equity means that each student is

provided with the treatment, opportunity and access to resources and opportunities *they* need to reach common goals, as well as the individual support *they* need to make use of those resources and opportunities (Cramer, Little & Alvarez McHatton, 2018). “Equity focuses on what is fair for the *individual* student” (Latta, 2022). School boards are increasingly being held accountable to ensure that students are not only treated equally, but are also treated equitably (MN DOE, 2018).

Era of Equity (2015 to present)

The years during which The No Child Left Behind Act was in effect (2001-2014) were dubbed the “Era of Accountability” with terms such as “achievement” and “accountability” predominating the literature (Devarics & O’Brien, 2011; Rice et al., 2000). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) ushered in a new era with a concomitant shift in the literature’s verbiage. Following the enactment of ESSA, the literature and educational policy has become replete with terms such as “equity” and “equitable access.” Under ESSA, and ensuing state mandates, school boards in Minnesota (the study population) are accountable to ensure that their district strives toward achievement benchmarks, and also to ensure that their school district submits evidence it is providing each student with “*equitable access* to resources they need to reach high achievement, including high quality and effective teachers” (MN DOE, 2018). Based on the prevalence of the concept of equity arising in literature and policy since the enactment of ESSA, the researcher has designated the time period from 2015 to the present as the “*Era of Equity.*”

School Board Characteristics of Equity

School board characteristics of equity encompass both equity beliefs and equity practices. Equity *beliefs* include a shared understanding by school board members of both equality and equity, how they differ, and how both concepts are important in education. Equity beliefs by the school board members also include shared beliefs about students' need for "equitable access to resources including high quality and effective teachers" (Espinoza, 2007; MN DOE, 2018). Equity *practices* include having equity focused policies/processes, reviewing said policies/processes for content, and monitoring said policies/processes for compliance (adaptation of Carver & Carver, 2009).

School Board Governance

School board *governance* is a set of responsibilities a school board must complete to fulfill its accountability to its community, and to the state by which the school board is granted authority to act (MN statute 123B.09). A list of school board governance responsibilities, compiled from the literature, include: choose a governance model, set a vision for the district after connecting with the community to learn their educational values, establish end goals for the district, hire and evaluate the performance of a superintendent, socialize new board members, approve the district budget and other financial items, monitor results of the district and the work of the board, communicate results to the community and the state, participate in professional organizations, and build relationships with elected officials (Alsbury and Gore, 2015, Carver, 2011; Ford & Ihrke, 2015, 2016a; Stover, 2005)

School Board Governance Effectiveness

School board governance *effectiveness* is the degree to which a school board performs its governance responsibilities to fulfill its accountability to its community, and to the state by which it is granted authority to act (MN statute 123B.09). Seminal school board characteristics associated with effective governance include being visionary, believing in the ability of students to learn and the system to teach at high levels, being accountability driven, having strong and collaborative relationships internally and externally, being data savvy, aligning resources with goals, leading as a team with the superintendent, and taking part in team development and training to improve the board's governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011).

School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization

School board member *comprehensive socialization* is a multi-phased process of experiences had by a school board member by which they gain knowledge, skills and experience to govern effectively, *prior to and throughout the course of their term(s)*. The researcher arrived at this definition of comprehensive socialization following a review of cross-discipline socialization theory and practice in corporate, nonprofit, government and school board training literature. The literature from disciplines other than school board training revealed socialization phases and practices that were absent from or not explicit in current school board training models (Bauer, 2014; Christiansen et al., 2016; Cistone, 1977, 1974; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Klein, Palin & Sutton, 2015; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001; MSBA, 2018b, 2018c; Wanberg, 2012).

The researcher curated the various socialization models from the literature and compiled an initial *comprehensive socialization model* (Figure 1) which informed the conceptual structure within which the research was conducted.

Figure 1

Initial Model - School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases (Link, 2021)



School District Management

School district management is the purview of the school district superintendent and is comprised of duties they must perform to fulfill their responsibilities as stated in their contract with the school board and in state statute (MN statute 123B.143). These duties include the superintendence (supervision) of district staff, facilities, grading practices and examinations, the general operation of the schools, and other responsibilities the board delegates or assigns. Superintendents are evaluated by the school board based on the superintendent's demonstrated ability to meet the board's ends within limitations set by the board (Dawson and Quinn, 2011).

Are School Boards Equipped to Govern Effectively In the Era of Equity?

School boards in the United States of America have long been heralded as the bastions of democracy and the nearest level of constituent representation (Trujillo, 2012). Lauded as the voice of the community regarding the education of its children, school boards are responsible for gathering input from the electorate to set a vision for the education of its district's youth, and to oversee its execution within legal and fiscally prudent parameters (MN statute 123B.09; MSBA, 2018c). Potential school board members are motivated to run for a seat on the board for a variety of reasons, but predominantly they report being committed to making a positive impact on children's education. As elected officials, accountable for the results of their district's educational efforts, school boards are also no strangers to criticism. School board literature is replete with assertions that school board governance, at the local level, is not effective to ensure that opportunity gaps are closed and student achievement benchmarks are met (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Lee & Eadens, 2014). Results of recent nationwide comprehensive tests seemingly fuel these observations, especially for traditionally underserved student populations (NEAP, 2019).

Historical Criticism

At the local level, unfavorable comprehensive test results have historically led to dissatisfaction and repercussions for school boards (Alsbury, 2008; Editorial Board, Minneapolis Star Tribune, 2021; Fowler, 2013 p. 73). School boards have also borne the brunt of criticism from state governments, and the federal government, for not ensuring outcomes mandated in a series of state and federal policies, which sometimes conflict (ESSA, 2015; MN ESSA State Plan, 2018; NCLB, 2001). During the accountability era

of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001-2015), some school boards experienced erosion, or outright elimination, of their authority when their districts did not meet ambitious benchmarks for adequate yearly progress within the allotted time (Cooper et al., 2008; Fusarelli & Cooper, 2009; Maeroff, 2010; NCLB, 2001; Reimer, 2015).

School boards that prevailed during the NCLB era either governed districts that made reasonable progress (some having received waivers from the federal government), or they persevered until passage of the subsequent Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.

Current Criticism and Issues for School Boards

Most recently, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2022), and roiling civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd, school board criticism has reached a heightened level, at times escalating to rancor and threat (U.S. DOE, 2021). In Minnesota (the state of this study's population), a record number of school board members, some having served for many years, resigned midterm (Yoo, 2021). An unprecedented number of school board members reported feeling *ill-prepared* to handle the logistical complexity and emotional intensity of school board governance during and after the pandemic (Yoo, 2021). Seated school board members who have remained are still reeling from the "bypass" of their governance authority during the protracted "state of emergency" declared by their governors (Walz, 2019, 2020, 2021). Executive orders and mandates, issued to control the spread of the pandemic, closed schools and instituted distance/hybrid learning (Walz, 2019, 2020, 2021). Subsequently, student learning has suffered significant setbacks, posing current and upcoming school board governance challenges.

In Minnesota, 2021 statewide assessments show the number of students meeting grade-level standards in reading, math and science dropped significantly from those of 2019 (MN DOE, 2021; Shockman, 2021). Younger students and students of traditionally underserved populations experienced the greatest declines (MN DOE press release, August 26th, 2021). While students and their instructors strive to bridge student knowledge gaps after a multi-year disruption in the learning process, parents of struggling students are demanding that the school board rectify what they perceive as inequitable resource allocation and student support during the pandemic (Brooks, 2021; Kleckler, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Mitchell, 2020).

In addition, school boards are grappling with how to repair pandemic-related breeches in trust that occurred between school board members, between the school board and their electorate, and between the school board and district staff (Kleckler, 2021; Kleckler, 2022).

Statement of Problems

The pandemic and recent civil unrest have exposed and exacerbated underlying school board governance struggles which have long been fodder for criticism at the local, state and federal levels. Three particular areas of school board struggle were the impetus of this exploratory quantitative study: the struggle to define contemporary school board *governance*, the struggle to define contemporary school board *governance effectiveness*, and the struggle *to equip* school board members to govern effectively in this era of equity.

School Boards Struggle to Define Contemporary School Board Governance

School boards have specific responsibilities for which they are accountable to their state, from whom they receive their authority to govern (MN statute 123B.09).

Though each state has its own school board statute, a general list of historical school board responsibilities compiled from the literature includes: 1) choose a governance model, 2) set a vision for the district after connecting with the community to learn their educational values, 3) establish end goals for the district, 4) hire and evaluate the performance of a superintendent, 5) socialize new board members, 6) approve the district budget and other financial items, 7) monitor results of the district and the work of the board, 8) communicate results to the community and the state, 9) participate in professional organizations, and 10) build relationships with elected officials (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Carver, 2011; Ford & Ihrke, 2015, 2016a; Stover, 2005).

School boards are also accountable to their electorate. During the pandemic-related school shut downs, school boards were caught between conflicting accountabilities while the interests of the state and the electorate were, at times, seemingly at odds with one another. Constituents' demands for equitable action, during and post pandemic, landed squarely on the table of their local school board, with school board credibility taking a major hit due to their inability to effect change during that time (Brooks, 2021; Kleckler, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Mitchell, 2020). School boards are grappling to re-establish their role as accountable and effective local governors.

School Boards Struggle to Define Effective School Board Governance

Board governance researchers have posited that effective boards exercise foresight, insight, oversight and hindsight to fulfill their responsibilities to their stakeholders (Boston et al., 2019; Denyer, 2017). Applying this framework to school board governance, school boards employ *foresight* to set a vision for the district and *insight* to assess the district's current academic and financial situation. Boards use

oversight to monitor results of actions taken to achieve strategic outcomes and *hindsight* to evaluate the district's progress against the board's overall vision. But what governance characteristics are present in effective, high performing school boards?

To discern characteristics of high performing school boards, the landmark Iowa Association of School Board's Lighthouse Studies I, II and III compared school boards of districts that had similar demographics but disparate student achievement (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; Rice et al., 2000). The focus on student achievement as a measurement of governance effectiveness reflected the accountability thrust of the NCLB mandate (NCLB, 2001). According to the studies, an "effective" school board was defined as one "whose district made significant (academic) improvement despite serving large numbers of disadvantaged students" (defined as those students receiving free or reduced lunch). "Ineffective" school boards were those that served districts that did not make significant academic improvement. Such effectiveness descriptors are arguably deficit-based, but reflective of the era from which they arose.

Characteristics of Effective School Boards. Conversely, the eight characteristics of effective school boards that subsequently emerged from these IASB Lighthouse studies are more strengths-based (Alsbury, 2014; Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). According to the landmark studies, effective boards are: visionary, believe in the ability of students to learn and the system to teach at high levels, are accountability driven, have strong and collaborative relationships internally and externally, are data savvy, align resources with goals, lead as a team with the superintendent, and take part in team development and training to improve their governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; NSBA, 2018).

Absence of Equity-focused Characteristics and Practices. As stated earlier, missing from this seminal governance effectiveness characteristics list are equity-focused school board governance characteristics and practices that are currently garnering notice and gaining importance. The Lighthouse school board effectiveness characteristic “aligns resources with goals” is nearest in intent to the ESSA mandate for resource and high quality teacher accessibility (Devarics & O’Brien, 2011). This characteristic, as it was originally conceived, used staff development funding as an example. The characteristic did not specify equity as a board or school district goal. School boards may have the concept of equity embedded in their policies/processes, but boards are now being challenged by the state and their communities to make explicit the content of and compliance with their equity policies/processes (Burns, Darling-Hammond & Scott, 2019; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Minnesota Statute 120B.11, 2018). For a board to evaluate its governance effectiveness in regards to equity, it must first grasp the meaning of equity and how it differs from equality (Espinoza, 2007). Latta (2022) distinguishes equality as focusing on “what is fair *within* the group of students” while equity “focuses on what is fair for the *individual* student.” Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training and development of individual board members, and the board as a group, can equip a board to govern through a lens of equity (WASSD, 2022). At the time of this research, however, not every school board included DEI training in their socialization program.

School Boards Struggle to Equip School Board Members to Govern Effectively

The Misunderstood Role of the School Board. The aforementioned critical school board governance functions are often not well known or understood by the community a school board serves (Stevenson, 2021). It is not surprising, then, that school

board candidates, arising from their community, likewise harbor misconceptions about school board governance and the role of a school board member (Cistone, 1977; Hayes, 2001, p. 175-178; Merz, 1986). Denyer (2017) laments that school board candidates and member-elects are often unclear about the individual responsibilities of a school board member and the role of the board acting in its official capacity as a collective governing body. Denyer further suggests *potential* board members need information about board functions, policies and procedures.

Cyclical School Board Member Turnover. School board candidates seek a seat on the board with varied motivations and expertise (Mueller, 2011). They may aspire to make a difference in education in their district (the activist), give back to their community (the philanthropist), hold elected office (the aspiring politician), or for some other personal reason (Mountford, 2004; Mountford & Brunner, 1999). School board members are elected or appointed to serve for a term, generally three to four years, and most members must be re-elected or reappointed to retain their seat. Hence, on any given school board election cycle, a school board may incur a turnover of between one to four (or more) board seats (Alsbury, 2003). During the timespan that new board members are assimilating their role, a school board's governance may be less effective (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Any change in school board membership affects board governance, but as Alsbury and Gore (2015) point out, board member turnover may also bring fresh and beneficial perspectives and abilities to the board.

Alsbury (2003, 2008), and Alsbury and Gore (2015) state that once sworn in, under informed new board members can have difficulty relating with their fellow board members and may impede effective governance. In addition, not understanding the

collective board's governance role, and how it differs from the management role of the superintendent, can undermine critical relationships with the superintendent and with the community (see Definition of Concepts above; Minneapolis Star Tribune, 2021; Wright, 2019). Clarity of roles and a collaborative, trusting working relationship between the board and the superintendent sets the tone for the district (Gann, 2015). However, trying to parse out from state statute "who does what" between the school board and the superintendent is challenging for experienced board members and superintendents, and can be bewildering for those who are new to board service (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Ford & Ihrke, 2016a; Gann, 2015; MSBA, 2018b).

Timing of School Board Member Training. Carnes (2008), and DeWitte and Schiltz (2017) question if existing models of school board member onboarding and development deliver the necessary information in a timely fashion to facilitate effective school board governance. Togneri and Anderson (2003) advocate for orientation of new board members as soon as possible so that they learn board "functions, policies and procedures;" uninformed school board members are at risk of violating board policy or state statute. As stated in the Lighthouse I studies (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011), one of the characteristics of an effective school board is that they take part in team development and training to improve their governance; boards that do not continually develop run the risk of ineffective governance over time (Nadler, 2004).

To promote effectiveness of new board members, approximately half the states in the United States of America mandate new board member training, often provided by a state school board association (MSBA, 2022) that is versed in the state's statutes (MN statutes 120B.11, 123B.09). Mandated state level training provides a base of

understanding for a new school board member, but may not take into account differing board governance models and community idiosyncrasies. The school board members in the other half of the states (that do not mandate training) must complete training with a consultant, inform themselves and learn “on the job,” or rely on their own board to equip them with knowledge and skills to govern. But school boards rarely have the expertise and bandwidth to design and implement a research-based training and evaluation program that ensures individual school board members, and the board as a group, are fully equipped to govern effectively over the full tenure of their term(s).

Limited Scope of School Board Member Socialization. Training and development of individual school board members, and the board as a group, has been referred to as *socialization* (Cistone, 1977). The comprehensiveness and content of school board socialization programs varies across states, and from district to district within a state (MSBA, 2022; TEA, 2022; WSSDA, 2022). Some boards have member training mandates written into their policies/processes (EPSB, 2022). But few of these policies address the board’s role in socializing potential candidates, leadership development of members for succession planning, and standardized offboarding processes to smooth transitions that may be caused by board member changes due to cyclical elections or unanticipated board member exits. Implementation of a board’s socialization program can also vary in consistency with changes in board leadership. And few school boards have measurements by which to evaluate the effectiveness of their socialization programs to increase individual member readiness to govern or to improve the board’s governance effectiveness as a group.

As previously stated, researchers are questioning the timing and scope of school board member training to adequately prepare members to govern effectively (Carnes, 2008; Denyer, 2107; DeWitte & Schiltz, 2017). Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature on school board member socialization, readiness to govern, or board governance effectiveness in the era of equity, post 2015. An extensive review of both seminal and contemporary school board literature failed to surface a school board member socialization model with a comprehensive, phased approach to socialization that spanned a board member's entire term(s) of service, from the time they consider running for the seat until they exit from board service (Carver, 2011; Hayes, 2001). Which socialization experiences, if any, may be related with an increase in a school board member's reported readiness to govern has not been explored well in school board socialization literature. Also unmentioned in the literature is research regarding relationships, if any, between board member socialization experiences and their observations of seminal governance effectiveness characteristics exhibited by their board.

Broader Socialization Models. In contrast to the relatively limited scope of training models used to onboard and develop school board members, socialization models used by corporate/nonprofit organizations are broader in scope (Kramer, 2010, p. 23). These corporate/nonprofit models of socialization include engaging the employee/volunteer prior to hiring, subsequent onboarding, ongoing development and succession planning, and eventually offboarding (Fusarelli et al., 2018). Some models advocate engaging in a two-way conversation with the potential or new employee/volunteer to understand their motivation for joining the organization, the skills and experience they bring to the job, and their aspirations (Bauer et al., 2014).

Organizations that use these expanded models of socialization develop a pipeline of informed, skilled employees/volunteers who are prepared to contribute positively to the organization when needed (Tripses et al., 2015). Succession plans coupled with strategic offboarding processes allow employees/volunteers to exit service with minimal disruption to the organization's ongoing vision (Kramer, 2010).

Fusarelli et al. (2018) present a compelling argument that the field of education should likewise consider adopting a broadened strategic plan for recruitment, development and succession of educational "administrators" to have cadres of potential leaders. By extension, should school boards use a broader socialization model, they might develop a larger base of potential board members in the community and establish a deep bench of board members prepared to assume leadership roles, despite planned or unplanned membership turnover. Which specific socialization experiences to include in such a model to support increased governance effectiveness of a school board has yet to be explored.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this exploratory, quantitative study was to add to the body of knowledge about current school board socialization experiences and what may constitute school board governance effectiveness in the era of equity (2015 to present). Secondly, this study sought to discover what, if any, statistically significant and substantively meaningful *relationships* existed between a school board member's socialization experiences with their readiness to govern, and with their perceptions of their board's governance effectiveness.

The study included seated school board members in the state of Minnesota with varying levels of board tenure from three months to over four years of service. This study employed a quantitative approach to exploratory research, and used an online questionnaire to gather data from each of the study's participants. Obtaining data from board members of varying tenure was important to understand members' experiences over time as they participated in socialization and gained experience in board governance.

Theoretical Framework

Following an extensive review of cross-disciplinary literature, three theories emerged as particularly relevant to form the basis of the framework for this exploratory, quantitative study to document current school board member socialization experiences, their reported readiness to govern, and observations of their board's governance effectiveness characteristics. The first theory is organizational socialization theory, which concerns itself with the acquisition, development and offboarding of employees. The second is school board governance effectiveness theory based on seminal studies conducted during the No Child Left Behind era prior to passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). And the third is quantitative exploratory research theory which seeks to explain phenomena by collecting quantitative data and then analyzing it using mathematically based methods (Sukamolson, 2007), such as statistical relationship which explores the strength and direction of a straight line relationship between two quantitative variables (Utts & Heckard, 2006).

Organizational Socialization Theory

Organizational socialization theory has developed over time, resulting in a variety of models that describe the way in which an individual enters an organization, learns the tasks and skills needed to perform a specific role, assimilates into the culture of the organization, and finally disengages and exits from the organization (Kramer, 2010). Organizational socialization has historically assumed a broad perspective, viewing an employee's experience in their role over time from attraction to the position, through onboarding, development, succession planning and finally exiting from the position (Wanberg, 2012). This broad perspective of organizational theory challenged the comparatively narrow scope of current school board socialization theory. Some socialization phases readily considered essential in organizational theory are currently not viewed as critical in school board member socialization literature. These phases include the time period prior to a member joining the board, planning for leadership succession, and also when a member disengages and exits from board service (Kramer, 2010, p 66, 171). Informed by cross-disciplinary theories of socialization, an initial broadened school board member socialization model was developed by the researcher (Link, 2021) and used to form the structure within which the study of current school board member socialization experiences was conducted.

Effective School Board Governance Theory

Effective school board governance remains the goal of board member socialization (MSBA, 2022). Discerning characteristics of effective school boards was the purpose of landmark research such as the previously cited Lighthouse Studies I, II and III (DeVarics & O'Brien, 2011). The defined characteristics from those studies have

prevailed as the ideals to which school boards aspire (NSBA, 2021), and are woven throughout contemporary school board effectiveness literature, forming a seminal theory of effective school board governance. Board members in this study were asked to rate to what degree their boards exhibited these widely accepted characteristics of effective governance.

There is evidence that the seminal theory of effective school board governance may need broadening to include characteristics and practices of equity. Recent mandates from state boards of education require school boards to ensure equitable access to resources (including highly qualified and effective teachers) by each student (ESSA, 2015; MN DOE, 2019). Therefore, school board members participating in the study were asked to rate to what degree their boards had specific equity policies and practices which may be additional indicators of their boards' governance effectiveness under the Minnesota ESSA State Plan (2018).

Quantitative Exploratory Research and Statistical Relationship Theories

Using exploratory quantitative research methods, a survey provided the structure to quantify both current school board member socialization experiences (independent variables) and school board member observations of their board's governance effectiveness characteristics (dependent variables)(Sukamolson, 2007). Statistical Relationship theory was then drawn on to form the structure within which select variables from the study were related to determine what, if any, statistical and substantively meaningful relationships existed between the variables that might have implications for the field of educational administration, particularly for school board governance.

Research Question and Subquestions

Current school board struggles to define governance effectiveness and to equip school board members to govern effectively informed the main study question: **“What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member’s socialization experiences and their perception of their board’s effective governance?”**

The study’s sub questions parsed the main question and established the parameters for the design of the study questionnaire and analysis of the resultant data:

- 1) With what demographic characteristics does a school board member identify?, 2) Which socialization experiences, if any, are had by a school board member individually, and as a team with their collective board?, 3) As perceived by a school board member, how ready do they feel to govern effectively at various socialization phases during their board service?, 4) As perceived by a school board member, what characteristics associated with effective school board governance are exhibited by their school board?, 5) As perceived by a school board member, what characteristics that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by their school board?, 6) As perceived by a school board member, what practices that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by their school board, and finally
- 7) What statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships, if any, exist between a school board member’s demographics and socialization experiences with their a) reported feelings of readiness to govern, and b) perceptions whether or not their school board exhibited characteristics of highly effective boards?

Overview of the Research Design

This study was conducted according to quantitative exploratory research theory and methodology (Sukamolson, 2007). Exploratory studies are used to gather data to inform current practice and provide the basis for future research (Stebbins, 2001). A quantitative approach to data collection and analysis was selected over a qualitative approach because of the study's purpose to confidentially gather, store and analyze a large amount of data, from a relatively large population, in a short amount of time (Sukamolson, 2007).

The research data was gathered, via survey, from the study population that included every school board member of the Independent School Districts of Minnesota. Rationale for using this particular study population and the details of the study methodology are presented in Chapter 3. The gathered and quantified data enabled aggregate population responses to be measured, disaggregated respondent groups to be compared, and statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships between select variables to be explored (Utts & Heckard, 2006).

Significance of the Study

The large amount of data amassed from this study contributed additional knowledge to the field of educational administration, specifically educational governance. The study documented information about school board members' demographics, their socialization experiences, their reported readiness to govern at various phases of their board service, and the degree to which they perceived that their board exhibited characteristics of governance effectiveness including practices of equity.

This study equips school boards, school board development committees, school board associations, and consultants with insight into the contemporary socialization experiences and needs of school board members as they strive to govern well. This research may inform the design of more comprehensive school board member socialization policies, processes and programs to undergird and promote equitable and effective school board governance in the era of equity. This broad study may provide a starting point for more in depth study of subgroups of the study's population.

This study may also provide a basis to extend the current model of effective school board governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011) to include having policies and practices that ensure each student has equitable access to resources they need to succeed, including high quality and effective teachers (ESSA, 2015; MN DOE, 2018).

Organization of the Study

In this first chapter, current struggles in the field of education administration, including school board socialization, were identified. The purpose of the study was explained and placed within a cross-disciplinary theoretical framework. The research question was posed, an overview of the research design was described, and the significance of the study was stated.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 reviews seminal and contemporary literature related to educational policy, educational governance and effectiveness, and socialization models. Gaps in the literature are identified as they relate to school board governance effectiveness and socialization practices.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 describes the methodology selected for the study and the rationale for its use. The research question is reiterated. The researcher's education and experience are relayed and the study's population and participants are described. The data collection strategy and collection instrument are discussed in depth. The study procedures followed and ethical considerations are documented, and the study's data analysis process is described.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 relates the results of the study. Aggregate responses of all board members are reported in figures. Subsequently, aggregate member responses are disaggregated by board member year of service and reported in tables. Also reported in tables are relationship studies between dependent and independent variables which surfaced statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the study's findings with the researcher's interpretation, implications for research theory and practice, limitations of the study and concluding remarks. The Appendices and References sections conclude the documentation of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review canvassed documents from multiple disciplines which were pertinent to answer the study's research question "What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences and their perception of their board's effective governance?" The study's sub questions parsed the main question into three areas which formed the structure of the literature search to discern a) seminal and contemporary understandings of the concept of school board *governance*, b) seminal and contemporary definitions of school board *governance effectiveness* including equity, and c) *practices used to socialize* members of organizations, especially members of school boards.

Keywords were used to search for pertinent literature, within each of the three categories above, using a variety of academic, business and government databases. Keywords used included: *governance, school board governance, effective school board, equity, school board training, socialization, quantitative analysis, and exploratory research*. Particularly sought out was literature pertaining to school boards of Minnesota Independent School Districts (ISD), which is the study's population. Research on contemporary exploratory quantitative research and methodology, survey development, and data analysis was also consulted. The extensive search yielded peer reviewed literature within books, articles, papers, manuals, state statute, school district policy, and professional websites. Each publication was vetted for appropriateness in addressing the study's research question and subquestions. The vetted publications were grouped into three main bodies of literature a) educational governance and policy b) school board

governance effectiveness, and c) cross-discipline socialization. These three bodies of literature are reviewed below.

Educational Governance and Policy Literature

Origin of School Board Governance in the United States of America

To function effectively as a republic, the government of the United States of America (U.S.) requires an educated citizenry (Kirst, 2010). As early as 1635, the fledgling federal government instituted local “school communities” to guarantee and oversee the education of students destined to become voters. The ratified U.S. Constitution (1788) established branches of the federal government: the legislative (law making), executive (law enacting) and judicial (law evaluating) (USA.gov, 2017). These branches concern themselves with issues that affect the entire country.

By 1791, just two years after ratifying the U.S. Constitution, the federal government ratified the 10th Amendment granting the states autonomy over the education of the country’s students. The states in turn, delegated authority for education to local “school boards” made up of community members, either appointed or elected. These boards were responsible in part for school buildings, curricula, budgets and student achievement (Land, 2002).

Federalism and the Shifting Balance of Power in Educational Governance

Federal Governance. The balance of power between federal, state and local governance (known as federalism) has shifted significantly from the 1700s resulting in a redistribution of authority, responsibility and accountability for educating the nation’s youth. A series of federal acts (cited below) have increasingly asserted the reach of the federal government into state educational jurisdiction, lessening the state’s autonomy and

decreasing the authority of local school boards regarding the funding and practice of education in their districts.

Beginning in 1958, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was enacted. This act was in response to a perceived threat to the U.S. national security from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) launch of the first satellite, Sputnik. The Act provided funding to states, with accompanying mandates, to increase the teaching of science and technology to “insure trained manpower of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs of the United States.” NDEA effectively extended the purpose of education from ensuring an informed electorate, and a well trained workforce, to additionally increasing the capacity for national security against external threat.

Concurrently, internal national struggles for socioeconomic and racial justice were commanding the attention of policy makers. Hard fought gains were made toward racial justice with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That Act paved the way for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 with a goal of “equal access to quality education,” but the goal of “full educational opportunity” was not met (Law, P., 1965). The ESEA has since been amended, renamed and reauthorized with each new presidential administration (Weinbaum, 2009). Each reauthorization ostensibly further eroded areas in which local governance exercises discretionary power in K-12 education. Fuhrman and Elmore (1990, p. 85) hypothesized this perception of eroding local governance power may be due to the way in which reforms (such as those in The No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB, 2001]) are “expressed as mandates or rules, as opposed to efforts to build local capacity. (This approach) may reinforce the image of increasingly obtrusive state presence.”

Accountability measures for NCLB mandates were stringent and the timeline for fulfilling the mandates proved overly ambitious. Economic and structural consequences for schools failing to make “adequate progress” were punitive in nature, even to the point of school closure (NCLB, 2001). States appealed to the federal government and twice received compliance waivers from the NCLB law under the Obama administration (2009-2017). These waivers provided more local agency in meeting the law’s mandates. By 2015, the federal government had replaced NCLB with The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This Act allowed each state to submit their own unique plan (within set parameters) to meet ESSA mandates.

State Governance. The ESSA Minnesota State Plan, first approved in 2017, set rigorous benchmarks for continuous progress by all students, measured in part by state-wide proficiency exams. The state plan’s goal, and mandate for school boards and their districts, was for “equity and continuous improvement for all students...ensuring all students have what they need to succeed and all teachers and administrators have supports in place to deliver on that promise” (ESSA MN State Plan, 2017). Under the state plan, results of student proficiency exams and other formative evaluations are disaggregated and reported at a more granular level. Purportedly, such detailed reporting more readily identifies students in need of personalized resources so that they may adequately progress toward college and career readiness. Schools with students needing support are ostensibly not penalized, rather they are teamed with strategic state educational specialists and provided with resources to equitably address their students’ needs (MN Regional Centers of Excellence, MDE, 2018).

While a benchmark for determining additional resources, the state proficiency exam has met opposition from the electorate, and the results of the exams have impacted achievement of state and district benchmarks for which the school board is accountable. Parents assert that such exams encourage districts to limit the curriculum to that needed to pass the test, that the test is biased against certain students, and that the testing process can cause student anxiety (Levy & Edelman, 2016). While students and their parents have the choice to have the student “opt out” of taking the test, “opt outs” are counted the same as “not passing.” Unfortunately, students are opting out of such “high stakes” proficiency tests in increasing number (Pizmony-Levy & Saraisky, 2016). The number of “not passing” students lowers a district’s overall achievement rating and impacts district funding which is tied to those ratings (Pizmony-Levy & Saraisky, 2016). The allocation of state funding in the district falls under the purview of the school board, and the board is accountable to both the state and the electorate for the results of the funding’s expenditure. In some districts, poor exam results may also affect teacher and administrator evaluations and staff retention. A reduction in access to high quality and effective teachers can impact a school district’s progress toward achieving critical equity goals set and monitored by both the state and school board (Mittleman & Jannings, 2018; Ravitch, 2010).

Unforeseen circumstances can also interfere with using the proficiency exam as a benchmark of student achievement by which the school board monitors a district’s progress towards end goals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota (as well as many states) received a waiver to cancel their comprehensive exams for the 2019-2020 school year, leaving the state, and school boards, without data against which to measure

student progress. During the 2020-2021 school year, students took the exams, but the state, and many school districts, opted to not use the results as a benchmark for comparison to other years (MN DOE, 2021). School boards found themselves with less data to inform their communication with their communities about the academic achievement of the district's students.

Executive Orders, Mandates, Standards and Rules. Executive orders, issued at the federal or state level, have the effect of law, and may circumvent the Legislative Branch that normally makes laws, and the Judicial Branch that reviews the laws for constitutionality. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the mode and methods of education were constrained to comply with the mandates that accompanied federal and state level executive orders (Federal Register, 2022; Walz, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). Many of the orders were informed by data and recommendations from appointed officials who were not elected by, representative of, or accountable to the electorate (CDC, 2022; MN DOH, 2022; NIH, 2022). School boards were caught in a “squeeze play” between official mandates and heightened community fervor regarding the implementation of education within frequently shifting constraints.

As accountable elected officials, school boards must also consider how best to allocate one-time relief funds received from the federal or state government, such as those recently granted for COVID related expenses (MPS, 2022), which are not appropriate to spend on recurring expenditures.

Local Governance. Communities are aware of school achievement ratings and compare their district to adjoining districts (Eden Prairie News, 2018). Critics of standardized tests state that when a school is identified as needing additional support, it

can cause enrollment flight and a decrease in neighborhood property value (Ravitch, 2010). Community perceptions that their district's education is inadequate can have repercussions for the school board including loss of trust by their electorate.

Communities that lose trust in the school board and superintendent's ability to maintain community value and ensure student success, are apt to call for the superintendent's resignation and vote current board members out of office (Alsbury & Gore, 2015).

Changes in district administration and/or board leadership may result in a pause of momentum, with ensuing changes being either positive or negative (Alsbury & Gore, 2015).

The Judicial System. Superfine and Goddard (2009) note that courts have, on occasion, reached beyond their traditional "law evaluating" responsibility and prescribed particular educational programs to ensure equitable teaching and learning, such as early childhood education. Such rulings, while just in the eyes of the court, and perhaps in the eyes of the school board and their community, may not be accompanied by federal or state funding. To abide by the court ruling, a school board must then shift both its educational priorities and its budget allocations. These priorities may or may not reflect the educational needs or values of their community.

Summary of Educational Governance Literature. It can be seen from a review of educational governance literature that not only has the purpose of education shifted from that initially defined in the U.S. Constitution, but the initially delegated authority and autonomy of local school board governance has eroded over time. Nevertheless, school board governance policy that has input from its constituency still has the ability to influence education at the local governance level (Gann, 2015). Government education

policy remains the predominant influence on education in the U.S., however global narratives and entrepreneurial influences are also impacting the education of U.S. students.

Educational Policy Literature

Government Educational Policy Influence. While public educational policy in the United States is enacted by the branches of representative government at the federal, state and local levels, implementation of those policies happens at the local level. Cunningham (2002) and Reimer (2015) state that policy incorporating input from stakeholders most closely impacted by it stands a better chance of successful implementation. School boards have a definite proximity advantage in garnering input from local stakeholders regarding pressing local educational needs (Gann, 2015; Paine & McCann, 2009). Such regular and strategic communication between a school board and its stakeholders is cited in the literature as one of the characteristics of effective governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011), and a determinant of school boards drafting more informed and effective policy.

Global Narrative Policy Influence. There is evidence that educational policy, at all levels of government, is being strongly influenced by global narratives, and unelected entrepreneurial lobbyists. Researchers such as Ball (2017) and Barkan (2018) state that educational policy in the United States and other countries is being influenced by a global narrative of “educational inadequacy” and the need for urgent reform. This narrative was fueled in part in the United States by the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk.” The report states:

Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.

The report concludes with an appeal (and justification) for intervention by educational governance at the federal, state and local levels: “It is, therefore, essential--especially in a period of long-term decline in educational achievement--*for government at all levels to affirm its responsibility* for nurturing the nation's intellectual capital” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). Stoking the urgency for continued intervention at all levels is the concern elicited by recent results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and their ranking of the nation’s global standing compared to other countries (Lewis, 2017; Lingard & Lewis, 2016). Conversely, Araujo, Saltelli and Schnepf (2017) express their unease with what they see as a lack of transparency regarding the purpose of the PISA exam, which they assert is based in economic competition, not improvement of student achievement. They question the legitimacy of using the results to inform educational policy to improve student outcomes.

Extending the influence of its global exams, PISA also makes available resources regarding “policies and practices for successful schools” (Hursh, 2016; Lewis, 2016). Phillips (2005) and Bromley (2014) state that wholesale implementation of borrowed educational practices, such as those advocated in PISA resources, may not be successful or ethical because of variations in cultural values and mores. Despite criticism of the exam, some countries are using the results to inform the modification of their educational mandates and teaching and learning practices (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). In a trickle down effect, the global narrative of “educational

inadequacy” can permeate community values. School boards may be expected by their community to take globally influenced values and practices into account when creating a local educational vision and school board policies. Conversely, the school board may find their electorate takes exception to the influence of global narratives which can permeate federal and state mandates and impact district curriculum and teaching practices in a way that the community does not value (Cabezudo et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial Policy Influence. Enacting educational change through policy levers can be agonizingly slow (Sillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Instead of relying solely on policy to effect change, classic and contemporary Neoliberalists, such as Hayek, Friedman, and Buchanan (Vallier, 2021), put faith in “risk-taking entrepreneurs.” While they value the government’s role to make policy and “steer the boat,” they also value the role of the market (which is able to respond more quickly) to act as the “rower” to deliver public services expediently (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Ascribing to the expedient ideals of Neoliberalism, organizations such as the Heising-Simons and Bill and Melinda Gates foundations (2018) are finding ways to abbreviate academic policy creation and implementation cycles. These organizations support a host of lobby groups to influence legislation in the educational policy arena, and also work directly with school systems to impact both curriculum and teaching (Hursh, 2016). While commending the foundations’ intent, Hursh cautions that these efforts are being led by unelected, unrepresentative and unaccountable individuals. He raises the concern about the organizations’ long term commitment to the district during and after the implementation of an initiative. School boards must consider the sustainability of any entrepreneurial intervention, and how it

may or may not comply with state and federal educational policy and mandates, or support the best interests and values of their community.

School Board Governance Effectiveness Literature

School Board Governance Accountability and Responsibility

School boards are accountable to the state from which they derive their authority, and to their electorate whom they represent. In Minnesota (the state of the study's population), state statute (123B.02) grants the school board "authority to govern, manage and control the district; to carry out its duties and responsibilities; and to conduct the business of the district." School board governance responsibilities can be summarized as exercising "foresight, insight, oversight and hindsight" (Boston et al., 2019; Denyer, 2017). Those responsibilities are explored below to highlight the complexity of what a school board member must grasp about their position in order to govern effectively, and for which many new school board members are ill prepared (IASB, 2001; MSBA, 2019; NSBA, 2018; WSSDA, 2018).

Choose a Governance Model. A governance model provides the framework within which a school board collectively agrees to conduct its business and fulfill its responsibilities. Working within the model, the board drafts policies and processes that define the role, responsibilities and actions of the collective board, the individual board members and the superintendent (Carver, 2011).

Set a Vision for the District. The school board demonstrates *foresight* by setting the vision for the district, ostensibly after connecting with the community to learn their educational values (Stover, 2005). State education plans, such as that of Minnesota, now require districts to show evidence of robust community input into district decisions

regarding student education (MN DOE, 2017). Such ongoing communication between the school board and its community builds trust, informs the board's work, and demonstrates the board's accountability (Stover, 2005). School boards that are unable to reach a consensus on a vision may consider seeking a consultant to assist the board (and the superintendent as an ex-officio board member) to do so. Such a defined vision sets the parameters for establishing end goals for the district (Alsbury & Gore, 2015).

Establish End Goals for the District. The board sets end goals the district must meet to realize the board's vision. These goals are high level, with very few specified means by which they must be achieved, unless the board deems such details vitally important to attaining the end.

Hire and Evaluate a Superintendent. If a district has a secondary school, the school board must employ a superintendent who has specific duties for supervision, evaluation and reporting (MN statute 123B.143). The superintendent is the sole employee of the board and in many districts, also the school board's sole point of contact with the district staff. Therefore, it is important that the board hire a superintendent who shares the board's aforementioned vision for the district and with whom the board can partner to achieve established end goals (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Clarity of roles and a collaborative, trusting working relationship between the board and the superintendent sets the tone for the district. Trying to parse out from state statute "who does what" between the school board and the superintendent is challenging for experienced board members and superintendents, and can be bewildering for those who are new to board service (Ford & Ihrke, 2016a). The role of the board is to govern; the role of the superintendent is to manage (Gann, 2015; MSBA, 2018b). Superintendence encompasses district staff,

facilities, grading practices and examinations, the general operation of the schools, and other responsibilities the board delegates or assigns (MN statute 123B.143).

Superintendents are evaluated by the board based on their ability to meet the board's ends within limitations set by the board (Dawson & Quinn, 2011).

Socialize New Board Members. In half the states in the U.S., mandated training of new board members and officers is required (MN State Statute 123B.09, Subd.2). This mandated training covers roles, responsibilities and processes of board service as well as a primer on school finance (MSBA, 2018). Self-learning by new members is available through research-based board socialization resources by authors such as Dawson and Quinn (2011), Alsbury and Gore (2015) and Donlan and Whitaker (2019), however, these resources are not well known by school boards. Additional topical training may also be available through state school board associations or outside consultants, but additional training is primarily the responsibility of the board (Alsbury & Gore, 2015), which may or may not have a board development plan. On average, a school board member completes their full term(s), but may leave midterm for a variety of reasons, and it is the school board that bears the responsibility for offboarding members who exit their seats due to planned or unplanned reasons (MSBA, 2022). School boards may or may not have policies/processes regarding the offboarding of members.

Approve the District Budget and Other Financial Items. The board is responsible to review and approve complex district budgets which allocate resources in accordance with state statute and the district's overall vision and ends. A large part of a district's budget is negotiated faculty and staff salaries and benefits, which the board must

also approve. Many board members have little to no knowledge of finance or contract negotiation, especially that of school districts (Maeroff, 2010).

Periodically boards must approve and champion the passage of district referendums for levies (for learning) or bonds (for buildings) which provide funding needed by the district over and above that which is funded by the state and federal government. Referendums are voted upon by voters living in the district. Referendums may result in a tax increase for stakeholders. To get a referendum to pass, it is vitally important that the board and superintendent work as a team. They most often must also employ the expertise of consultants to facilitate coordinated communication with the voters in a timely and accessible manner (Ehrenberg et al., 2004)

Monitor Results of the District and the Work of the Board. The board exercises *oversight* as it monitors each of its policies for compliance. Some policies refer to responsibilities of the superintendent such as ends that must be accomplished, or limitations within which the superintendent must perform their duties. Other policies refer to responsibilities of the board members and the collective board. Monitoring provides vital information the board uses to assess progress toward achieving the board's end goals for the district's education (Hess, 2010). The board uses *hindsight* to evaluate next steps needed toward ends achievement, including altering the content of the policies (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013).

Communicate Results. The board is directly accountable for its use of federal, state and local funding, and is expected to communicate the results of their actions in a timely, transparent manner to both the state and the community (MN statute 123B.143). This accountability to the state is accomplished, by law, through submitted documents.

Accountability to the community occurs at public board meetings, committee meetings, workshops and forums (MN Open Meeting Law, 2017). Boards increasingly communicate with their stakeholders via print and social media.

Participate in Professional Organizations. While not a required responsibility, most boards participate in professional organizations at the national, state, regional or local level. For boards in Minnesota, these organizations include the National School Board Association (NSBA)¹, the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), and regional associations such as the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD).

Build Relationships with Legislators. It is also incumbent of boards, acting as representatives of their districts, to nurture working relationships with their local and national legislators who make decisions regarding educational mandates and funding. By doing so, school boards contribute local voice to laws that impact school districts and the futures of their students (NSBA, 2018a).

The degree to which a school board fulfills its many governance responsibilities determines its effectiveness (see Definition of Terms). Some boards govern more effectively than others. The following literature explores characteristics of boards that govern well.

Characteristics of School Boards that Govern Effectively

The Iowa Association of School Boards' Lighthouse studies I, II and III (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011) are seminal and oft-cited research on school board effectiveness. These Lighthouse studies concluded that there are different characteristics exhibited by boards

¹ In 2022, the Minnesota School Board disaffiliated from the National School Board Association citing a conflict of views and decreasing value of membership (Verges, 2022).

whose districts have high student achievement than those that do not. The National School Boards Association incorporated these research-based characteristics in their “Key Work of School Boards” framework (NSBA, 2015). Additional research corresponding with a characteristic is also noted.

Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision (Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006)
2. Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels (ESSA, 2015; MN DOE, 2018).
3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement (Goodman, Fulbright & Zimmerman, 1997; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).
4. Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals (Sell, 2006).
5. Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).
6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals (LaRocque & Coleman, 1993; Waters & Marzano, 2006).
7. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust (Snipes, Doolittle & Herlihy, 2002).
8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts (LaRoque & Coleman, 1993; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Effective Board Governance Through an Equity Lens. The Minnesota ESSA, 2018 plan states that boards are responsible to ensure students' have "equitable access to high quality and effective teachers and resources." The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) and ensuing state policies (MN DOE, 2018) propel to the fore mandates for a student's access to resources as a way of reducing gaps in achievement (Klanderud & O'Laughlin, 2019). In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning loss inequitably impacted students of color and lower socioeconomic standing, exposing additional gaps in resource accessibility and student achievement. In response, the National School Board Association published a guide for school boards to use to start deep conversations regarding equity policies and practices in their district (2021). It follows that demonstrated board action to ensure equity (such as calling equity to the fore in its policies/processes and monitoring those policies/processes regularly for compliance) may soon be added to the list of codified characteristics of effective boards (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Leverett, 2016; Sampson, 2019; Simon, 2007).

To summarize, a school board's governance can be evaluated for effectiveness by measuring a board's performance against the following criteria: a) completing governance responsibilities as mandated in state statute and state education plans, b) fulfilling governance expectations of a board's electorate, and c) demonstrating characteristics of effective boards, including having and monitoring equity policies/processes. Despite best intentions to govern effectively, school boards face challenges, some of which are not under their immediate control.

Challenges to Effective School Board Governance

Political, Economic and Societal Value Shift Challenges. Changes in political administrations may affect educational mandates and funding which can support or challenge school district financial budgets (ESSA 2015; NCLB, 2001). At times, changes in political administrations can spur economic shifts. Such shifts may decrease or increase voter support for school board referendums that are used to secure funds to meet the district's financial needs that are not funded by state or federal funds (Hoover, 2021).

Global and community values may change expectations for education and how district funds are apportioned (Cabezuda et al., 2019). At times, school boards are caught between immediate community needs/opinion and long range goals for district financial security and academic achievement to stay fiscally sound and competitive with area districts. A loss of trust in the ability of the district to meet the district and state's academic benchmarks can lead to a decrease in enrollment that can create a financial and academic downward spiral for a district (Hubler et al., 2021).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and Practice Challenges. Despite the impact of NCLB (2001-2014) during which failing districts were consolidated, mayors were granted control of some large districts, or education came under the control of governors in some states (Garda Jr. & Doty, 2013), the basic structure of the almost 14,000 current U.S. school boards has remained constant (NSBA, 2018b). Boards generally consist of between five to seven members (plus an ex-officio superintendent). Members are either elected or appointed for a term that generally is either three or four years in length, but may be for as long as six years (Hess & Meeks, 2010).

The majority of school boards do not yet reflect the diversity of their student population. With the exception of some boards that have (non-voting) student representation, board members tend to be middle age, well educated, somewhat conservative, financially successful, well connected to their community, 44% female and 56% male (Alsbury, 2014; Kerr, 1964; Marschall, 2003; Marsh, 2014). In Minnesota, of the 2,148 total school board members in 2017, seventy-one (roughly 3%) identified as people of color (MPRnews, 2017). Studies on the underrepresentation of certain people groups on school boards focused on the impact of the electoral/appointment process (Hutton, 2008; Rauch, 2017; Scott, 2017; Sell, 2006). Findings show that ward based elections and appointments are more likely to result in diverse board candidates being represented (Meier et al., 2005). Criticism of ward elections is that it can pressure a representative to vote in a way that most benefits the students in their ward rather than what is best for all students in the district.

With the board charged to ensure equitable and high student achievement, diverse perspectives that arise from lived experience can inform and enrich board deliberations on critical decisions (Hutton, 2008). However, a board member of a specific demographic should not be expected to speak on behalf of that entire demographic group (Demby, 2013). Being cast in an “official” or “superhero” role can either artificially heighten or limit the influence of the individual (Sampson, 2018).

Electoral Process and Cycle Challenges. In any given election year, a number of seats may be up for appointment or election. In districts with seven member boards, up to four seats may turn over. Voters who are satisfied with the governance of the current board may opt to re-elect seated board members; those dissatisfied may vote in all new

members (Alsbury, 2003, 2008a; Hess & Leal, 2005). The ensuing disruption may create a positive opportunity for new direction, or result in negative destabilization. Temporary board inertia and decreased effectiveness may occur while new members gain governance experience and negotiate critical relationships (Alsbury, 2008b). Adding even one newly elected or appointed member (planned or unplanned) impacts the ethos and effectiveness of the board (Minnesota Statute Section 123.09, Sub 5b).

Gaining a seat on the board may be more difficult in communities with long standing board members, and especially formidable for someone who does not match the prevailing board demographic (MPRnews, 2017). Some districts are mindful of individuals involved in school committees and encourage them to seek an elected school board position, but few districts have an ongoing pipeline of highly qualified and informed potential candidates (DeWitte & Schlitz, 2017). While some states have documents that encourage recruitment of potential candidates (MASB, 2018), other states discourage the use of the term “recruiting,” as it may denote “cherry-picking” some candidates to the exclusion of others.

Potential school board members must meet state requirements to file for candidacy (Minnesota Statute 123B.09, 2018a). Some districts experience a large turnout of candidates for open seats on the board; others have great difficulty attracting citizens willing and able to run for this important office. Running for school board can be expensive, time consuming for any candidate, and bewildering for a first time candidate (Hess & Leal in Howell, 2005).

To inform potential candidates, state websites provide an overview of school boards and how to file for candidacy, and most local newspapers post a notice of open

seats. School boards may post open seats on their website and offer information sessions for candidates. In some instances, a superintendent or a member of his cabinet may hold a candidate information session to initiate a positive relationship with school board candidates (those who have filed to seek election). The information presented can help to jumpstart a candidate's learning curve regarding board governance and clarify the roles of a board member and the superintendent (EPSB, 2018). Local newspapers and community organizations may offer forums for candidates to present their views to the public (EPLN, 2021; League of Women Voters Minnesota, 2019; SWnewsmedia, 2018). However, many local newspapers have ceased publication in the last five years, leaving an effective local "information desert" in many suburbs, exurbs and rural communities (Hayes, D., 2021).

School board elections have historically been conducted on off years from major elections to preserve their (theoretically) apolitical nature. Unfortunately, these elections have repeatedly experienced low voter turnout (5-12%), especially if there is no referendum on the ballot (Cai, 2020). To increase voter turnout and decrease election costs, a majority of school boards now hold elections on the same year as the general elections. Whether this practice will more overtly politicize future school board elections and create voter fatigue due to ballot length, or increase voter interest and involvement in school board elections remains to be seen (Gersen & Berry, 2010).

School Board Governance Model Challenges. The process by which school boards divide their responsibilities with the superintendent and carry out their governance duties varies with the model of school board governance they adopt. Following a traditional model of governance, school boards govern, but may also manage some day-to-day operations of the school. This model has fallen out of favor due to the

potential for role confusion leading to an ineffective, if not adversarial, relationship between the board and the superintendent, which has been shown to negatively impact school achievement (Lee & Eadens, 2014).

School Board Relationship Challenges.

The Board and the Superintendent. A majority of boards now ascribe to a model of governance in which the responsibilities of the board and superintendent are clearly differentiated in policy (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Carver, 2011; Ford & Ihrke 2016b; Maeroff, 2010). In reality, a potential overlap of roles necessitates ongoing clarification, collaboration and “good faith” negotiation between the board and the superintendent. Unresolved friction in this critical relationship, and amongst board members, are the major causes of dissatisfaction and turnover of board members and superintendents, as well as ineffective board governance and voter mistrust (Alsbury, 2003; Alsbury & Gore, 2008b; Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Nelson, 2010).

Superintendent stability enables follow-through of long range initiatives (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Having a shared vision for the district, and clear policy with definitive measurements against which achievement is evaluated, creates a milieu of collaboration within which the board and the superintendent can effectively carry out their respective roles, garner community trust, and positively impact student achievement (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Ford & Ihrke, 2016a).

Between School Board Members. A critical working relationship an *individual* board member must develop is that with their fellow board members. Board members arrive at the table with varying backgrounds, abilities, motivations and aspirations. Some members may win a seat as a result of voter dissatisfaction with the seated board, and this

can set up an initial adversarial relationship which must be negotiated to work in a spirit of shared vision (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Johnson, 2012). Many newly elected board members have never served in a governance position, and don't know what it means to govern, nor how governance varies from management (Glass et al., 2000). School board members are encouraged to engage in deliberation (sometimes spirited) with their peers within prescribed rules of order to reach a decision (i.e. Robert's Rules of Order [Robert III, Honemann & Balch, 2011]). However, according to state statute, the power of the board is exercised only when acting as a collective body. As established in state statute (MN 123B.09, 2018a), when acting alone, individual board members have no authority or power in and of themselves. Productive or non-productive conflict inevitably occurs due to a clash of values, personalities or varying interpretations of policy. The community's confidence in the board's capability to govern effectively can be affected by the board's ability to resolve conflict (Jutabha, 2017; Saatcioglu et al., 2011).

Sound policies that state the board's ends, executive limitations, how the board delegates its authority, and how the board does its job, create a firm structure within which to govern. Board policies, processes and procedures specify the board's expectations for board member behavior and interaction (Alsbury in Cooper et al., 2008a; Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Johnson, 2012; Jutabha, 2017). Ongoing collective board development has been shown to contribute to productive board relationships and ongoing effective governance, despite board member or superintendent turnover (Delagardelle, 2008; Jutabha, 2017; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Maeroff, 2010; Reimer, 2015).

Board-Community Engagement. Researchers agree that community centered engagement, to understand community values for the future direction of education in the

district, is a necessity for effective governance (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Donlan & Whitaker, 2019; Khalifa, 2021; Reimer, 2015). Regular communication with the community is also a state required responsibility of school boards, and expectations have expanded with authorization of ESSA (2015) and approval of state plans (CCSSO, 2017).

Ongoing engagement with all district stakeholders is a major challenge of school boards, and one for which boards admit the need for further training and action (Hess, 2002; Maeroff, 2010). In a diverse community, having a representative board may enhance community-board trust (Marschall, 2003). Equally important is that a school board has a commitment to authentic community centered engagement, that it drafts policies to ensure engagement with all communities in the district, and that the board implements practices to accomplish that communication (Khalifa, 2021). A school board and its district's superintendent may devise a plan to share this community engagement opportunity/responsibility by utilizing resources such as those highlighted by Alexander et al (2019) in "Expanding the Vision of Reimagine Minnesota" which is a "collective action plan to ensure that all students receive an equitable, integrated, and excellent education." Technology can be one means to rapidly convey information to and from the community, but not all school boards are equally tech savvy (Carr & Cook, 2012; OSBA, 2016). Boards that have a long range, authentic and time bound plan for community centered engagement, aligned with the district mission, and monitored regularly, derive the most benefit for their community (Carr & Cook, 2012; CCSSO, 2017).

Effective school board governance that rises above challenges such as those noted above, does not happen overnight. Board members learn to govern well over time. The

next section explores current models of organizational and school board socialization that can support learning of individual school board members and their board as a group.

Socialization Literature

Documentation of school board training post enactment of ESSA in 2015 is sparse. Even seminal studies prior to that time present socialization models that are narrow in scope, focus predominantly on the onboarding phase. Therefore, a review of socialization literature below is cross-disciplinary to expand the scope to include attraction to a position, preparation to assume the position, onboarding, development and evaluation, and transitioning to exit from the position.

Organizational Socialization Models

Socialization models used by for-profit and nonprofit organizations are broader in scope and are more well documented in the literature than models for socializing appointed or elected federal, state or local government officials. For-profit, nonprofit and government official socialization models are explored below, followed by an investigation of socialization models used by school boards (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Klein et al., 2015; Kramer, 2010; Wanberg, 2012).

For-profit Models. Kramer (2010) presents a for-profit corporate model of phased socialization. The first stage, “organizational anticipatory socialization,” chronicles mutual choices made by the business and the employee during phases of recruitment, selection, and pre-entry. This stage is followed by “organizational encounter” which includes learning about the job, the culture and cultivating relationships, possible transition during employment tenure, and finally exiting the organization. Bauer and Erdogan’s corporate socialization model (2012) is similar with

“pre-entry antecedents, entry, proximal outcomes and distal outcomes.” While these corporate models are comprehensive, and potentially useful for broadening socialization models for school board, school board members are appointed or elected officials rather than employees of the district.

Nonprofit Models. A nonprofit socialization model, which more closely mirrors a school board member’s experience, is Haski-Leventhal and Bargal’s Volunteering Stages and Transitions Model (VSTM)(2008). It speaks to a less formal socialization process acknowledging a volunteer’s lack of training compounded with job ambiguity. This can lead to emotionally laden “contradictions between their expectations and reality” of the job. The model acknowledges employees’ altruistic motivations for joining the organization. Some school board members’ reasons for serving parallel those of nonprofit volunteers, such as “to make a difference” (Donlan & Whitaker, 2019). Like non-profit volunteers, school board members often receive minimal or no compensation. However, unlike volunteers, elected or appointed school board members are accountable to the state and their community for a specific set of responsibilities. They serve in an oversight capacity within a set governance structure and under state statute.

Government Models. Literature regarding socialization of elected or appointed government officials is sparse. Where it is documented, it is often embedded in website pages accessible only with a password. More often, such a plan is undocumented, or simply does not exist. A rare exception is a report by Christiansen et al. (2016). Findings of their research with high level appointees in the Obama Administration (2009-2017) revealed a dearth of organized onboarding plans. Even when an onboarding plan existed, it was not consistently implemented. Nearly all appointees expressed a lack of needed

onboarding support. Additionally they stated that a good time for this onboarding is *between* their appointment and when they assume their position, due to increased time constraints once they assume their office. Christiansen et al. (2016) advocate for consistent strategic onboarding of appointees that takes into account their prior experience. The researchers defined onboarding as “a systematic and designed approach over the first year of an appointee’s tenure to prepare the new appointee for success.”

These for-profit, nonprofit and government models present a large aperture through which to view socialization, spanning from “attraction to” through “exit from” the organization. School board socialization models currently have a narrower scope.

School Board Socialization Models

A search for literature pertaining specifically to socialization of elected and appointed officials, such as school board directors, yielded only a handful of articles, with most research conducted prior to the era of equity (2015 to present).

Researchers Delagardelle (2008) and Maeroff (2010) acknowledge that board members lack a full understanding of what the role entails prior to their election. Carnes (2008) specifies that new board member learnings include: grasp the purpose and structure of the board’s governance, assimilate (or at least be aware of) the board’s culture, assume an individual and collective board role, and navigate critical relationships (with fellow board members, the superintendent, faculty, staff and the community).

The benefit of school board member orientation and on-boarding training is acknowledged in school board literature (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; MSBA, 2018d; WSSDA, 2018). Approximately half of the 50 states in the U.S. mandate new school board member training within the first six months of assuming office. This means that

school board members in the remaining half of the states must learn solely “on the job” with the responsibility for onboarding resting squarely with the member, their board and the superintendent (EPSB GP 4.4, 2018; NSBA, 2018). To bridge this gap, some state school board associations issue handbooks for novice board members that cover topics essential for informed governance (ASBSD, 2018; MASB, 2018b; WSSDA, 2018).

There is also an argument, presented in the school board socialization literature, for *ongoing* individual member and collective board development to improve effectiveness (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Some state school board associations support this process through a series of trainings regarding board responsibilities and accountability (MSBA, 2018). These trainings may be attended by an individual school board member or as a collective board. There are also a number of books available which address school board responsibility and accountability (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Dawson & Quinn, 2011; Donlan & Whitaker, 2019). Some books offer board evaluation instruments such as those in Alsbury and Gore (2015). These resources are helpful, however, processes they advocate may not be an exact fit for the governance model used by a specific board. The resources are not tailored to the experience level of each board member, and cannot transmit the tacit ethos of a specific board and its community.

Current socialization models used by school boards are limited in breadth and depth (Kramer, 2010). These models generally focus on policy and procedure. Absent from the models are strategic processes to inform and attract potential candidates, develop governance and leadership skills of seated board members, evaluate governance effectiveness, and manage change and risk as members exit board service (MSBA Mentoring, Officer’s Workshop, 2019). School boards may experience frequent board

member turnover due to their three to four year election cycle. Unaddressed gaps in individual board member and collective board socialization may contribute to pauses in board effectiveness (Baker et al., 2016; Bradt in Wanberg, 2012; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001).

To narrow gaps in board effectiveness, a handful of researchers are advocating for a more comprehensive school board socialization model (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Baker et al., 2016; Bradt, 2012; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010). No model yet exists that comprehensively addresses the phases of attraction, onboarding, leadership development and succession planning, governance effectiveness evaluation, and offboarding.

One broader educational socialization model is the “MN-Teachers of Color Strategy Map,” developed by Rose Chu (2017). It posits a range of socialization phases along a “teacher career pathway.” Chu’s model addresses some phases not currently addressed in school board socialization models.

Toward a Comprehensive School Board Member Socialization Model. To build a more comprehensive school board socialization model, one must first understand current socialization experiences had by school board members during various points in their board service. To create a framework for this study’s exploratory research of current school board member socialization experiences in the era of equity (post 2015), the researcher curated the various socialization models from the previously cited cross-discipline literature, and compiled an *initial comprehensive school board member socialization model* (Figure 1). This model formed the conceptual structure within which

the methodology of the study's research was developed to gather information about current socialization practices experienced by sitting school board members (Bauer, 2014; Christiansen et al., 2016; MSBA, 2018b, 2018c; Cistone, 1977, 1974; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Klein, Palin & Sutton, 2015; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001; Wanberg, 2012;).

Figure 1 (Second Appearance)

Initial Model - School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases (Link, 2021)



Summary of the Literature Review

Seminal and contemporary literature reveals an ongoing debate regarding the relevance and effectiveness of school boards to ensure adequate student achievement. Researchers cite recent comprehensive test scores as evidence that little progress has been made toward closing student achievement gaps, especially for traditionally underserved student groups (Golden & Webster, 2019). School boards have borne the brunt of the criticism from researchers for their school districts' failings to meet benchmarks of successive federal Acts and state mandates, including each student having equitable access to resources need to succeed. Defenders of the current local governance model relayed that districts with school boards that exhibit governance characteristics associated with highly effective school boards (Devarics & O'Brien, 2013) are more likely to experience favorable student outcomes (Jutabha, 2017).

School board socialization has been shown to increase and support a board's governance effectiveness (Cistone, 1974; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Jutabha, 2017;

Walters & Marzano, 2006). Researchers question whether current school board socialization programs contain the right content, are comprehensive enough, or are implemented consistently enough to promote school board governance effectiveness (Carnes, 2008; Chu, 2017; DeWitte & Schiltz, 2017; MSBA, 2018e; NSBA, 2010). To measure a board's governance effectiveness, Alsbury and Gore (2015) assert that periodic school board governance evaluations can surface areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. While a variety of school board evaluation tools are available to boards, they are not routinely accessed (MSBA, 2019).

Gap in the Literature

School board governance literature currently contains much research relaying the history of school board governance and its shortcomings. Also documented are characteristics of highly effective school board governance and how exhibiting those characteristics is associated with more favorable student achievement outcomes. What is not well documented are the ways in which individual school board members, and boards as a group, may learn how to govern effectively (sometimes referred to as socialization) over the full course of their term. Corporate and nonprofit board member socialization models are broad, with multiple phases encompassing recruitment through offboarding. The school board literature currently contains no such comprehensive socialization model for school board members and/or the board as a group. The literature also lacks research on how school board member socialization may affect a school board member's readiness to govern or be related to a member's observation of the characteristics and practices of governance effectiveness exhibited by their school board.

This literature review canvassed seminal and contemporary literature related to educational policy, educational governance and effectiveness, and socialization models. Gaps in the literature were identified as they related to school board governance effectiveness and socialization practices. An initial comprehensive school board member socialization model was proposed as a structure within which the methodology of the study could be constructed. Chapter 3 of this study describes the methodology used to gather and analyze the research data to answer the research questions and add to the body of knowledge about school board socialization, school board governance effectiveness, and relationships that may exist between them.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Delineated below is the research methodology for this quantitative study to explore what socialization experiences are had by current school board members, and what relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences with their relayed readiness to govern, and with their perception of their board's effective governance. A quantitative exploratory approach enabled the researcher to efficiently gather a large amount of data, in a short amount of time. The data gathered add to the existing body of knowledge and provides the basis for further research regarding implications from the study.

Research Question and Subquestions

The main research question "What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences and their perception of their board's effective governance?" was further parsed to established the parameters for the design of the study questionnaire and analysis of the resultant data: 1) With what demographic characteristics

does a school board member identify?, 2) Which socialization experiences, if any, are had by a school board member individually, and as a team with their collective board?, 3) As perceived by a school board member, how ready do they feel to govern effectively at various socialization phases during their board service?, 4) As perceived by a school board member, what characteristics associated with effective school board governance are exhibited by their school board?, 5) As perceived by a school board member, what characteristics that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by their school board?, 6) As perceived by a school board member, what practices that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by their school board, and finally 7) What statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships, if any, exist between a school board member's demographics and socialization experiences with their a) reported feelings of readiness to govern, and b) perceptions whether or not their school board exhibited characteristics of highly effective boards?

Selected Methodology - A Quantitative Exploratory Approach

Exploratory studies are used to gather data to inform current practice and provide the basis for future research (Reiter, 2017; Stebbins, 2001), and can be either qualitative or quantitative in approach. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were considered for this study. Qualitative face-to-face interviews with a sample of the study population could have yielded rich, culturally situated data (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). However, qualitative exploratory approaches have been criticized for being non-representative of the population studied due to their frequent small sample size, and the findings are not generalizable (Hartas, 2010; Singh, 2007).

In contrast, the population for this study was comprehensive (every school board member in one state of the U.S.). Therefore, a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis was selected over a qualitative approach because of the study's need to confidentiality gather, store and analyze a large amount of data, from a relatively large population, in a short amount of time (Creswell, 2003; Sukamolson, 2007). The quantified data enabled aggregate population responses to be measured, disaggregated respondent groups to be compared, and statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships between select variables to be explored.

The Researcher

The researcher has nearly two decades of experience in education. She has taught at a variety of levels including K-8, undergraduate and graduate. The researcher also has extensive experience creating and implementing onboarding and development programs for corporations and nonprofits. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Communications, a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy/Clinical Art Therapy, and is a Doctor of Philosophy Candidate in Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development-Educational Administration.

The researcher also served on her local school board for two terms (2013-2020), during which she chaired the Board Development Committee and created the Board Member's Handbook. Through her previous professional and graduate work, the researcher has gained skills necessary to complete the study, including survey development, data collection and analysis. The research for this study was not conducted until the researcher had completed her second school board term. Therefore, no study

participant had a current relationship with the researcher that may have biased their responses or that constituted a conflict of interest.

Study Population and Participants

The unit of analysis for this study is a school board member of an independent school district in the United States of America. A school board member has a unique role in that while each member represents the constituency and deliberates as an individual board member, their governance authority and power is exercised only when they are acting as a group. Therefore, the data collection instrument for this study contains both survey questions that are specific to each member's *individual* socialization experience (such as their personal motivation for seeking a seat on the board); and survey questions that ask the respondent about their experiences as a *member of the board as a group* (such as rating to what degree they observe that their board exhibits certain characteristics of effective governance). A multi-state survey of a representative sample of U.S. school board members was considered for the study but decided against. The reason for this decision is that in the U.S., each state's school board statutes, education plan and oversight are unique to that state. To reduce the number of variables in the study, the population selected is comprised of all school board members of one state only, Minnesota.

Rationale for Specific Population Selection

To support governance effectiveness, Minnesota state statute mandates that new members complete two trainings conducted by the Minnesota School Boards Association, and that board officers complete additional position specific training. This study sought to understand what relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's

socialization experiences (including mandated training) and their perception of their board's governance effectiveness, including characteristics and practices of equity. While Minnesota boasts one of the highest overall student achievement rankings, it also has the second widest racial disparity in graduation rates between black and white students (Alexander et al., 2019; Golden & Webster, 2019; MN DOE, 2018; Minnesota Report Card, 2019; Sohoni, 2021). In addition, people of color are underrepresented on Minnesota's independent school boards. Enrolled students of color comprise 35.3% of the student population, yet only 3% of school board members serving Minnesota are people of color (Wastvedt, 2000).

Data Collection

Data was collected via a web-based questionnaire. An initial invitation to participate in the study, via online survey, was sent to each of the 2,169 school board members of the Independent School Districts of Minnesota, using the most current listserv of members furnished by the Minnesota School Boards Association (2021). Board members who did not submit a completed survey from the initial invitation were sent up to three reminder emails until they responded with a completed survey. Following the close of the survey, a thank you email was sent to each study respondent (see Appendix A, p 188). Designed to take 10-11 minutes, the questionnaire could be completed either on a desktop or mobile device. Respondents could complete the survey in one sitting, or pause and resume. To minimize the completion time, there were no open-ended questions. The questions were multiple-choice: some allowed only a single answer, some allowed multiple answers, and others were Likert scaled (see the Data Analysis section for how each question response was coded.)

Data Collection Instrument - Online Questionnaire

To gather a large amount of qualitative data efficiently, this study used a 37 item questionnaire developed using Qualtrics, a robust online survey tool available through the researcher's university. The tool had built-in survey quality indicators: duration, logic, clarity, format, accessibility and mobile optimization. The survey developed for this study received the highest rating of "great" against the indicators. Survey response data was securely stored under multiple factor authentication in this online tool.

Questionnaire Development for Reliability and Validity

When developing the questionnaire to gather research data about school board member socialization experiences and their perceptions of their board's governance effectiveness, attempts were made to find existing well-constructed, reliable and valid surveys on the research topics or at least applicable questions within the existing surveys. No such existing questionnaire was found that addressed school board member socialization as it is broadly defined in the study (from attraction through to exit from board service). Therefore survey questions about a school board member's personal socialization experiences, and their readiness to govern, were constructed by the researcher based on peer reviewed school board governance and cross-discipline socialization literature (Delagardelle, 2008; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Jutabha, 2017; Kramer, 2010; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Maeroff, 2010; Nikolai, 1999; Reimer, 2015; Wanberg, 2012 p. 315-324). Each survey item (question) regarding board member socialization experiences was constructed according to generally accepted questionnaire writing guidelines for web-based surveys (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014, p. 126, 168).

A separate search was conducted to obtain a valid and reliable survey instrument to assess how, if at all, a school board exhibits the eight characteristics of school board effectiveness (NSBA, 2017). An existing survey that most closely matched the goals of this study was a 71 item questionnaire developed by the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA). The WSSDA survey is designed as a board self-assessment tool to evaluate the way in which the board *conducts its business*. The questions in the WSSDA survey are grouped according to the Association's Five Standards of School Board Leadership, and incorporate the concepts of effective board governance from the Lighthouse Studies (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). The WSSDA survey questions ask a respondent to identify, from the operational level, to what extent a board completes specific tactical *actions* while governing. For this evaluative instrument, the rate of completion of these tactical actions make up the evidence that the board is meeting the "Five Standards."

In contrast, for questions GE (Governance Effectiveness Characteristics) 1-12 and EQ (Equity Characteristics and Practices) 1-6, this study's questionnaire asked respondents to use their own perception to consider the *end results* of their board's tactical actions toward effective governance, and assess to what degree their school board *exhibited these seminal characteristics associated with effective school board governance* (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). In this study's questionnaire, each characteristic was assigned its own item with a Likert scale (four point) response option (see individual questionnaire item descriptions below).

A few of the effective governance characteristics that appear in the literature were "double or triple barreled" containing more than one discrete concept. Following

questionnaire best practice, these “barreled” characteristics were parsed and each concept was assigned its own survey item. Hence there are twelve survey items in this portion of the survey instrument rather than eight.

The third and final survey section asked a respondent to assess to what degree their board exhibited two characteristics and four practices which *may* be associated with equitable governance. The questions in this section used verbiage from the Minnesota State Plan (DOE, 2017) and incorporated concepts from recent equitable access studies such as Burns, Darling-Hammond and Scott, 2019 (p 79-84).

Accommodation For Participants. When developing the survey, the researcher asked the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) whether they had knowledge of any board member who needed accommodation to participate in an on-line study. MSBA was unaware of any board member who was not fluent in English or had accommodation needs.

Questionnaire Items, Their Research Base, Validity and Reliability

The 37 questionnaire items asked respondents about their demographics, socialization experiences and perceptions. The survey items (questions) were coded as shown below.

- Demographics (ADEM 1, ADEM 2, ADEM4)
- Socialization experiences by phase: Attraction (A3), Preparation (P1), Onboarding (O1-2), Developing (DEV 1-4) and Evaluating (EVAL 1-2), Exiting (EX1-3)
- Perception of their own readiness to govern (RTG 1-3)

- Observations of their board's governance effectiveness (GE 1-12)
- Observations of their board's equity characteristics and practices (EQ 1-6)

The research upon which each survey item is based is noted in each section below.

Demographics. Demographic information requested of respondents was limited to that needed to address the research question and subquestions (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014; Wanberg, 2012 p. 115-134). Item ADEM2 (response options *d* and *e*) asked a board member whether or not they identified as a member of a community currently underrepresented on the board, and whether or not they identified with a gender that held less than half the seats on the board. Item ADEM4 inquired about a respondent's length of board service. Additional demographic information such as size of school district, although potentially informative, would have compromised respondent confidentiality.

Readiness to Govern. Survey items RTG 1-3 asked board members about their perception of their own readiness to govern after certain phases of socialization: a) prior to being sworn in, b) after onboarding, and c) when they first felt fully ready to govern (Kramer, 2010; MSBA, 2019; Nikolai, 1999; Quinn & Dawson, 2019; Wanberg, 2012 p. 48, 51-53, 177-180). This data was gathered to ascertain what, if any relationships there were between school board member socialization experiences and their reported readiness to govern at various phases of board service.

Socialization Experiences By Socialization Phase. The survey structure was based on the researcher-developed *Initial Model - School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases* (Link, 2021) based on cross-disciplinary socialization theory (Bauer, 2014; Christiansen et al., 2016; Cistone, 1977, 1974; Gothard & Austin, 2013;

Klein, Palin & Sutton, 2015; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001; MSBA, 2018b, 2018c; Wanberg, 2012).

Figure 1 (third appearance)

Initial Model - School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases (Link, 2021)



Attraction. Survey item ADEM1 asked members how they were attracted to board service. Item ADEM2 (response options *a, b, and c*) asked about the challenges members overcame to serve on the board (Demby, 2013; DeWitte & Schlitz, 2017; Hess & Leal in Howell, 2005; Hutton, 2008; Meir et al., 2005; MPR News, 2017). And item ADEM3 asked what board members how they learned about the role of the school board prior to being elected (Quinn & Dawson, 2019 p. 206, 33, 43, 55).

Preparation. Survey item P1 asked a board member how they prepared for board service after election but before being sworn in (Wanberg, 2012 p. 101, 277; MSBA, 2019).

Onboarding. Survey item OB1 asked about materials board members received from their board that informed their board service during their first six months of their term, and item OB2 asked a member about actions they completed after being sworn in (Kramer, 2010; MSBA, 2019; Quinn & Dawson, 2019; Wanberg, 2012 p. 79, 281).

Developing. Survey items DEV1-3 asked a member about their ongoing governance effectiveness and leadership skill training that they completed individually and as a collective board (Quinn & Dawson, 2019 p. 74, 118-124; Wanberg, 2012, p. 53).

Item DEV4 inquired about leadership positions board members held throughout their tenure. Equipping each board member with knowledge, skills and opportunity to assume board leadership positions can smooth the inevitable transitions that occur because of member turnover due to election/appointment cycles and other unexpected events (Tripses et al., 2015).

Items EVAL1 asked about the ways in which a member evaluated their personal governance effectiveness and item EVAL2 about ways in which a member, acting with their board as a group, evaluated the board's collective governance effectiveness. Routine board evaluation is advocated by state and national school board associations (MSBA, 2019; NSBA, 2019) as well as researchers Alsbury and Gore (2015) and Quinn and Dawson (2019 p. 7013, 27, 249.)

Exiting. Survey items EX 1-3 asked a member about ways their collective board prepares for a change in board membership, and the experience a board member has when exiting from their board (Kramer, Quinn & Dawson, 2019 p. 8.; Wanberg, 2012 p. 57). Frequent turnover of board members can cause disruption and strain for seated board members; having a broad socialization strategy with defined processes can ease that strain (Wanberg, 2012, p. 223-224, 341).

Board Member's Observations of Exhibited Board Governance Effectiveness Characteristics. Survey items GE1-12 asked a board member to assess how much they disagreed or agreed that their board exhibited seminal characteristics associated with effective school board governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). Each item had a 4-point Likert scale: disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and agree.

Board Member’s Observation of Their Board’s Equity Characteristics and

Practices. Survey items EQ1-6 asked a member to assess whether or not their board had explicit equity policies/processes and whether those policies had been reviewed and monitored in the past two years. The measures reflected those designated in the current Minnesota state plan (DOE, 2018). The state plan was developed to fulfill mandates in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) to ensure students have “equitable access to high quality education” to narrow the persistent achievement gap, particularly for students of color and lower socio-economic standing. The researcher asserted that the measures of equitable access be included as additional indicators of school board governance effectiveness. These indicators were not explicitly included in the characteristics associated with effective school boards described in the seminal work of Devarics and O’Brien (2011).

Research Procedures Followed, Ethical Considerations

The proposed study was approved by the researcher’s dissertation committee and submitted to the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB determined that the study met the criteria for exemption from IRB review since it “included interactions involving only survey procedures” and the information obtained from respondents “could not be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects” (see Appendix A).

Following recommended distribution procedures for web-based questionnaires (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014), each of the potential 2,169 school board member respondents received a personal invitation to participate in the survey that included a link to the survey instrument. The survey opened mid-February, 2020.

In the introduction of the survey, study participants were assured of confidentiality, secure storage of their responses, and reporting of their responses only in the aggregate. They were given contact information for the research team as well as the University of Minnesota Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). The survey advised that a respondent's decision to continue the survey beyond the introduction was their indication of informed consent to participate in the study.

Participants were able to complete the survey only once, and could not forward the survey to anyone else. A confirmation of submittal was received by a respondent immediately upon completion of the survey. A follow up reminder was sent, at one week and two weeks post-survey opening, only to board members who had not yet completed the survey. A final notice of the survey's impending closure was sent ten days prior to survey closure in mid-March.

Data Analysis

All participant responses to the study's online survey were captured and stored in the Qualtrics survey tool. In order to obtain the data necessary to answer the research question and subquestions, the study's "raw data" was first "cleaned" to reflect only responses from board members who identified their year of board service and completed most, if not all, of the survey questions.

Aggregate Responses, Disaggregated Respondents

Using the "StatsIQ, description" function of the Qualtrics survey tool, the aggregate number of board member responses to each survey item option were ascertained, and the percentage of each option selected compared to total responses was

calculated. Subsequently, aggregate responses were disaggregated by board member year of service to compare respondent groupings.

Relationship Studies

Using the Qualtrics tool “Stats iQ relate” function, relationship studies were done to determine what, if any, *statistically* significant relationships existed between select study variables that were not likely due to chance. Each survey response option was considered a separate variable. Each independent variable categorized as “board member demographics” (categorical) and “socialization experiences by phase” (categorical) was paired with each of three dependent variables categorized as “readiness to govern” (ordinal), “perceived governance effectiveness characteristics,” (ordinal) and “perceived equity characteristics and practices” (ordinal). (See Relationship Schema below, Table 1).

To relate these variables, the Stats iQ relate function of the Qualtrics survey tool ran an ANOVA (analysis of variance) test and a series of pairwise “post hoc” tests (Games-Howell tests) to produce a statistical value which it then converted to a *p-value*. At a 95% confidence interval, *p-values* were designated as * *p-value* less than 0.05, ** *p-value* less than 0.01, and ****p-value* less than 0.001, with the asterisks denoting levels of statistical significance, *** being the greatest.

When running multiple tests on a variable, there is the possibility of making a Type I error, finding statistical significance when there is none. A *p-value* of 0.05 at a 95% confidence interval implies that 5% of *all* tests will result in false positives ([Non Linear Dynamics](#), 2022). To control for Type I error in significant tests resulting from relating each independent variable in the “socialization experiences by phase” with the 12 dependent variables “perceived governance effectiveness characteristics,” the *p-values*

were adjusted to get the *q-values* using the Benjamini-Hochberg False Discovery Rate (FDR) procedure in the R program (<https://www.r-project.org/>) applying the equation *p.adjust (P_values, method="fdr")* (Jafari & Naser, 2018). A resulting q-value of 0.05 implies that 5% of *significant* tests will result in false positives, resulting in fewer false positives overall ([Non Linear Dynamics](#), 2022). The adjusted p-values (q-values) are included in the results tables for comparison.

In addition to statistical significance, the effect size of each relationship was calculated, using Cohen's d, to determine *substantively meaningful* significance (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004; Schuele & Justice, 2006). Substantively meaningful significance values were interpreted using Cohen's d standards: <0.2 trivial (no statistically significant relationship between variables), >0.2 small and >0.5 medium (variables are statistically related), and >0.8 large (variables are "strongly" related).

For each relationship pairing in this study, "effect size" was the magnitude of the differences between the two means of "selected [S]" or "didn't select [D]" the independent variable. (Effect sizes in statistics are most often denoted as either "higher" or "lower" rather than "greater" or "less than," and will be referred to as such in this study.) In some of the relationship studies, selecting the independent variable tended to have "higher" values for the dependent variable. In the relationship tables, this relationship was noted with the shorthand descriptor "S^D" ("Selected" is higher than "Didn't Select"). For some relationships, **not** selecting an independent variable tended to have higher values for the dependent variable. In the relationship tables, this relationship was noted with the shorthand descriptor "D^S" ("Didn't Select" is higher than "Selected"). A dash (-) in the relationship table means that there was no substantively

meaningful relationship found between the independent and dependant variables related.

Table 1

Independent and Dependent Variables Relationship Schema, Study Questions Addressed

Variables Related		Tests	Study Question Addressed
Demographics			
Independent	Dependent		
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Readiness to Govern (RTG1-2)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their readiness to govern at various socialization phases during their board service?
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Perceived governance effectiveness characteristic (GE1-12)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their perception of their board's effective governance ?
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Perceived equity characteristic and practice (EQ1-6)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their perception of their board's characteristics and practices of equity ?
Socialization Experiences			
Independent	Dependent		
Socialization Experiences by Phase (A3, P1, OB1-2, DEV1-4, EVAL1-2, EX1-3)	Readiness to Govern (RTG1-2)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Sub Question 3 - How ready does a board member feel to govern effectively at various socialization phases during their board service?
Socialization Experiences by Phase (all as above)	Perceived governance effectiveness characteristic (GE1-12)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Benjamini-Hochberg Cohen's d	Main Study Question - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences and their perception of their board's effective governance?"
Socialization Experiences by Phase (all as above)	Perceived equity characteristic and practice (EQ1-6)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Sub Question 5 and 6 - What characteristics and practices that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by a member's board?"

To answer the research question and subquestions, the relationship tables were analyzed to determine variables with the most statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships based on resulting p-values, q-values and Cohen's d values.

This chapter described the methodology selected for the study and the rationale for its use. The research question was reiterated. The researcher's education and experience are relayed and the study's population and participants were described. The data collection strategy and collection instrument were discussed in depth. The study procedures followed and ethical considerations were documented. And the study's data analysis process was described. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of this quantitative exploratory study to answer the research question "What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences and their perception of their board's effective governance?" Results of seven sub questions are also discussed.

Additionally, this chapter explains how the study used a quantitative exploratory methodology to analyze the data, and how that analysis relates to the research question and each subquestion. The data analysis is supported by the school board member aggregate responses displayed in figures, and disaggregated respondent data and relationship studies displayed in tables.

Study Process Recap

The study sought first to determine what socialization experiences Minnesota Independent School District school board members had as they moved through phases of board service (subquestion 2). Select board member demographic data were captured

including year of board service, challenge to obtaining a seat on the board, and motivation for serving (subquestion 1).

Second, the study gathered responses from school board members regarding their feeling of readiness to govern at various phases of their board service (subquestion 3).

Third, the study garnered board member perceptions as to what extent their board exhibited characteristics historically associated with school board governance effectiveness (subquestion 4), and characteristics and practices of equity (as identified by the Minnesota Department of Education) which may be associated with school board governance effectiveness (sub questions 5 and 6).

And finally, the study sought to explore what statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships, if any, exist between a school board member's socialization experiences with their a) reported feelings of readiness to govern, and b) perceptions whether or not their school board exhibited characteristics of highly effective boards (subquestion 7).

Participant Response Rate and Representation

Using a listserv provided by the Minnesota School Boards Association (2021), the total population of 2,169 board members of Minnesota Independent School Districts received an invitation and personalized link to complete the study's online survey (See appendices 1, 2 and 3). Using a confidence rate of 95% and a confidence interval of 5, the sample size needed to reflect the responses of the target population was 326 respondents. The number of board members who opened the survey was 416, with 410 further opting to respond (99% survey completion rate). Of the 410 responders, 393 (18.1% of the total school board member population of 2,169) identified their year of board service, and

completed most survey questions. For statistical purposes, these 393 respondents constituted the *aggregate* respondent study population (designated in the tables as *n*) whose responses were captured in the study data.

Aggregate respondent data was subsequently disaggregated by a board member's reported year(s) of service to understand the experiences and perceptions of school board members at various tenures of board service. Respondents in each year of board member service were represented by a separate *n* (from *n*¹ to *n*⁵). The distribution of disaggregated respondents roughly reflected that of the total survey population (2,169) with a slight overrepresentation of first and second year board members and underrepresentation of 3rd year board members and those who had served over four years (see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparison of the Number and Percent of the Study Population and the Survey Respondents, by Their Year(s) of Board Service

<u>Yr. of Board Service</u>	<u>Study Population</u>	<u>% of Study Population</u>	<u>Survey Respondents</u>	<u>% of Survey Respondents</u>	<u>% Variance from Study Pop.</u>
1st year	363	16.7	97 <i>n</i> ¹	24.7	+8
2nd year	78	3.6	30 <i>n</i> ²	7.6	+4
3rd year	395	18.2	62 <i>n</i> ³	15.8	-2.4
4th year	88	4.1	16 <i>n</i> ⁴	4.1	0
> 4 yrs	<u>1245</u>	<u>57.4</u>	188 <i>n</i> ⁵	47.8	-9.6
Total	2169	100	393 <i>n</i>	100	

Survey Respondents' Aggregate Responses

Demographics

Reported in this section are the survey responses to address Research Sub Question 1 “With what *demographic characteristics* does a school board member identify?” As seen in Table 2, of the 393 school board members who responded to the survey, nearly half had served more than four years. Approximately 48% of members were in their fourth year of service, 25% of were first year members, 15.8% were third year members, 7.6% had served two years and 4.1% had served four years.

Twelve percent of school board members reported being a member of a community currently underrepresented on the board and 10% identified with a gender holding less than half the seats on the board.

Phases of Socialization

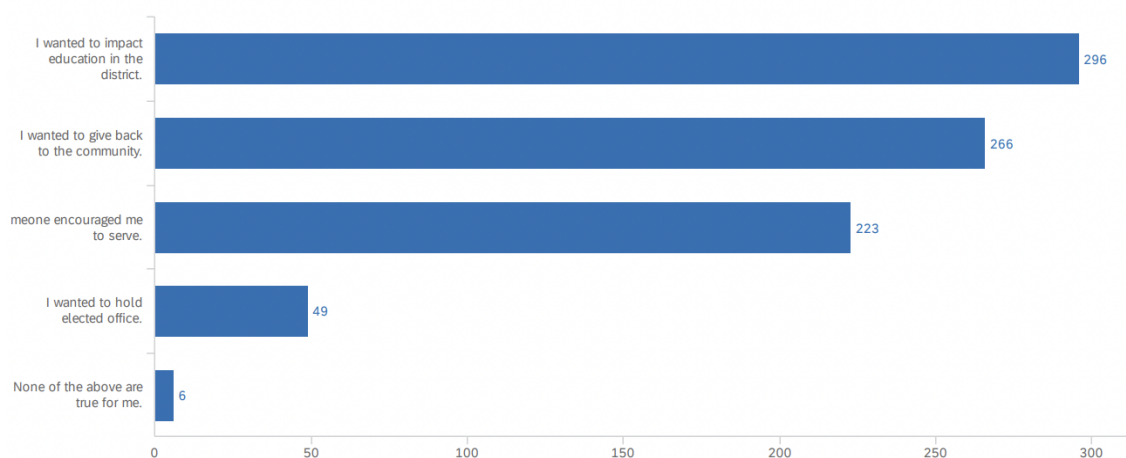
Reported below are the survey responses to address Research Sub Question 2: “Which *socialization experiences*, if any, are had by a school board member individually and as a team with their collective board?” For purposes of this study, school board socialization was segmented into five phases from Attraction through Offboarding, using Link’s Initial Model-School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases (2021).

Attraction Phase. During the attraction phase, the prospective board member sought out information about the role of a school board member, became motivated to serve on the board, decided to seek a seat, and overcame challenges to obtain board membership. The phase ended when the candidate was successfully elected (or appointed) and became a member elect (or member-appointee).

Motivations to Serve. The top two motivations to serve selected by the aggregate board members were to “make an impact on education in the district” (75%) and to “give

back to the community” (68%). Over half (57%) of members reported that someone had encouraged them to serve (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



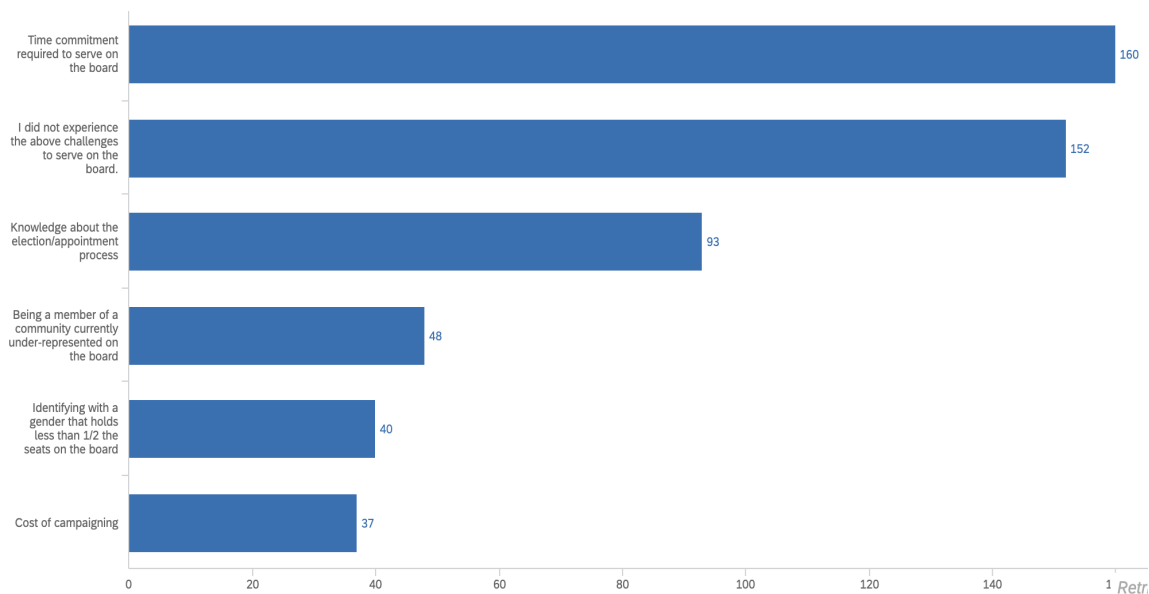
Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Motivation(s) for Serving on the Board

Challenges Overcome to Serve on the Board. Approximately 40% of board members stated that they did not overcome any challenges to serve on the board. Sixty percent of the aggregate board members experienced challenges. The top challenges identified were the time commitment to serve (40%) and knowledge about the election process (24%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Challenges Overcome to

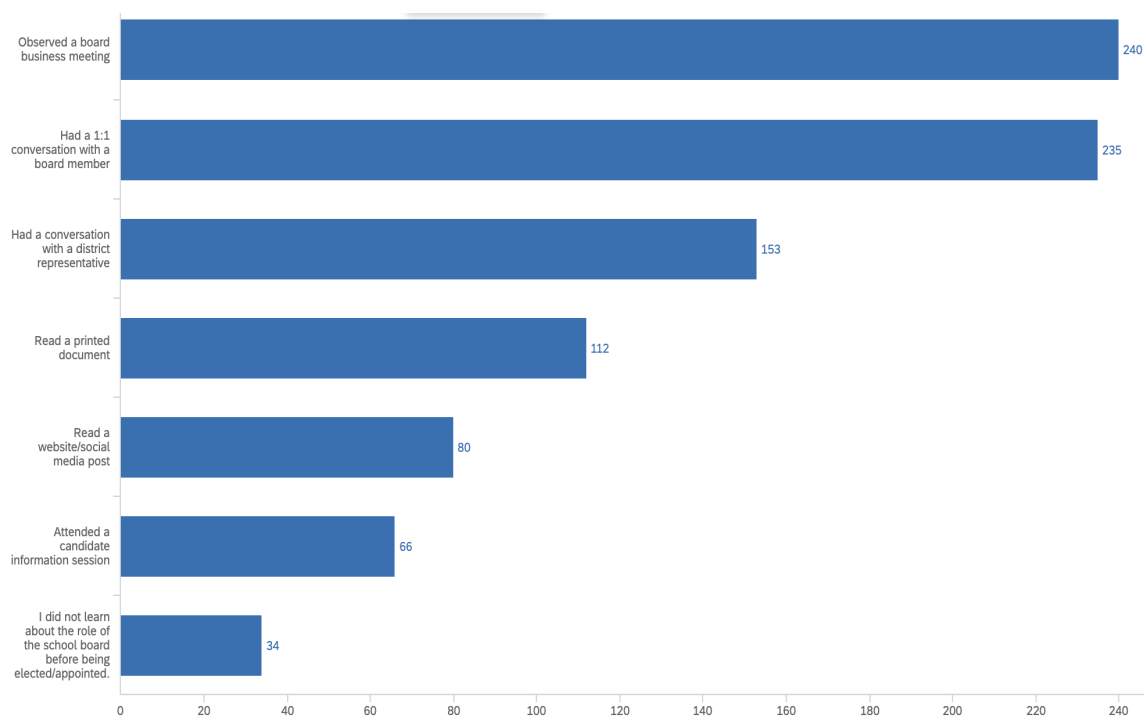
Serve



Way(s) a Board Member Learned About the Role of the School Board. As seen in Figure 4, the top ways members learned about the role of the board were to observe a board business meeting (61%), have a 1:1 conversation with a board member (60%), or have a conversation with a district representative (39%). Less than 33% of respondents learned about the role of a board member from printed material, social media or candidate information sessions. Nearly 10% of board members did not learn about the role of a board member prior to assuming their seat.

Figure 4

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Way(s) Board Member Learned About the Role of the School Board, Prior to Being Elected/Appointed

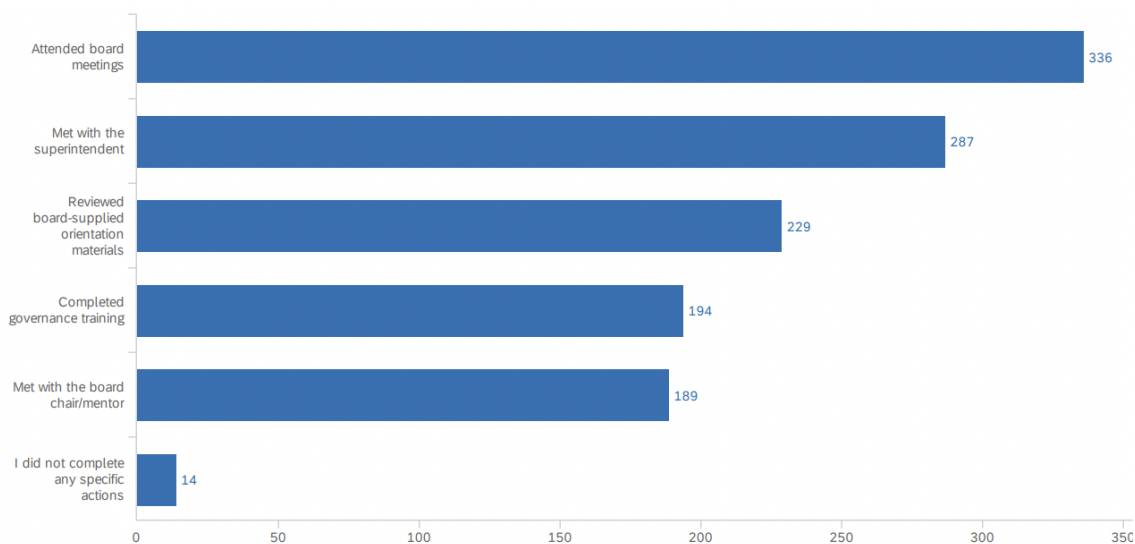


Preparation Phase. Following election to a board seat, the candidate became a member-elect and prepared to be sworn in to board service. Figure 5 displays that the most frequent actions completed by member-elects were to attend board meetings (85%) and to meet with the superintendent (73%). Approximately half of the members also reported they reviewed board-supplied orientation materials (58%), completed governance training (49%) and met with the board chair/mentor (48%).

Figure 5

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Elect Preparation Actions

Completed Prior to Being Sworn In

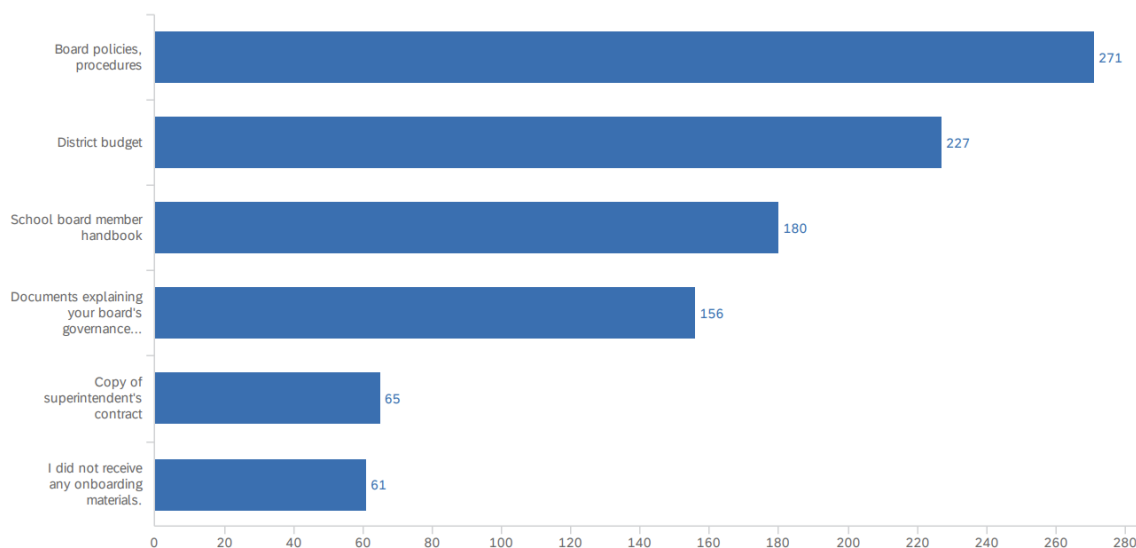


Onboarding Phase. The onboarding phase began after a member was sworn in for board service, and encompassed the first 6 months of their first term. As seen in Figure 6, during onboarding, board members most frequently reported receiving board policies and procedures (69%) and the district budget (58%). Less frequently received were a board member handbook (46%) and information regarding their board's governance structure (40%). Only 17% reported receiving a copy of the contract of the superintendent (the sole district employee that the board hires and evaluates), and 16% percent of respondents reported receiving no documents at all during onboarding.

Figure 6

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - New Board Member Onboarding Material

Received

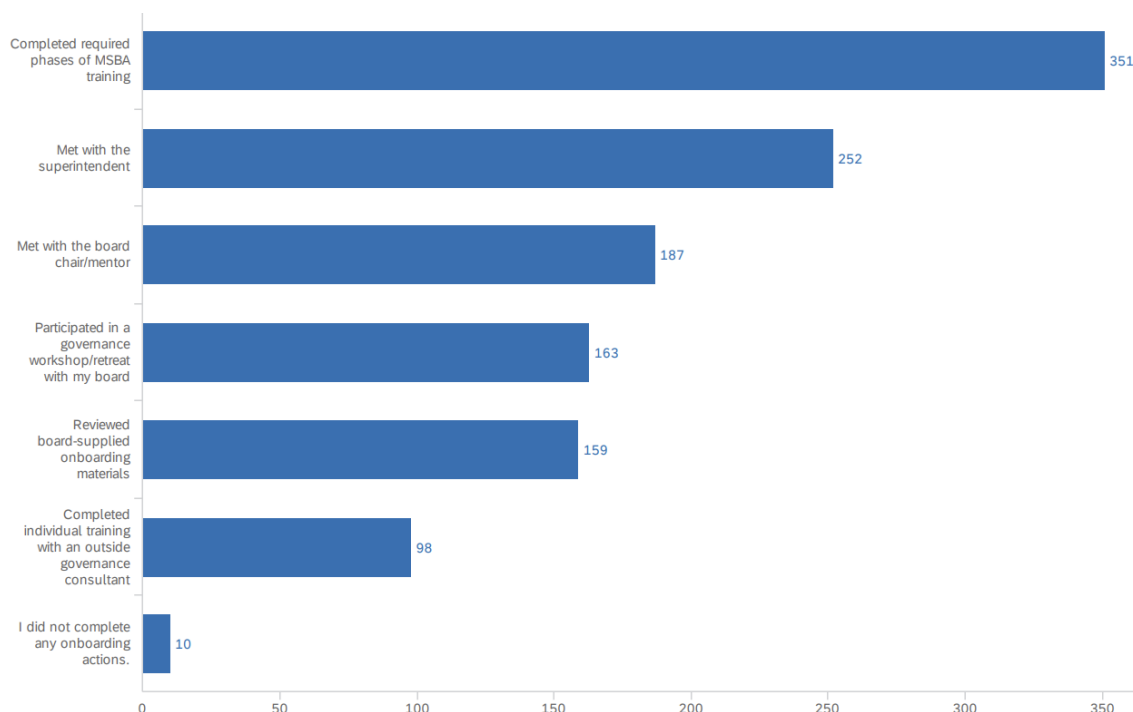


Onboarding Actions Completed Post Swearing In. Figure 7 displays that the most frequently reported onboarding actions completed by new school board members *post* swearing-in were to attend Minnesota School Boards Association Phase I and Phase II trainings (as required by the State of Minnesota) (89%), and to meet with the district's superintendent (64%) and/or the board chair/mentor (48%). Less than half of board members reported they reviewed board-supplied onboarding materials and participated in a workshop/retreat with their board. Twenty-five percent of board members reported they completed governance training with an outside consultant.

Figure 7

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Onboarding Actions

Completed Post Swearing-In



Developing Phase. For purposes of this study, the developing phase began at the close of the onboarding phase, seven months post swearing in, and was ongoing for the remainder of the member's board service. Development occurred during this time for a board member both individually and for the board as a group collectively.

Advanced Governance Training Completed By Individual Board Members.

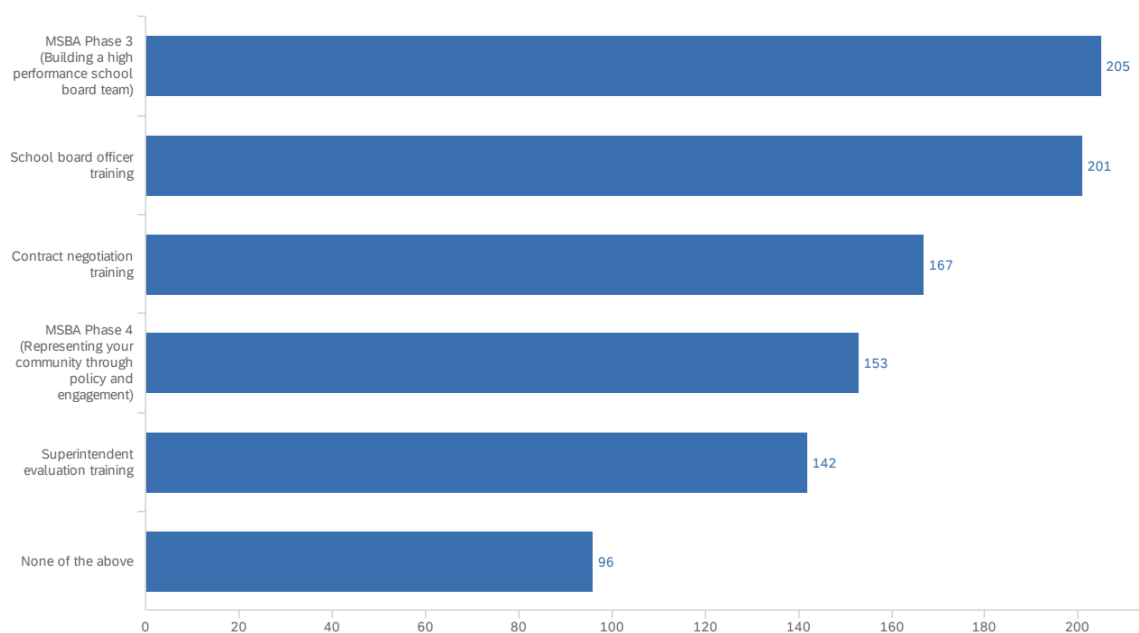
Figure 8 shows that the top advanced governance trainings completed by board members *individually* were Minnesota School Boards Association trainings. Some board members completed more than one advanced governance training. These trainings, in order of completion rate, were Phase III Training (52%), School Board Member Officer Training (51%), Contract Negotiation (42%), Phase IV Training (39%) and Superintendent

Evaluation training (36%). Nearly 25% of respondents did **not** complete any individual advanced governance training.

Figure 8

Aggregate School Board Responses - Individual Advanced Governance Training

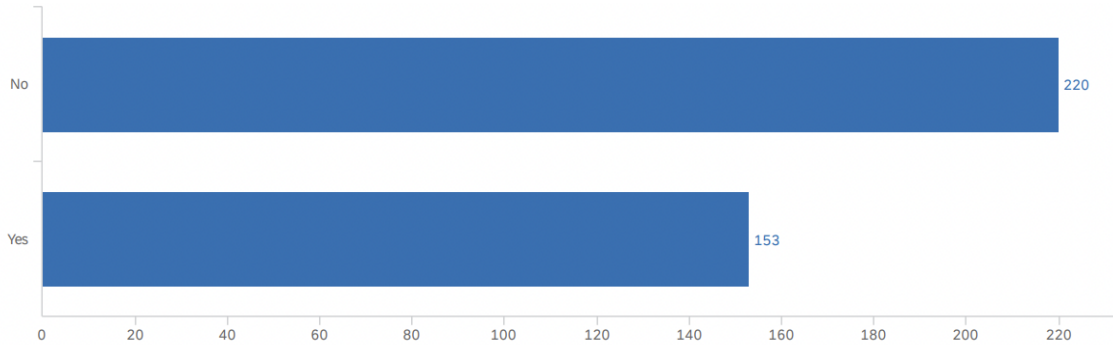
Completed



Advanced Governance Training Completed as a Group. As Figure 9 depicts, 56% of members reported that their board did not complete **any** team development or advanced governance training as a group.

Figure 9

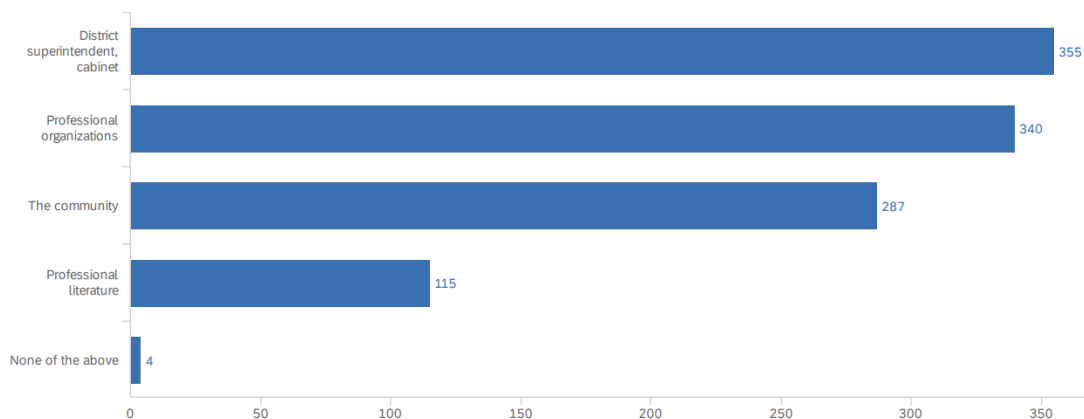
Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Team Development or Advanced Governance Training Completed as a Group in the Past 2 Years



Information Sources Consulted When Making Governance Decisions. Figure 10 relays that when making governance decisions as a board, the information sources most consulted were the district superintendent/cabinet (90%), professional organizations such as the Minnesota School Boards Association or Association for Metropolitan School Districts (87%), and the community (73%).

Figure 10

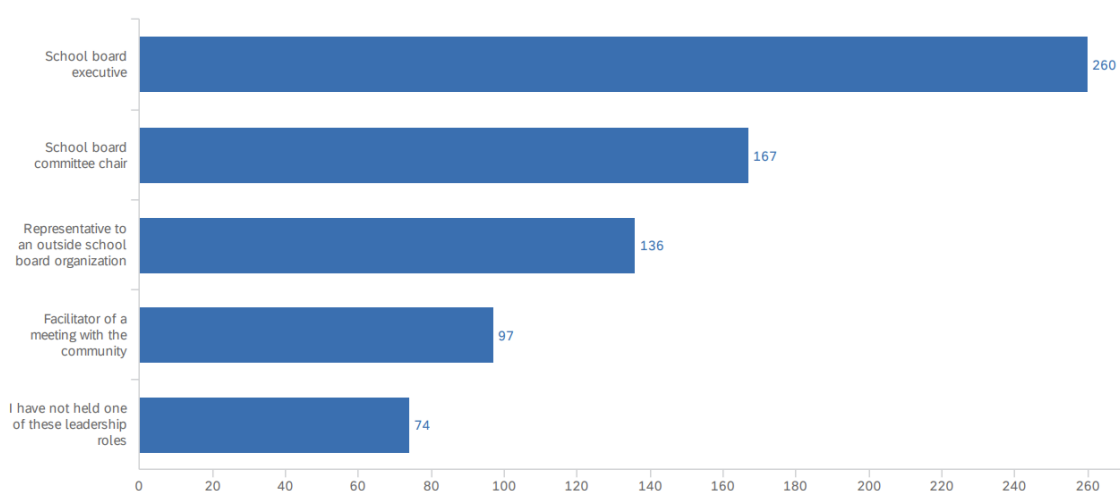
Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Information Sources Consulted When Making Governance Decisions



Leadership Roles Held. Figure 11 displays that the two top leadership roles held by school board members were school board executive (chair, co-chair, treasurer or clerk) (66%) and school board committee chair (42%). Closely following was the role of representative to an outside school board organization (35%). Only 25% of members had facilitated a meeting with the community, and roughly 20% of members had never held any leadership position.

Figure 11

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Leadership Roles Held



Individual Governance Practice Evaluation. When evaluating their personal governance, the majority of individual school board members conducted ongoing self reflection (82%) or reflection with a board chair/mentor (31%). A written board member self-evaluation was completed by 13%, and 10% of board members reported they did **not** evaluate their personal governance practice by any means (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Evaluation of Their Personal Governance Practice

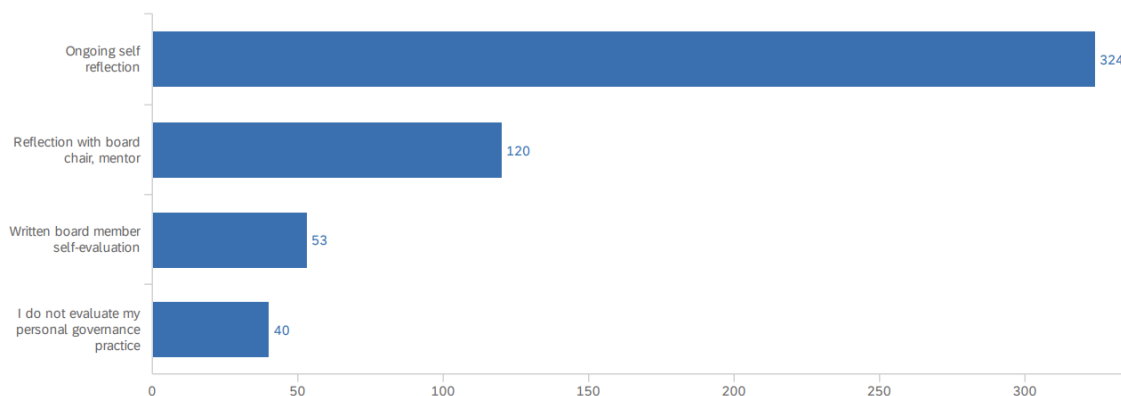
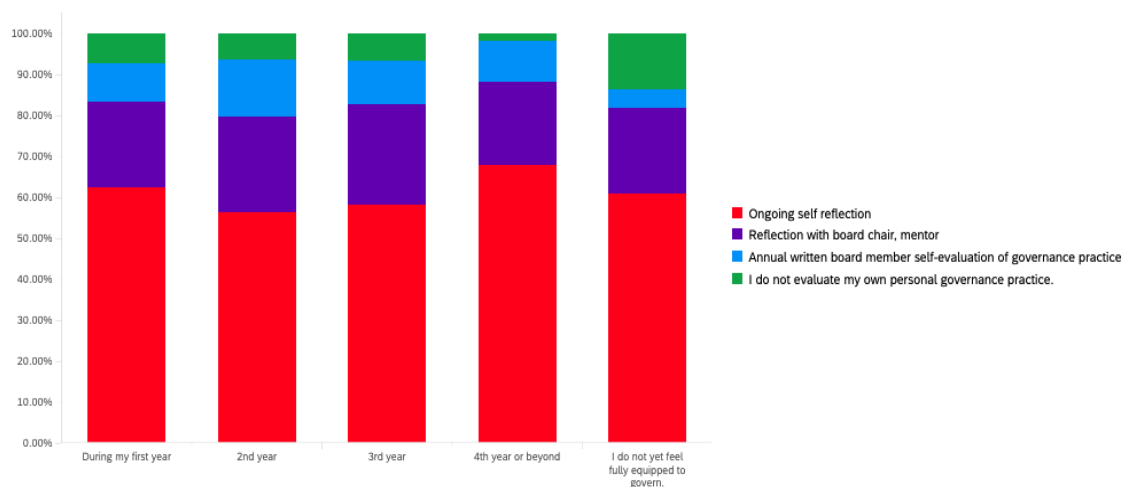
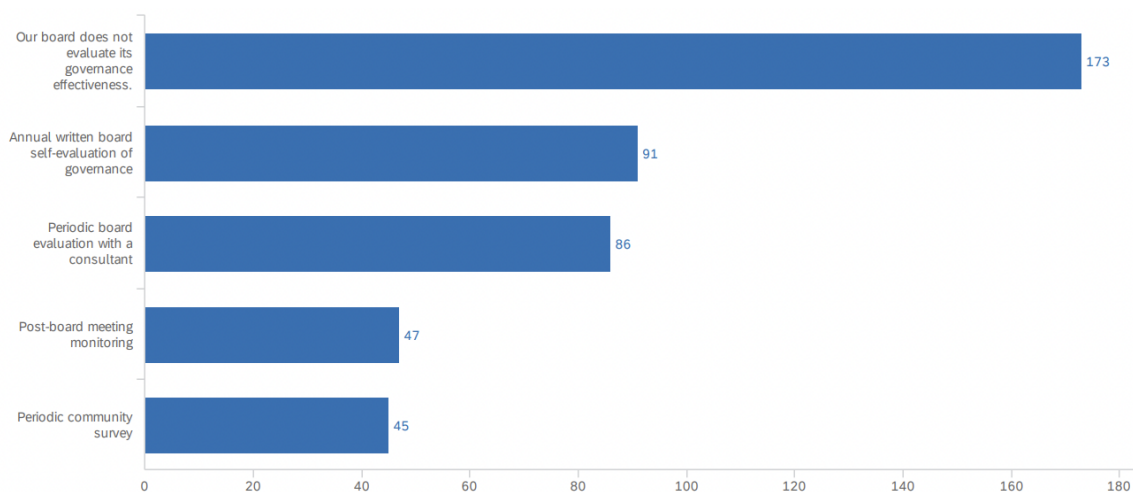


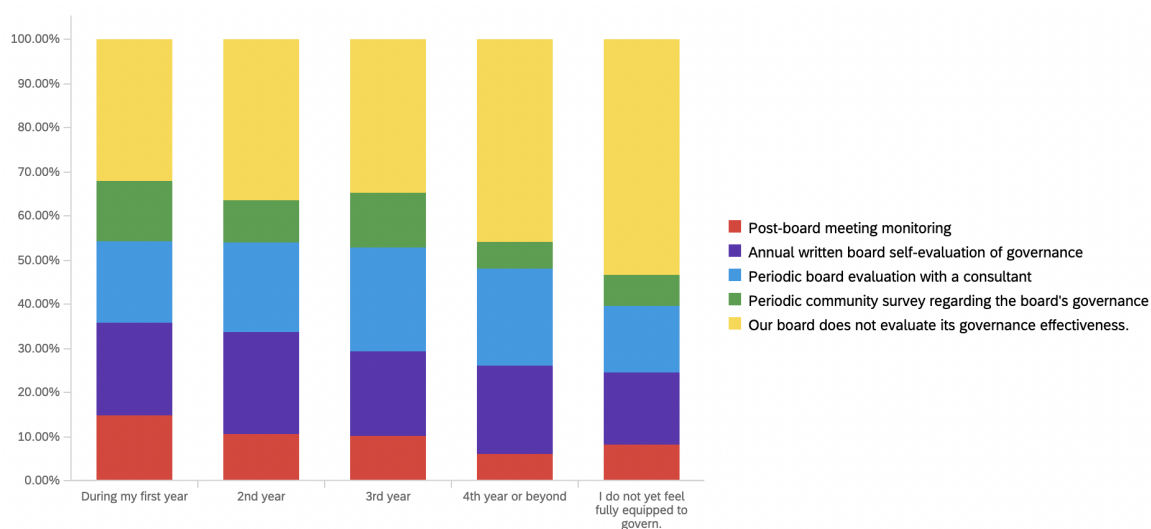
Figure 13 (see the farthest right bar) shows that members who had the highest reported percentage of *not yet* feeling fully equipped to govern also had the highest percentage of *not* evaluating their governance, and the lowest percentage for completing an annual written board member self evaluation.

Figure 13*Aggregate Board Member Responses - Individual Governance Practice Evaluation**Methods by Year Board Member First Felt Fully Equipped to Govern*

Collective Board Governance Practice Evaluation. Figure 14 reveals that nearly half of school boards did not evaluate their **collective** governance practice (44%). Of the other 56% of boards that did evaluate their governance effectiveness, 23% completed an annual written board self evaluation and 22% conducted a periodic evaluation with a consultant. Post board meeting monitoring was done by only 12% of the boards and only 11% conducted a periodic community survey regarding their governance effectiveness.

Figure 14*Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Collective Board Governance Practice**Evaluation Methods*

Board members who reported that their board does *not* evaluate its collective governance were more likely to report they did *not* yet feel fully ready to govern, or were not fully ready to govern until their 4th year or beyond (see Figure 15, furthest right bar below).

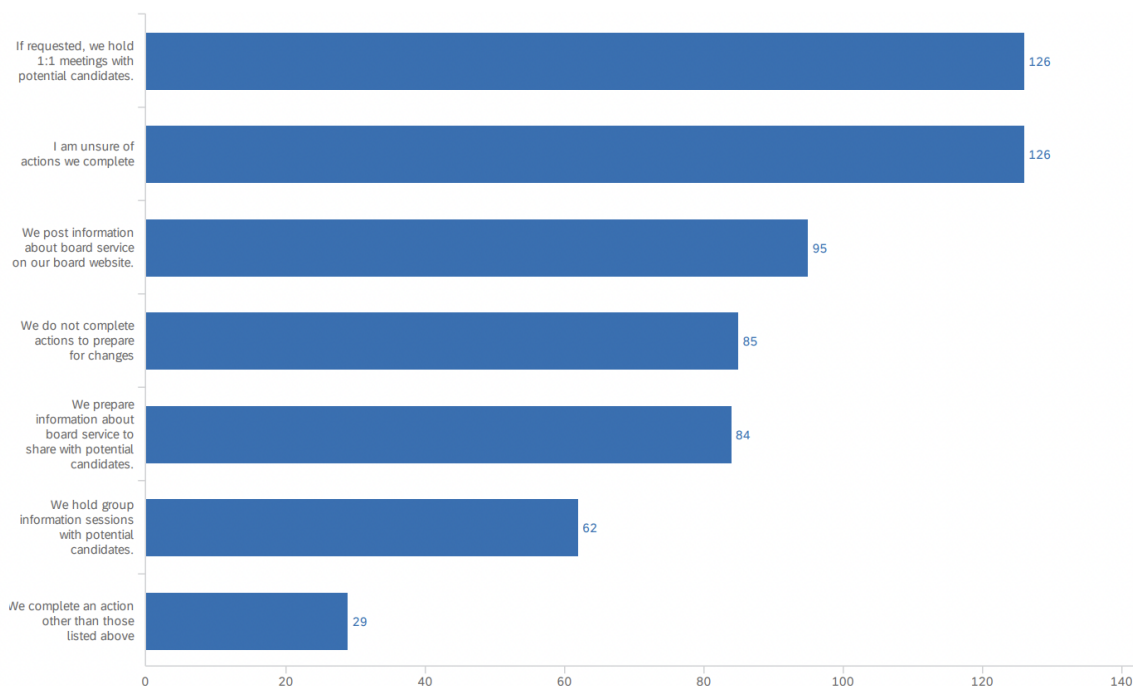
Figure 15*Aggregate Board Member Responses - Collective Governance Practice Evaluation**Methods by Year Board Member First Felt Fully Equipped to Govern*

Exiting Phase. Exiting was the phase that began when a board member announced their intended *voluntary* exit from board service or after the *involuntary* end to a member's board service (following a board vote to remove a member, or that member not winning re-election for their seat).

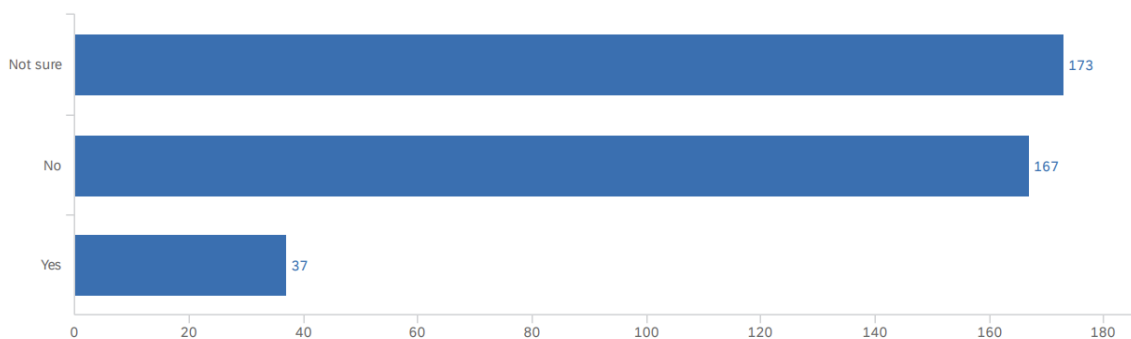
Preparation For Change in Membership. When facing an impending change in board membership, over 50% of the respondents reported that they were either unsure of what actions their boards would take in preparation for the change (33%) or that their board did not complete any actions in preparation for changes in board membership (25%). Of respondents who reported their board did prepare for change, 33% held 1:1 meetings with potential candidates and 24% posted information about upcoming elections on their board website (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

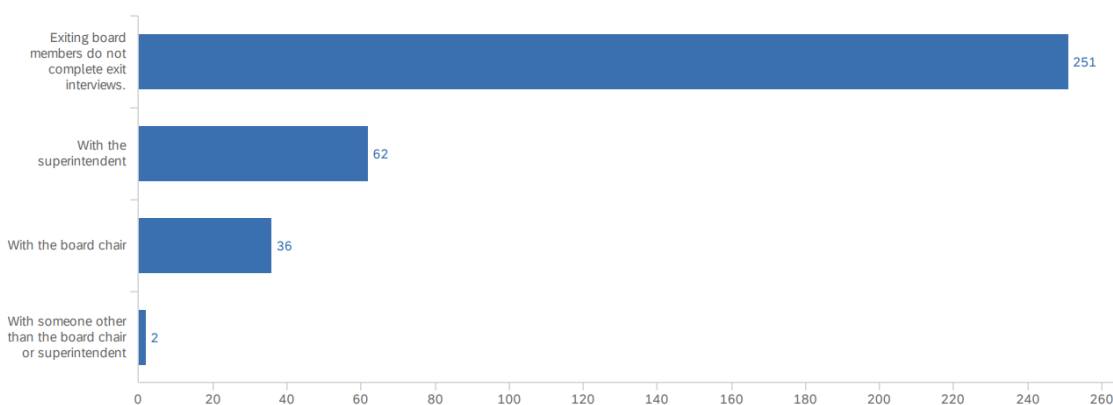
Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Preparation for Change in Membership



Offboarding Policy/Process. As seen in Figure 17, only 9% of board members were certain that their board had a written offboarding policy or process to follow when a board member was involuntarily removed from service or announced their voluntary resignation. Forty-two percent of respondents stated that their board did **not** have a policy/process for offboarding board members. And 44% of board members were uncertain whether their board had such a policy or process.

Figure 17*Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Offboarding**Policy/Process*

Exit Interviews. Figure 18 shows that the majority of respondents reported members of their board **do not** complete exit interviews when they leave board service (64%). Of those board members who reported exiting board members do complete interviews, 16% stated the interviews are with the superintendent, 10% with the board chair.

Figure 18*Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Exit Interview Completed*

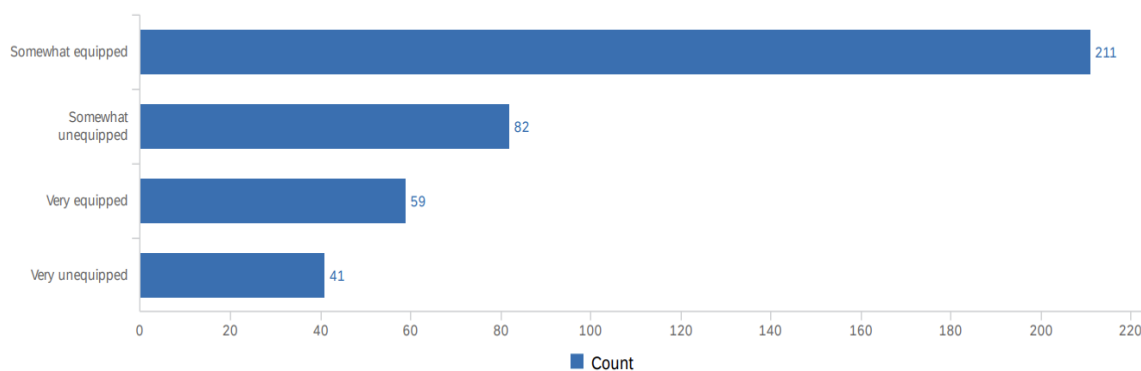
Reported Readiness to Govern

To answer study sub question three “As perceived by a school board member, *how ready do they feel to govern effectively* at various socialization phases during their board service?,” board members were asked to identify their level of readiness to govern prior to being sworn in, after their first 6 months of service, and then to identify during which year of service, if ever, they first felt fully equipped to govern.

Prior to Being Sworn-In. As seen in Figure 19, nearly one third of member-elects said they felt either very unequipped to govern (10%), or somewhat unequipped (21%). Of the other two thirds, 54% of the respondents stated that they felt somewhat equipped to govern, and 15% reported feeling very equipped.

Figure 19

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Reported Readiness to Govern Prior to Being Sworn In

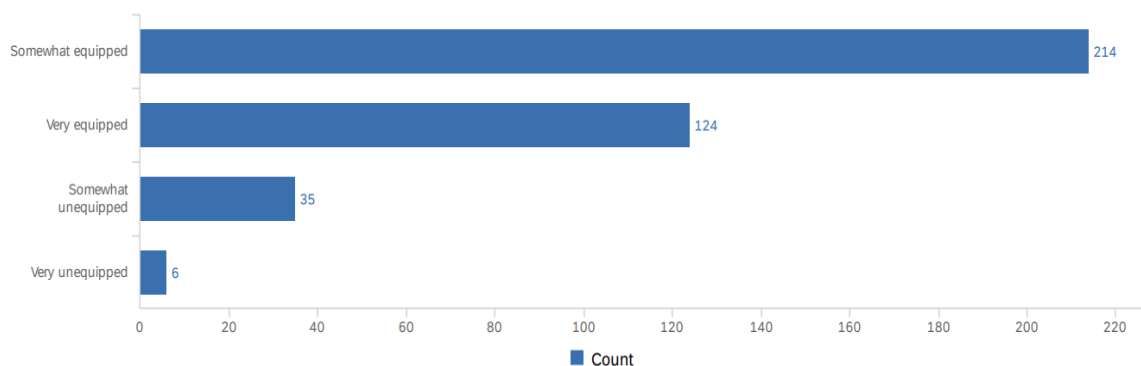


After the First Six Months of Service. Two percent of board members said they still felt very unequipped to govern and 9% said they felt somewhat unequipped after six months of onboarding. Conversely, 54% of respondents stated they felt somewhat

equipped to govern, and 32% of members had shifted to reporting they felt very equipped (see Figure 20).

Figure 20

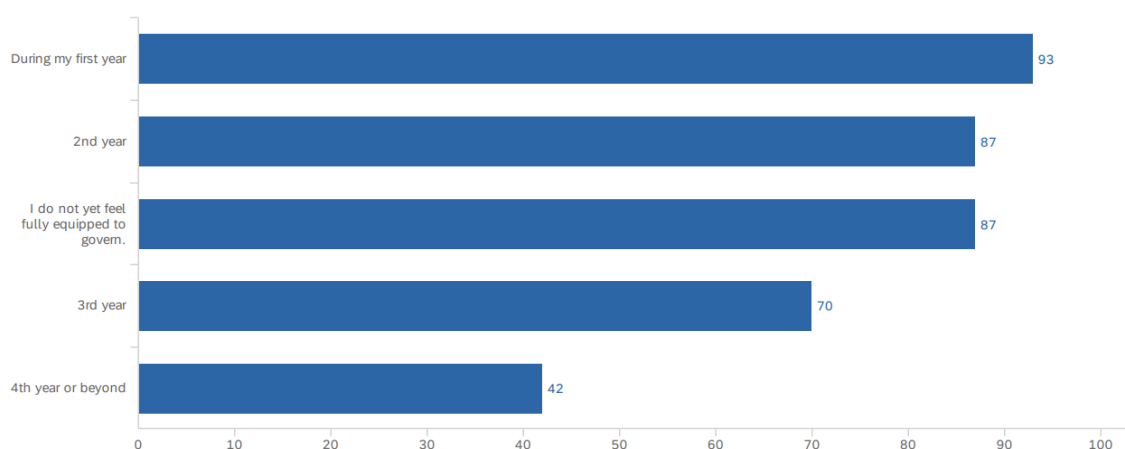
Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Reported Readiness to Govern After Six Months of Board Service



Felt Fully Equipped to Govern. When asked when they first felt fully equipped to govern effectively, in aggregate 24% of school board members said they felt fully equipped in their first year, 22% in their second year, 18% in their third year, 11% in their 4th year or beyond. Nearly 25% of respondents reported they did **not** yet feel fully equipped to govern effectively (see Figure 21).

Figure 21

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Year of Service Board Member Reported They First Felt Fully Equipped to Govern



Board Members' Perceptions of Their Board's Governance Effectiveness

Characteristics

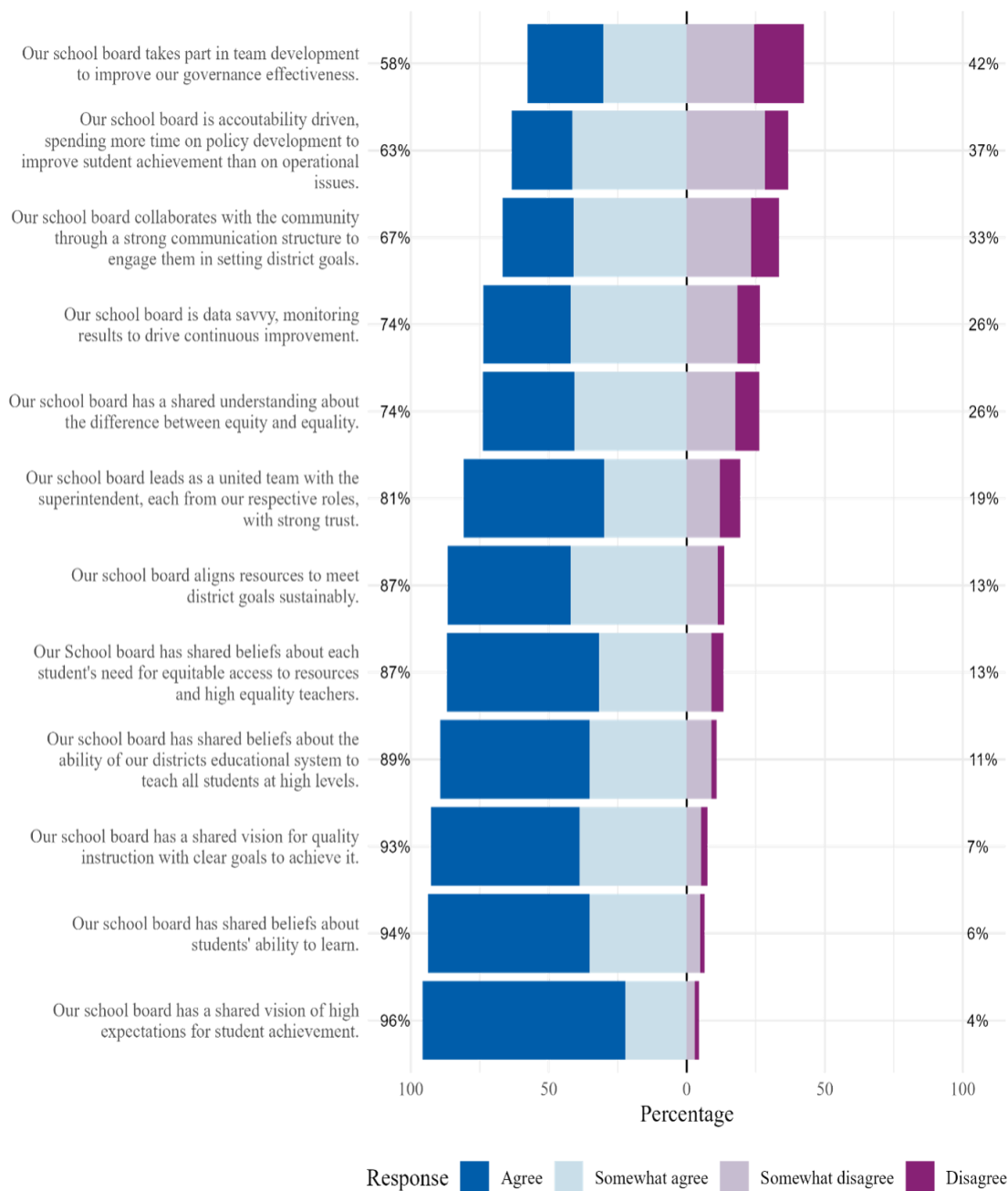
Reported in this section are the survey responses to answer research sub question number four: “As perceived by a school board member, what *characteristics associated with effective school board governance* are exhibited by a school board?” Figure 22 displays to what extent board members reported they agreed or disagreed that their board exhibited characteristics historically associated with effective school board governance.

Least Exhibited Characteristics. In aggregate, board members were **least** likely to agree or somewhat agree that their board: 1) takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness (42%), 2) is accountability driven spending more time on policy development than on operational issues (37%), and 3) collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure (33%).

Most Exhibited Characteristics. In aggregate, boards were **most** likely to agree or somewhat agree that their board had: 1) a shared vision of high expectations for student achievement (96%), 2) shared beliefs about students' ability to learn (94%), and 3) a shared vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it (93%).

Figure 22

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Perceptions of Their Board's Governance Characteristics



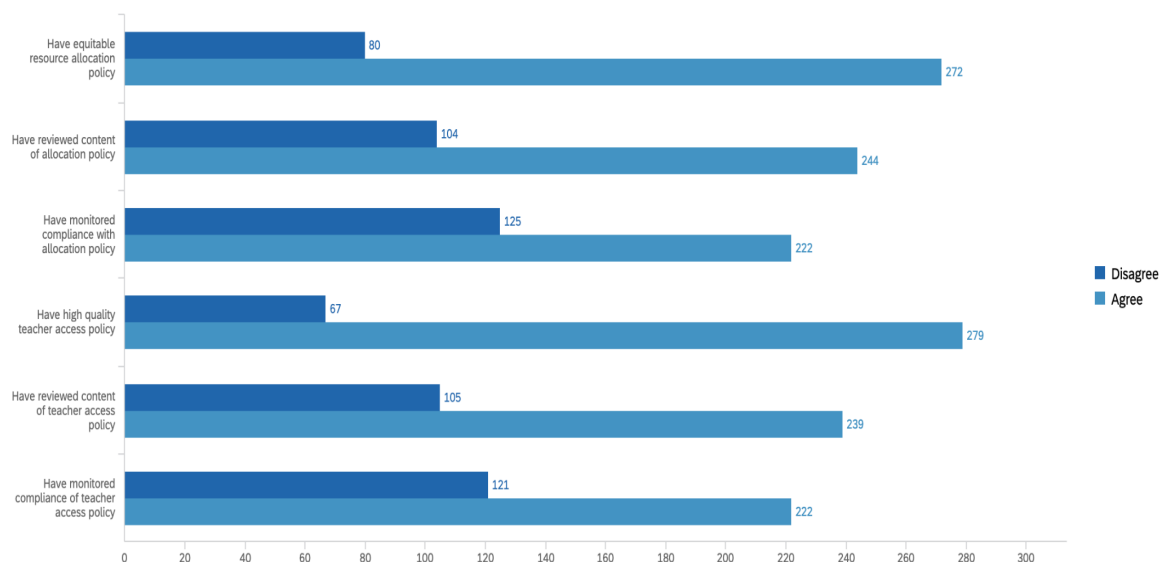
Board Members' Perceptions of Their Board's Equity Characteristics and Practices

Reported in this section are the survey responses in answer to research sub questions number five and six: “As perceived by a school board member, what *characteristics* that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by a school board?” and “As perceived by a school board member, what *practices* that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by a school board?”

Figure 23 shows that of the total 393 board member survey respondents, 77% *agreed* that their board has policies explicitly stating equity expectations for allocation of resources and 80% agreed they had policies stating expectations for students' access to highly qualified and effective teachers (80%). However, nearly 33% of board members *disagreed* that the equity-related resource allocation policies and access to highly qualified and effective teachers policies were reviewed for content or monitored for compliance within the past two years.

Figure 23

Aggregate School Board Member Responses - Board Member Perceptions of Their Board's Policies and Practices of Equitable Allocation of Resources and Equitable Access to Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers



Survey Respondent Results, Disaggregated by Year of Service

Survey respondents' results were disaggregated by year(s) of service to determine if there were variances in selections of survey items based on member tenure. A table was created for each survey question and its response items. In many cases, respondents were able to select more than one item in response to each survey question. The number of *respondents* selecting each item was displayed in the column corresponding to their number of years of board service. The tallied number of respondents selecting each item was divided by the total number of survey respondents for that year of board service, and the result was displayed as a percentage of that *n*. The survey item selected by the highest percentage of respondents for a given year of service was highlighted in dark gray; the

second highest percentage was highlighted in light gray. Table 3 below serves as a guide for understanding the display of disaggregated respondent data for each survey item selected by respondents.

Table 3

Example Table of Survey Item(s) Selected by Respondent, by Year of Board Service

Question Item	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
	# of 1st yr. respondents selecting the survey item	% of 1st yr. respondents selecting the survey item									$\Sigma n's$	$\Sigma n's$
	<hr/>											n
Item opt. #1	75	77 ^a	21	70	44	71	12	75	142	76	296	75
Item opt. #2	60	62	19	63	40	65	11	69	136	72	266	68
n; n/n	97	25	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393*	100
	Total respondents in n'	<hr/>									n	

Notes. For each n[#], and for the **n**, the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \Sigma n's; \% = \Sigma n's \div n$.

Phases of Socialization

Attraction Phase.

Demographics of Survey Respondents. Respondents completed four survey items to address study subquestion number one, “With what *demographic characteristics* does a school board member identify?” Table 2 lists the study population by year of board service (Minnesota School Boards Association, 2021), and the number and percent of survey respondents by year of service, as reported by respondents.

Table 2 (second appearance)

Comparison of the Number and Percent of the Study Population and the Survey Respondents, by Their Year(s) of Board Service

Yr. of Board Service	Study Population	% of Study Population	Survey Respondents	% of Survey Respondents	% Variance from Study Pop.
1st year	363	16.7	97 <i>n</i> ¹	24.7	+8
2nd year	78	3.6	30 <i>n</i> ²	7.6	+4
3rd year	395	18.2	62 <i>n</i> ³	15.8	-2.4
4th year	88	4.1	16 <i>n</i> ⁴	4.1	0
> 4 yrs	<u>1245</u>	<u>57.4</u>	<u>188 <i>n</i>⁵</u>	<u>47.8</u>	-9.6
Total	2169	100	393 <i>n</i>	100	

Motivation(s) for Serving. Respondents were able to select multiple items to describe their motivation for serving on their school board. The frequency and percentage of respondents selecting each item are shown in Table 4. As in the aggregate responses, nearly two-thirds of board members *in every year of service* were motivated by an opportunity to impact education in the district, over 60% wanted to give back to the community, and over 50% were encouraged to serve by someone in the community or district.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Motivations for Serving, by Year of Board Service

Motivation	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Impact education in the district	75	77 ^a	21	70	44	71	12	75	142	76	296	75
Give back to the community	60	62	19	63	40	65	11	69	136	72	266	68
Was encouraged to serve	49	51	17	57	35	56	7	44	115	61	223	57
Hold elected office	12	12	6	20	8	13	3	19	20	11	49	12
None of the above	2	2	0	0	3	5	1	6	0	0	6	2
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

Challenges to Serving. Respondents were able to select multiple items to describe the challenges they overcame to serve on their school board. The frequency and percentage of respondents selecting each item are shown in Table 5. The time commitment to serve was the top challenge to overcome for members in all years of

service (between 41-57%). Of note is that 40% of members in service years two and four also reported a high rate of challenge because of a lack of knowledge of the election process.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Challenges Overcome to Serve, by Year of Board Service

Challenges Overcome to Serve	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
No challenge experienced	33	34 ^a	6	20	24	39	4	25	85	45	152	39
Non demo. variables												
Knowledge of election process	25	26	13	43	12	20	7	44	36	19	93	24
Cost of campaigning	9	9	9	30	5	8	1	6	13	7	37	9
Time commitment to serve	40	41	17	57	27	44	8	50	69	37	160	41
Demographic variables												
Member of Underrep. community	12	12	5	17	9	15	2	13	20	11	48	12
Gender that holds <1/2 of seats	6	6	4	13	3	5	4	25	23	12	40	10
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's; \% = \sum n's \div n$.

Ways of Learning About the Role of the School Board. Board members in all years of service selected some method of personal contact with a sitting board member or a district representative as their top ways of learning about the role of the school board (52-73%). Roughly one-third of respondents in every year of service also read printed material about board service. Members in years one and two of their service were more likely to have consulted a website than members of other years (29%, 33%). One quarter or less cited attending a candidate information session (13-25%).

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage of Way(s) School Board Member Learned About the Role of the School Board, Prior to Being Elected/Appointed, by Year of Board Service

Way of Learning	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
1:1 with a board member	54	56 ^a	22	73	32	52	10	62	117	62	235	60
Observed board meeting	52	54	20	67	41	67	9	56	118	63	240	61
1:1 with district representative	27	28	15	50	19	31	9	56	83	44	153	39
Read printed document	29	30	8	27	22	35	5	31	48	26	112	28
Read website/social media post	28	29	10	33	11	18	4	25	27	14	80	20
Attended candidate info session	13	13	7	23	11	18	4	25	31	16	66	17
Did not learn about role before being elected	9	9	3	10	7	11	3	19	12	6	34	9
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the \mathbf{n} , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $\mathbf{n} = \sum n^{\#} \text{'s}; \% = \sum n^{\#} \text{'s} \div \mathbf{n}$.

Preparation Phase. After election, but prior to being sworn in, over three quarters of all member-elects attended board meetings and met with the superintendent. First year respondents reported an unusually high percentage of completion of Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) Phase I and II trainings (71% as opposed to an aggregate 40%). According to Gary Lee, Deputy Executive Director of MSBA, COVID-19 pandemic mandates dictated that the first offering of Phase I and II trainings for board members elected in November 2020 could only be held virtually. Likewise the winter (2021) Phase I and II trainings, usually offered live at the annual MSBA conference, were also held virtually as the conference was only available online (G. Lee, personal communication, January 1, 2022). First and second year board members also reported the highest percentages for meeting with the board chair (over 50%) and reviewing board-supplied orientation material (over 60%).

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Elect Preparation Actions Completed, Prior to Being Sworn In, by Year of Board Service

Preparation Actions	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Attended board meetings	82	85 ^a	27	90	54	87	12	75	161	86	336	85
Met with superintendent	77	79	25	63	47	75	10	63	128	68	287	73
Reviewed board-supplied orientation materials	64	66	19	63	32	51	8	50	106	56	229	58
Completed governance training	69	71	13	43	27	44	1	6	84	45	194	49
Met with board chair/mentor	52	54	21	70	31	50	6	38	79	42	189	48
No actions completed	2	2	0	0	1	2	3	19	8	4	14	4
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

Onboarding Phase. Disaggregated percentages for the onboarding phase revealed that board policies and procedures and the district budget were the materials most consistently received by new board members, but the percentages for any given year varied from the average by up to 10% (see Table 8). First year members garnered the highest percentage for receiving a board handbook (53%). No members in any year of service reported over 45% for receiving documents that explained the board's governance structure, or rose above the 25% mark for receiving a copy of the contract for the superintendent who is the board's sole employee.

Table 8

Frequency and Percentage of New School Board Member Onboarding Material Received, by Years of Board Service

Onboarding Material Received	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Board policies, procedures	68	70 ^a	22	73	39	63	13	81	129	69	271	69
District budget	62	64	21	70	30	48	10	62	104	55	227	58
Board member handbook	51	53	10	33	27	44	4	25	88	47	180	46
Documents explaining board's governance structure	41	42	12	40	28	45	6	38	69	37	156	40
Copy of superintendent's contract	14	14	6	20	14	23	2	13	29	15	65	17
No materials received	16	17	3	10	8	13	2	13	32	17	61	16
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's; \% = \sum n's \div n$.

After being sworn in, first year board members were less likely than members having two, three and over four years of service to participate in a workshop/retreat with the board (33%) and more likely than members having two, three and over four years to complete governance training with an outside consultant (30%) (Table 9).

Table 9

*Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Onboarding Actions Completed
Post Swearing-In, by Year of Board Service*

Onboarding Actions Completed	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Completed required MSBA training	84	87 ^a	28	93	52	84	14	88	173	92	351	89
Met with superintendent	58	60	18	60	34	55	13	81	129	69	252	64
Met with board chair/mentor	53	55	17	57	29	47	8	50	80	43	187	48
Participated in workshop/retreat with board	32	33	15	50	27	44	4	25	85	45	163	41
Reviewed board-supplied onboarding materials	44	45	13	43	22	36	3	19	77	41	159	40
Completed individual training with outside consultant	29	30	6	20	9	15	5	31	49	26	98	25
No onboarding actions completed	2	2	1	3	3	19	1	6	3	2	10	3
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

Developing Phase. The completion rate of *individual* advanced governance training increased with board tenure (Table 10). However 56% or less of board members for any year had completed Phase IV, Superintendent Evaluation, or Contract Negotiation, offered by the Minnesota School Boards Association.

The timing of the survey was a mere three-four months post the November 2020 school board election. Over 50% of first year board members had not yet completed individual advanced governance training such as Minnesota School Boards Association Phase III and IV. Only 20% of first year board members attended school board officer or contract negotiation training. COVID-19 pandemic mandates prohibiting large group gatherings affected the mode and offering of these trainings.

Table 10

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Individual Advanced Governance Training Completed, by Year of Board Service

Advanced Training Completed	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
MSBA Phase 3	14	14 ^a	10	33	35	56	10	63	136	74	205	52
MSBA Phase 4	7	7	7	23	31	50	9	56	99	53	153	39
School board officer	23	24	11	36	25	40	10	63	132	70	201	51
Superintendent evaluation	7	7	5	17	17	27	8	50	105	56	142	36
Contract negotiation	20	21	7	23	29	47	7	44	104	55	167	42
No advanced governance training completed	51	53	11	37	15	24	3	19	16	9	96	24
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; $\% = \sum n's \div n$.

Taking part in team development and training as a *group* is one of the seminal characteristics of effective school boards (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011). Fifty percent or more of the respondents reported that their board had **not** completed any advanced governance training as a group in the past two years (Table 11).

Table 11

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Team Development or Advanced Governance Training Completed as a Group in the Past 2 Years, by Year of Board Service

Completed Group Development/Training?	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Yes	31	32 ^a	14	47	23	37	6	38	78	41	153	39
No	48	49	15	52	38	61	10	62	109	58	220	56
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

When making governance decisions, results by respondents disaggregated by year of service roughly reflected the aggregate percentages. (See Table 12.)

Table 12*Frequency and Percentage of School Board Information Sources Consulted**When Making Governance Decisions, by Year of Board Service*

Source of Information Consulted	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
District superintendent/cabinet	82	85 ^a	27	90	56	90	15	94	174	93	355	90
Professional organizations	78	80	26	87	53	85	13	81	169	90	340	87
The community	70	72	21	70	42	68	13	81	140	74	287	73
Professional literature	28	29	9	30	19	31	7	44	52	28	115	29
None of the above	1	1	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	1
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's; \% = \sum n's \div n$.

The percentage of leadership roles for any position held by a school board member generally increased with board tenure, with first year members holding the fewest leadership positions. The report of serving as a representative to an outside organization or being a facilitator of a community meeting never rose above 49% for respondents in any year of service.

Table 13

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Leadership Roles Held by a School Board Member, by Year of Board Service

Leadership Role Held	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
School board executive	16	17 ^a	13	43	24	39	14	88	176	94	260	66
School board committee chair	12	12	5	17	15	24	7	44	119	63	167	42
Rep to outside school board organization	10	10	12	40	14	23	6	38	93	49	136	35
Facilitator of community meeting	8	8	7	23	9	15	5	31	63	34	97	25
Not held a leadership role	50	52	7	23	24	39	0	0	8	4	74	19
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

For any given year, approximately 75% of board members evaluated their individual governance effectiveness by ongoing self-reflection, and 33% by reflection with a board chair/mentor. Roughly 10% did not evaluate their *individual* practice by any means.

Table 14

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Evaluation of Their Personal Governance Practice, by Year of Board Service

Evaluation Method	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Ongoing self reflection	76	78 ^a	21	70	49	79	15	94	163	87	324	82
Reflection with board chair/mentor	29	30	11	37	10	16	6	38	64	34	120	31
Annual written board member self-evaluation	5	5	4	13	5	8	4	25	35	19	53	13
I do not evaluate my personal practice	9	9	5	17	10	16	0	0	16	9	40	10
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; $\% = \sum n's \div n$.

When reporting what evaluation method, if any, their school board conducted to evaluate its collective governance effectiveness, the most frequent answer for board members of any year of service was that their board did **not** evaluate its governance by any means (ranging between 36% for first year members to 60% by third year members).

Written collective board evaluations never rose above 27% for any year of service. Evaluation with a consultant never reached more than 31%, post meeting

monitoring percentages for any year never escaped the teens, and the least used method of collective board evaluation was a community survey, ranging from 0% to 14%.

Table 15

Frequency and Percentage of Collective School Board Governance Practice Evaluation

Methods, by Year of Board Service

Collective Governance Practice Evaluation Methods	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	35	36 ^a	15	50	37	60	7	44	78	41	173	44
Annual written whole board governance self-evaluation	20	21	5	17	12	19	4	25	50	27	91	23
Periodic evaluation with a consultant	11	11	4	13	11	18	5	31	55	29	86	22
Post-board meeting monitoring	11	11	4	13	4	6	2	1	26	14	47	12
Periodic community survey	8	8	5	17	6	10	0	0	26	14	45	11
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; $\% = \sum n's \div n$.

Exiting Phase. Regarding preparation for changes in board membership, over half of first and second year board members were unsure of their board's actions (62%

and 53% respectively). Twenty-nine percent of board members who had served three years were still unsure, as were 19% of fourth year members and 15% of those who had served more than four years. Beyond two years of board service, approximately one-third of respondents stated that their board does **not** complete actions to prepare for change (27-32%). The most tenured board members, those with four or more years of service, reported that their board held 1:1 meetings with potential candidates (approximately 50%), posted information on their board website (30%), prepared information for potential candidates (20-30%), and held group information sessions for potential candidates (21-25%) (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Frequency and Percentage of School Board Preparation for Change in Membership,
by Year of Board Service*

Preparation for Change Action	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Unsure of actions completed	60	62 ^a	16	53	18	29	3	19	29	15	126	33
Hold 1:1 meetings with potential candidates	10	10	6	2	19	31	9	56	82	44	126	33
Post info on board website	15	15	7	23	14	23	5	31	54	29	95	24
Do not complete actions to prepare for change	8	8	1	3	20	32	5	31	50	27	85	22
Prepare information for potential candidates	11	11	4	13	11	18	3	19	55	29	84	21
Hold group info sessions with potential candidates	6	6	6	20	6	10	4	25	40	21	62	16
Other	3	3	2	6	5	8	2	13	17	9	29	7
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

Over 50% of board members in the first and second year of their service, and 42% of those in their third year were unsure whether or not their board had a written policy or process for offboarding a board member when the member was exiting from board service (voluntarily or involuntarily). Nearly one-third of members in their fourth year or beyond were still unsure. The longer a member had served, the more likely they were to report that their board did **not** have an offboarding policy or process (44-61%).

Table 17

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Offboarding Policy/Process, by Year of Board Service

Written policy/process for offboarding a member?	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Not sure	65	67 ^a	17	57	26	42	5	31	60	32	173	44
No	9	9	7	23	27	44	9	56	114	61	166	42
Yes	10	10	4	13	8	13	2	13	13	7	37	9
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

The longer a board member had served, the more likely they were to report that an exiting board member did not complete an exit interview with anyone. Completing an exit interview with the superintendent, while garnering the highest percentages, still did not rise above a 21% respondent rate by members for any year of service.

Table 18

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Exit Interview Completed, by Year of Board Service

Exit Interview Completed	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
No exit interview completed	34	35 ^a	13	43	40	65	12	75	152	81	251	64
With the superintendent	15	15	3	10	13	21	3	19	28	15	62	16
With the board chair	11	11	5	17	5	8	1	6	14	7	36	10
Someone other than chair or superintendent	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; $\% = \sum n's \div n$.

Readiness to govern

Board members were asked to rate their readiness to govern at three stages of their board service: prior to being sworn in, after six months of board service, and when they first felt fully equipped to govern.

Prior to being sworn in (Table 19), 5% of first year board members felt very unequipped to govern, 20% felt somewhat unequipped, 56% felt somewhat equipped, and 20% reported feeling very equipped. Approximately 33% of members in any year of their board service reported feeling very unequipped or somewhat unequipped to govern, and 66% felt either somewhat equipped or very equipped.

Table 19

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Reported Readiness to Govern,

Prior to Being Sworn In, by Year of Board Service

Reported Readiness to Govern	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Very unequipped	5	5 ^a	6	20	9	15	3	19	18	10	41	11
Somewhat unequipped	20	21	3	10	12	19	2	13	45	24	82	21
Somewhat equipped	54	56	15	50	32	51	10	63	99	53	211	54
Very Equipped	18	19	6	20	9	15	1	6	25	13	59	15
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

After six months, board member reported readiness to govern by any year of service had shifted with approximately 50% reporting they felt somewhat equipped to govern, and only one third felt very equipped prior to being sworn in.

Table 20

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Reported Readiness to Govern, After Six Months of Service, by Years of Service

Reported Readiness to Govern	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Very unequipped	2	2 ^a	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	6	2
Somewhat unequipped	10	10	3	10	6	10	1	6	15	8	35	9
Somewhat equipped	46	47	16	53	32	52	9	56	111	59	214	54
Very Equipped	26	27	10	33	24	39	6	38	57	30	124	32
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

When asked when they first felt fully equipped to govern, over 50% of first and second year board members reported not yet feeling fully equipped, but approximately one third expected to feel fully equipped sometime during their first year of service. The greater tenure a board member had, the more likely they were to respond that they did not feel fully equipped to govern until year two of their service or beyond.

Table 21

*Frequency and Percentage of Year of Service School Board Members Reported They **First Felt Fully Equipped** to Govern, by Year of Board Service*

Year Felt Fully Equipped to Govern	Member Year(s) of Board Service										Total ^b	
	1		2		3		4		>4		n	%
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
1st year	35	36 ^a	9	30	15	24	4	25	29	15	93	24
2nd year	2	2	4	13	22	35	6	38	53	28	87	22
3rd year	0	0	0	0	12	19	1	6	67	36	70	18
4th year	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	40	21	42	11
Do not yet feel fully equipped to govern	49	51	15	50	12	19	3	19	8	4	87	22
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; $\% = \sum n's \div n$.

Perceptions of Exhibited Governance Characteristics

When disaggregated by year of board service, first or second year respondents were most likely to **disagree** or **somewhat disagree** that their board exhibited the governance effectiveness characteristics (Table 22):

“Having a shared vision of high expectations for student achievement,” and

“shared beliefs about students’ ability to learn”

“Collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure to engage them in setting district goals”

“Aligns resources to meet district goals sustainably”

“Leads as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective role, with strong trust”

“Has shared beliefs about each student’s need for equitable access to resources and high quality teachers”

Board members in their third, fourth or greater year of service were most likely to **disagree** or **somewhat disagree** that their board

“Has a shared vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it”

“Is accountability driven, spending more time on policy development to improve student achievement than on operational issues”

“Are data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement”

“Take part in team development to improve governance effectiveness”

“Have a shared understanding about the difference between equity and equality.”

Table 22

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Perceptions of Their Board's Governance Characteristics, by Year of Board Service

Board Governance Characteristic Perceived by Board Member	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
	97		30		62		16		188		393	
Shared vision of high expectations for student achievement												
Disagree	3	3 ^a	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	1
Somewhat disagree	6	6	2	7	1	2	0	0	2	1	11	3
Somewhat agree	24	25	4	13	13	21	3	19	39	21	83	21
Agree	46	47	21	70	46	74	13	81	146	78	272	69
Non response	18	19	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	22	6
Shared vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it												
Disagree	5	5	1	3	1	2	1	6	0	0	8	2
Somewhat disagree	9	9	3	10	3	5	2	13	2	1	19	5
Somewhat agree	33	34	10	33	26	41	5	31	72	38	146	37
Agree	32	33	14	47	31	50	8	50	113	60	198	50
Non response	18	19	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	22	6
Shared beliefs about students' ability to learn												
Disagree	2	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	5	1
Somewhat disagree	6	6	4	13	3	5	1	6	4	2	18	5
Somewhat agree	35	36	7	23	22	35	6	38	60	32	130	33
Agree	34	35	16	53	35	56	9	56	122	65	216	55

Non response		20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	24	6
Board Governance Characteristic Perceived by Board Member	Member Year(s) of Board Service												
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b		
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%	
	97		30		62		16		188		393		
Shared beliefs about ability of districts educational system to teach all students at high levels													
Disagree	4	4 ^a	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	6	2	
Somewhat disagree	10	10	4	13	7	11	2	13	11	6	34	9	
Somewhat agree	29	30	11	37	23	37	4	25	64	34	131	33	
Agree	34	35	12	40	30	48	10	62	112	59	198	50	
Non-response	20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	24	6	
Accountability driven, more time on policy development to improve student achievement than on operational issues													
Disagree	12	12	4	13	6	9	3	19	7	4	32	8	
Somewhat disagree	20	21	6	20	15	24	2	12	60	32	103	26	
Somewhat agree	29	30	11	37	29	47	7	44	76	40	152	39	
Agree	15	15	7	23	11	18	4	25	44	23	81	21	
Non-response	21	22	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	25	6	
Collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure to engage them in setting district goals													
Disagree	17	18	4	13	7	11	2	13	6	3	36	9	
Somewhat disagree	21	21	6	20	14	23	4	25	42	22	87	22	
Somewhat agree	25	26	13	43	24	39	5	31	85	45	152	39	
Agree	14	14	5	17	16	25	5	31	54	29	94	24	
Non response	20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	24	6	

Board Governance Characteristic Perceived by Board Member	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
	97		30		62		16		188		393	
Is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement												
Disagree	12	12 ^a	3	10	5	8	4	25	5	3	29	7
Somewhat disagree	15	16	4	13	16	26	1	6	32	17	68	17
Somewhat agree	36	37	8	27	21	33	6	38	85	45	156	40
Agree	14	14	13	43	19	31	5	31	65	35	116	30
Non response	20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	24	6
Aligns resources to meet district goals sustainably												
Disagree	4	4	2	7	0	0	1	6	1	1	8	2
Somewhat disagree	16	16	3	10	10	16	1	6	11	5	41	11
Somewhat agree	31	32	8	27	28	45	7	44	82	44	156	40
Agree	26	27	15	49	23	37	7	44	92	49	163	41
Non response	20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	2	1	25	6
Leads as a united team with the superintendent, each from respective role, with strong trust												
Disagree	10	10	3	10	4	6	0	0	9	5	26	6
Somewhat disagree	7	7	6	20	10	16	3	19	19	10	45	11
Somewhat agree	25	26	4	13	22	36	3	19	55	29	109	28
Agree	33	34	15	50	25	40	10	62	104	55	187	48
Non-response	22	23	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	26	7

Takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness												
Somewhat disagree	17	18 ^a	8	27	21	34	3	19	43	23	92	23
Somewhat agree	25	26	8	27	13	21	4	25	61	32	111	28
Agree	19	19	8	26	17	27	3	19	52	28	99	25
Non response	21	22	2	7	1	2	1	6	1	1	26	7
Shared understanding about the difference between equity and equality												
Disagree	9	9	6	20	5	8	2	13	10	5	32	8
Somewhat disagree	15	15	4	13	9	14	3	19	35	19	66	17
Somewhat agree	34	35	9	30	24	39	4	25	80	42	151	38
Agree	20	21	9	30	23	37	7	43	62	33	121	31
Non response	19	20	2	7	1	2	0	0	1	1	23	6
Shared beliefs about each student's need for equitable access to resources and high quality teachers												
Disagree	9	9	1	3	0	0	1	6	4	2	15	4
Somewhat disagree	4	4	6	20	4	6	1	6	19	10	34	9
Somewhat agree	31	33	6	20	24	39	3	19	54	29	118	30
Agree	33	34	15	50	33	53	11	69	109	58	201	51
Non response	20	21	2	7	1	2	0	0	2	1	25	6

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^aFor some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's$; % = $\sum n's \div n$.

Perceptions of Board's Equity Characteristics and Practices

Board member perceptions of their board's equity characteristics, disaggregated by year of service, revealed that board members in their third year of service were more likely than all other years to disagree that their board had explicit equity policies in place

or that those policies were reviewed for content or monitored for compliance (see Table 23).

Table 23

Frequency and Percentage of School Board Member Perceptions of Their Board's Equity Policies and Practices, By Year of Board Service

Equity Policies and Practices Perceived by Board Member	Member Year(s) of Board Service											
	1		2		3		4		>4		Total ^b	
	n ¹	%	n ²	%	n ³	%	n ⁴	%	n ⁵	%	n	%
Have policies or processes that explicitly state district resources are allocated equitably												
Agree	61	63 ^a	20	67	48	77	8	50	134	71	271	69
Disagree	14	14	6	20	11	18	8	50	41	22	80	20
Have reviewed <i>content</i> of the policies/processes within past 2 years												
Agree	54	56	18	61	46	74	10	63	115	61	243	62
Disagree	19	20	8	27	13	21	5	31	59	31	104	26
Have monitored <i>compliance</i> of the policies/processes within past 2 years												
Agree	49	51	19	63	38	61	5	31	110	59	221	56
Disagree	22	23	7	23	20	32	10	63	66	35	125	32
Have policies/processes that explicitly state each student has equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers												
Agree	54	56	20	67	55	89	9	56	140	74	278	71
Disagree	17	18	6	20	3	5	7	44	34	18	67	17
Have reviewed <i>content</i> of policy within past 2 years												
Agree	49	51 ^a	17	57	44	71	7	44	121	64	238	61

Disagree	22	23	9	30	14	23	8	50	52	28	105	27
Have monitored <i>compliance</i> of policy within past 2 years												
Agree	48	49	17	57	39	63	7	44	110	59	221	56
Disagree	22	23	9	30	18	29	8	50	64	34	121	31
n; n/n	97	27	30	7	62	16	16	4	188	48	393	100

Notes. For each $n^{\#}$, and for the n , the item with the highest % of respondents is highlighted in dark gray, the second highest in light gray.

^a For some survey items, respondents were able to select more than one response, therefore the percentages for any given n may not total 100%. ^b $n = \sum n's: \% = \sum n's \div n$.

Relationship Studies (Using Aggregate Results)

Relationship studies were done to determine what, if any, *statistically significant and substantively meaningful* relationships existed between select study variables (that were not likely due to chance). Each survey response option was considered a separate variable. Each independent variable categorized as “board member demographics” (categorical) and “socialization experiences by phase” (categorical) was paired with each of three dependent variables categorized as “readiness to govern” (ordinal), “perceived governance effectiveness characteristics,” (ordinal) and “perceived equity characteristics and practices” (ordinal) (see Table 2). To relate these variables, the Stats iQ function of the Qualtrics survey tool ran an ANOVA (analysis of variance) test and a series of pairwise “post hoc” tests (Games-Howell tests) to produce a statistical value which it then converted to a *p-value*. At a 95% confidence interval, *p-values* were designated as: * *p-value* less than 0.05, ** *p-value* less than 0.01, and ****p-value* less than 0.001, with the asterisks denoting levels of significance, *** being the greatest.

To control for Type I error, due to conducting multiple tests (12) on each of the independent variables in the “socialization experiences by phase,” statistically significant p-values were adjusted to obtain *q-values*. The q-values were determined using the [Benjamini-Hochberg False Discovery Rate \(FDR\) procedure](#)² in the R program (<https://www.r-project.org/>) (*p.adjust (P_values, method="fdr")*) (Jafari & Naser, 2018). For transparency, both the p-values and the adjusted p-values (q-values) are included in the results tables.

In addition to statistical significance, the *effect size* of each relationship was calculated, using Cohen’s d, to determine *substantively meaningful significance* (Schuele & Justice, 2006). Significance values were interpreted using Cohen’s d standards: <0.2 trivial (no statistically significant relationship between variables), >0.2 small and >0.5 medium (variables are statistically related), and >0.8 large (variables are “strongly” related). For each relationship pairing in this study, “effect size” was the magnitude of the differences between the two means of “selected [S]” or “didn’t select [D]” the independent variable.

In some relationships, **selecting the independent variable tended to have higher values** for the dependent variable. In the relationship tables, this relationship was noted with the researcher’s shorthand descriptor “S^D” (“SelecteD” is higher than “Didn’t Select”). For some relationships, **not selecting an independent variable tended to have higher values** for the dependent variable. In the relationship tables, this relationship was noted with the shorthand descriptor “D^S” (“Didn’t Select” is higher than “SelecteD”). A

² When using FDR, a resulting q-value of 0.05 implies that 5% of *significant* tests will result in false positives, resulting in fewer false positives overall ([Nonlinear Dynamics](#), 2022).

dash (-) in the relationship table means that there was no substantively meaningful relationship between the independent and dependant variables related.

Table 2 shows the schema used to relate the independent variables, included in school board member **demographics** and school board member **socialization experiences**, with each of the dependent variables. The Relationship tests used for each study and the corresponding study questions addressed are noted.

Table 1 (second appearance)

Independent and Dependent Variable Relationship Schema, Study Questions Addressed

Variables Correlated		Tests	Study Question Addressed
Demographics			
Independent	Dependent		
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Readiness to Govern (RTG1-2)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their readiness to govern at various socialization phases during their board service?
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Perceived governance effectiveness characteristic (GE1-12)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their perception of their board's effective governance ?
Board Member Demographics (ADEM1, 2, 4)	Perceived equity characteristic and practice (EQ1-6)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Subquestion 7 - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's demographics and their perception of their board's characteristics and practices of equity ?
Socialization Experiences			
Socialization Experiences by Phase (all as above)	Perceived governance effectiveness characteristic (GE1-12)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Benjamini-Hochberg	Main Study Question - What relationship, if any, exists between a school board member's socialization experiences and their perception of their board's effective governance?"

		Cohen's d	
Socialization Experiences by Phase (all as above)	Perceived equity characteristic and practice (EQ1-6)	ANOVA Games-Howell post hoc Cohen's d	Sub Question 5 and 6 - What characteristics and practices that may be associated with equitable school board governance are exhibited by a member's board?"

Results of Relationship Studies for Readiness to Govern with Demographics and Socialization Experiences

When relating board member demographics and socialization experiences (independent variables) with board members reported readiness to govern at various phases of service (dependent variable), there were statistically significant and substantively meaningful results. Tables 26 and 27 relate the most significant (p -value = $<.01$ or smaller) and strongest (Cohen's $d = .3$ or greater). Members who stated they felt more ready to govern were those who were motivated to hold elected office and did not have to overcome challenges. Those challenges included knowledge about the election process, or identifying with a gender that held less than half the seats of the board, or being a member of a community underrepresented on the board.

Members reporting greater readiness to govern were attracted to board service by observing a board business meeting and attending a candidate information session. To prepare for board service prior to swearing in, they met with a board chair/mentor. Onboarding materials received by a member correlating with increased readiness to govern included a copy of the superintendent's contract, documents explaining their board's governance structure, board policies, the district budget and a school board member handbook. As new board members, they reviewed the onboarding documents,

and met with the board chair/mentor.

Table 24

Relationships With Highest Values for Readiness to Govern Prior to Swearing In

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Motivation for serving I wanted to hold elected office	.00191**	.452	S^D
	Challenges overcome to serve			
	Knowledge about election process	.00578**	.349	D^S
	ID with a gender that holds <1/2 seats on board	.00859**	.500	D^S
	Being a member of a community underrepresented on the board	.0262*	.375	D^S
Attraction	Ways member learned about role			
	Observed a board business meeting	.0016**	.333	S^D
	Attended candidate info session	.00528**	.362	S^D
Preparation	Action completed as a member-elect Met with board chair/mentor	.00007***	.404	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 25

Relationships with Highest Values for Readiness to Govern After Six Months of Service

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	New member onboarding material received			
	Copy of superintendent's contract	<.00001***	.638	S^D
	Documents explaining governance structure	<.00001***	.515	S^D
	Board policies, procedures	<.00001***	.513	S^D
	District budget	<.00001***	.462	S^D
	School board member handbook	.00001***	.402	S^D
	Did not receive any onboarding materials	.00002***	.621	D^S
	Action completed as new member			
	Reviewed board-supplied onboarding material	.00003***	.433	S^D
	Met with board chair/mentor	.00006***	.413	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Results of Relationship Studies for Observed Governance Effectiveness

Characteristics with Demographics and Socialization Experiences

Tables 28-44 relate the most statistically significant and strongest relationships between board member demographics and socialization experiences, and member observations of their board's governance effectiveness characteristics, including those of equity. Board members who selected they were a member of a community

underrepresented on the board were **less** likely to observe that their board exhibited a shared “vision for high expectations for student achievement,” a “vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it,” “beliefs about students’ ability to learn,” or “beliefs about the ability of the district’s educational system to teach all students at high levels.” Board members who identified with a gender that held less than half of the seats on the board were **less** likely to observe that their board had “policies or processes that state district resources are allocated equitably,” or that those policies had been reviewed for content or monitored for compliance within the last two years.

Board members who experienced challenges to obtaining a seat on the board including knowledge about the election process and the cost of campaigning were **less** likely to observe that their board had “policies and processes that state that each student has equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers.”

Socialization Experiences by Phase

Preparation Phase. Board members who met with the board chair/mentor during the preparation phase prior to being sworn in were more likely to observe that their board “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness.”

Onboarding Phase. For each of the twelve seminal governance effectiveness characteristics, receiving board policies and procedures during onboarding was positively related with a board member observing that their board exhibited each characteristic. Likewise, *receiving no onboarding materials was negatively related* with observing that a member’s board exhibited each governance effectiveness characteristic.

Receiving documents explaining the board’s governance structure was positively related with a member observing the exhibited governance effectiveness characteristics of

“shared beliefs about students’ ability to learn,” and “being accountability driven, more time on policy to improve student achievement than operational issues.” They also observed that their board “is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement,” and “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness.”

Receiving the district budget during onboarding was positively related with a board member observing that their board “collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure,” “is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement,” and has “shared beliefs about each student’s need for equitable access to resources and high quality teachers.”

During onboarding, board members who participated in a governance workshop/retreat with the board or who reviewed board supplied onboarding materials were more likely to observe that their board “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness,” and “is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement.”

Developing Phase. Board members in the developing phase who reported their board gathered information from professional organizations to make informed governance decisions, were more likely to observe that their board had a shared “vision for high expectations for student achievement,” and beliefs about “students’ ability to learn,” and “about the ability of the district’s educational system to teach all students at high levels.”

Holding the leadership role of facilitator of a meeting with the community was related with a member observing that their board “collaborates with the community

through a strong communication structure,” “aligns resources to meet district goals sustainably,” and “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness.”

Governance Effectiveness Evaluation. Board members who reported their board evaluated its collective governance effectiveness through a periodic community survey were more likely to observe that their board had a shared “vision for high expectations for student achievement” and “beliefs about the ability of the district’s educational system to teach all students at high levels.” They also observed that their board was “accountability driven, spending more time on policy to improve student achievement than operational issues,” and “collaborated with the community through a strong communications structure.”

Members who stated their board conducted a periodic evaluation with a consultant were likely to observe that their board had a shared “vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it.” They also perceived that their boards were “accountability driven, spending more time on policy to improve student achievement than on operational issues,” “aligned resources to meet district goals sustainably,” were “data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement,” and “took part in team development to improve governance effectiveness.”

Conducting post board meeting monitoring and completing an annual written board self evaluation were related with the member’s observation that their board “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness” and that “equity policies and procedures are monitored for compliance.”

For each of the seminal governance effectiveness characteristics and the six equity characteristics studied, there was a *negative* relationship between a board member

reporting their board did **not** conduct collective board governance evaluation and the likelihood that the board member observed that an equity characteristic or practice was exhibited by their board.

Exiting Phase. Board members who reported that their board prepared for membership change by posting information about board service on their website were more likely to observe that their board “is accountability driven, spending more time on policy to improve student achievement than operational issues,” “collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure,” “aligns resources to meet district goals sustainably,” “is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement,” and “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness.”

Preparing information to share with potential candidates and holding one to one meetings or group meetings with potential candidates was positively related with a board member observing that their board “takes part in team development to improve governance effectiveness” and “had a shared understanding of the difference between equity and equality.”

Board members who stated that they were “unsure of actions that their board does to prepare for change in board membership” or that their board “does not complete any actions to prepare change” were less likely to observe that their board exhibited **any** of the seminal governance effectiveness characteristics.

Completing an exit interview with either the board chair or the superintendent was positively related with a board member observing **each** seminal governance effectiveness characteristic and three of the six equity characteristics/practices exhibited by their board. (See relationship tables below for *p-values*, *q-values* and Cohen’s *d* effect sizes and relationships.)

Table 26

Relationships with Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE1

“Shared Vision for High Expectations for Student Achievement”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Member of a community underrepresented on board	.01200*	.048*	.530	D^S
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	.00001***	.00002***	.565	S^D
	No materials received	.00005***	.00001***	.791	D^S
Developing/ Evaluation	Information source for governance decisions				
	Professional organizations	.00009***	.004**	.839	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.560	D^S
	Periodic community survey	<.00001***	.00012***	.488	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 27

Relationships with Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE2

“Shared Vision for Quality Instruction With Clear Goals to Achieve It”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Member of a community underrepresented on board	.00370**	.044*	.596	D^S
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	.00001***	.00002***	.545	S^D
	No materials received	.00048***	.00005***	.619	D^S
Dev/Eval	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Periodic board evaluation with consultant	.00001***	.00002***	.434	S^D
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	.00003***	.00004***	.448	D^S
Exiting	Board action to prepare for membership change				
	Post info about board service on board website	.00007***	.00016***	.406	S^D
	Unsure of actions completed to prepare for change	.00055***	.00442**	.428	D^S

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 28

Relationships with Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE3

“Shared Beliefs About Students’ Ability to Learn”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Member of a community underrepresented on board	.0252*	.075	.475	D^S
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Documents explaining governance structure	<.00001***	.00006***	.471	S^D
	No materials received	.0001***	.00024***	.692	D^S
	Board policies, procedures	.00015***	.00007***	.417	S^D
Developing/ Evaluation	Information source for governance decisions				
	Professional organizations	.00060***	.0004***	.781	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.587	D^S
	Post board meeting monitoring	.00003***	.00036***	.435	S^D
Exiting	Exit interview with the board chair	.00200**	.00343**	.422	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 29

Relationships with Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE4

“Shared Beliefs About Ability of District’s Educational System to Teach All Students at High Levels”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Member of a community underrepresented on board	.00100**	.048*	.559	D^S
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received No materials received	.0039**	.0039**	.517	D^S
Developing/ Evaluation	Information source for governance decisions Professional organizations	.00370**	.00615**	.661	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated Periodic board evaluation with a consultant	.00001***	.00002***	.439	S^D
Exiting	Exit interview with the board chair	.00028***	.00072***	.481	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 30

*Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE5
 “Accountability Driven, More Time on Policy to Improve Student Achievement than
 Operational Issues”*

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	.00002***	.00003***	.478	S^D
	Documents explaining governance structure	.00012***	.00036***	.415	S^D
	No materials received	.00042**	.00056***	.546	D^S
Dev/Eval	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.541	D^S
	Periodic community survey	.00005***	.0003***	.663	S^D
	Periodic board evaluation with consultant	.00086***	.0012***	.418	S^D
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	Post info about board service on board website	.00005***	.00015***	.459	S^D
	Group info sessions with potential candidates	.00008***	.00032***	.549	S^D
	Exit interview, board chair	.00052***	.00104**	.598	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 31

Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE6

“Collaborates With the Community Through a Strong Communication Structure”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	District budget	.00001***	.00012***	.408	S^D
	Board policies, procedures	.00002***	.00003***	.508	S^D
	No materials received	.00029**	.00044***	.629	D^S
Dev/Eval	Leadership roles held				
	Facilitator of meeting with the community	.00002***	.00006***	.454	S^D
	School board committee chair	.00010***	.00120**	.403	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	.00001***	.00001***	.466	D^S
	Periodic community survey	.00030***	.00120**	.565	S^D
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	Post info about board service on board website	.00003***	.00015***	.455	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 32

Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE7

“Is Data Savvy, Monitoring Results to Drive Continuous Improvement”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	No materials received	<.00001***	.00006***	.765	D^S
	Document explaining governance structure	<.00001***	.00006***	.466	S^D
	Board policies, procedures	.00001***	.00002***	.530	S^D
	District budget	.00009***	.00051***	.421	S^D
	Actions completed as a new member				
	Reviewed board-supplied onboarding material	.00001***	.00012***	.459	S^D
Dev/Eval	Information source for governance decisions				
	The community	.00021***	.00120**	.490	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.639	D^S
	Periodic board evaluation with consultant	<.00001***	.00179**	.605	S^D
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	Post info about board service on board website	.00008***	.00012***	.433	S^D
	Do not complete actions to prepare for change in board membership	.00021***	.00010***	.534	D^S
	Exit interview with board chair	.00001***	.00012***	.596	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 33

Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE8 “Aligns Resources to Meet District Goals Sustainably”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	.00008***	.00010***	.453	S^D
	No materials received	.00080***	.00087***	.521	D^S
Dev/Eval	Leadership roles held				
	Facilitator of meeting with the community	<.00001***	.00006***	.498	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.629	D^S
	Periodic board evaluation with consultant	<.00001***	.00002***	.582	S^D
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	One to one meetings with potential candidates	.00001***	.00804**	.449	S^D
	Post info about board service on board website	.00002***	.00016***	.487	S^D
	Do not complete actions to prepare for change in board membership	.00025***	.00010***	.468	D^S
	Exit interview with board chair	.00005***	.00030***	.612	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 34

*Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE9
“Leads as a United Team With the Superintendent, Each From Respective Roles, With
Strong Trust”*

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	No materials received	.00017***	.00087***	.546	D^S
	Board policies, procedures	.00043***	.00047***	.435	S^D
Dev/Eval	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.497	D^S
	Post board meeting monitoring	.00062***	.00186**	.401	S^D
Exiting	Exit interview with board chair	.00016***	.00064**	.607	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 35

Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE10

“Takes Part in Team Development to Improve Governance Effectiveness”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Attraction	Way Board Member Learned About Role Attended candidate info session	.00008***	.00096***	.537	S^D
Preparation	Actions completed as member-elect Met with board chair/mentor	<.00001***	.00012**	.510	S^D
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	<.00001***	.00002***	.570	S^D
	No materials received	<.00002***	.00008***	.650	D^S
	Documents explaining governance structure	.00002***	.00008***	.447	S^D
	Actions completed as a new member				
	Participated in governance workshop/retreat with board	<.00001***	.00012***	.653	S^D
	Reviewed board-supplied material	.00008***	.00048***	.418	S^D
Dev/Eval	Information source for governance decisions				
	Professional literature	<.00001***	.00012***	.484	S^D
	The community	.00013***	.00120**	.484	S^D
	Leadership roles held				
	Facilitator of meeting with the community	<.00002***	.00006***	.461	S^D
	Ways personal governance effect. is evaluated				
	Annual written self evaluation	<.00001***	.00012***	.716	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.963	D^S
	Periodic board evaluation with consultant	<.00001***	.00002***	.787	S^D
	Annual written board self evaluation	.00001***	.00012***	.511	S^D
	Post board meeting monitoring	.00032***	.00186**	.487	S^D
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	Group info sessions with potential candidates	<.00001***	.00006***	.804	S^D
	Prepare info to share with potential candidates	<.00001***	.00012***	.737	S^D
	Do not complete actions to prepare for change in board membership	<.00001***	.00012***	.634	D^S
	Post info about board service on board website	.00001***	.00012	.502	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 36*Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE11**“Shared Understanding of Difference Between Equity and Equality”*

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Board policies, procedures	.00001***	.00002***	.521	S^D
	No materials received	.00026***	.00044***	.604	D^S
Dev/Eval	Ways personal governance effectiveness is evaluated				
	Reflection with board chair/mentor	.00019***	.00114**	.402	S^D
	Annual written self evaluation	.0006***	.00324**	.481	S^D
	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	<.00001***	.00001***	.655	D^S
Exiting	Board actions to prepare for membership change				
	Group info sessions with potential candidates	<.00001***	.00006***	.554	S^D
	Prepare info to share with potential candidates	.00006***	.00024***	.414	S^D
	One to one meetings with potential candidates	.00013***	.00078***	.400	S^D
	Do not complete actions to prepare for change in membership	.00042***	.00126**	.472	D^S
	Unsure of actions we complete to prepare for change in membership	.00072***	.00432**	.410	D^S

Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial,

>0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. *S*^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, *D*^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.

Table 37

Relationships With Highest Values for Governance Effectiveness Characteristic GE12

“Shared Beliefs About Each Student’s Need for Equitable Access to Resources and High Quality Teachers”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	q Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Onboarding	Onboarding materials received				
	Did not receive any onboarding materials	.00001***	.00006***	.692	D ^S
	Board policies, procedures	.00002***	.00003***	.527	S ^D
	District budget	.00017***	.00051***	.413	S ^D
Dev/Eval	Ways collective board governance is evaluated				
	Board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness	.00011***	.00012***	.419	D ^S

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001; q-value = p-value adjusted using Benjamini-Hochberg FDR. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Equity Characteristics and Practices

Tables 38-42 relate the most statistically significant (p-value = <.01 or smaller) and strongest (Cohen’s d = .3 or greater) relationships between select independent variables and characteristics and practices of equity.

Table 38

Relationships With Highest Values for Equity Characteristic EQ1 “Have Policies, Processes That State District Resources Are Allocated Equitably”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Identifying with gender that holds less than ½ the seats on board	.0191**	.509	D^S
Developing/ Evaluation	Ways collective board governance is evaluated Board does not evaluate its gov. effectiveness	.0011**	.359	D^S

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 39

Relationships With Highest Values for Equity Practice EQ2 “Have Reviewed Content of Policies, Processes of Equitable Resource Allocation”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Identifying with gender that holds less than ½ the seats on board	.0203**	.463	D^S
Developing/ Evaluation	Ways collective board governance is evaluated Board does not evaluate its gov. effectiveness	.0006**	.374	D^S
Exiting	Board member exit interview Completed with superintendent	<.00001***	.529	S^D
	Does not complete exit interview	.00001***	.455	D^S

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 40

Relationships With Highest Values for Equity Practice EQ3 “Have Monitored Compliance of Policies, Processes of Equitable Resource Allocation”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Identifying with gender that holds less than ½ the seats on board	.0012**	.621	D^S
Developing/ Evaluation	Ways collective board governance is evaluated	.00014***	.419	D^S
	Board does not evaluate its gov. effectiveness			
	Post-board meeting monitoring	.0057**	.406	S^D
Exiting	Board member exit interview	.00002***	.464	D^S
	Does not complete exit interview			
	Completed with superintendent	.00056***	.442	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Table 41

Relationships With Highest Values for Equity Characteristic EQ4 “Have Policies, Processes That State That Each Student Has Equitable Access to Highly Qualified Effective Teachers”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Challenges overcome to serve Knowledge about election process	.0067**	.393	D^S
	Cost of Campaigning	.0093**	.623	D^S

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Studies relating socialization experiences, by phase, with equity practice EQ5 “Have reviewed content of policies, processes of equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers” yielded some values of statistical significance (*p-value less than .05), but effect sizes were trivial to small, and a table of results is not included.

Table 42

Relationships With Highest Values for Equity Practice EQ6 “Have Monitored Compliance of Policies, Processes of Equitable Access to Highly Qualified, Effective Teachers”

Phase	Socialization Experience	p Value	C. Effect	Rel.
Demographics	Identifying with gender that holds less than ½ the seats on board	.0029**	.576	D^S
Exiting	Board member exit interview			
	Completed with superintendent	.00007***	.497	S^D
	Does not complete exit interview	.0001***	.419	D^S
	Completed with the board chair	.0006***	.520	S^D

*Notes. Statistical Significance * p-value less than 0.05, ** p-value less than 0.01, ***p-value less than 0.001. Effect size (Cohen's d) <0.2 trivial, >0.2 small, >0.5 medium, >0.8 large. S^D = Selected tends to have higher values than not selected, D^S = Not selected tends to have higher values than selected.*

Results Overview

In aggregate, Minnesota Independent School District school board members reported socialization experiences across all phases of their board tenure. These experiences began with their attraction to and preparation for board service prior to being sworn in. Members reported varying degrees of continued socialization during their phases of onboarding (their first six months of service), ongoing development, governance evaluation, and when exiting from board service.

New board members were more likely to report feeling more ready to govern after onboarding (during their first six months of service). However, approximately one third

of the members said they did not feel *fully equipped* to govern until their third or fourth year of board service. Board members who relayed that their board evaluated its collective board governance effectiveness also reported feeling fully equipped to govern sooner than those that did not.

Board members observed that their boards exhibited many of the governance characteristics historically associated with school board governance effectiveness. They were most likely to agree that their boards “had a shared vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction,” as well as beliefs in “students’ ability to learn at high levels,” and a shared vision for high quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it.” Board members were least likely to agree that their board “took part in team development,” “spent more time on policy development than on operational issues,” or “collaborated with the community through a strong communication structure.”

Regarding their board’s characteristics and practices of equity, which may be associated with governance effectiveness, members were more likely to agree that their board had policies/procedures related to equity, but less likely to state that those equity policies/processes had been reviewed for content or monitored for compliance in the past two years.

Relationship studies were conducted to determine the strength of relationships, if any, that existed between a school board member’s socialization experiences with their a) reported feelings of readiness to govern, and b) perceptions whether or not their school board exhibited characteristics of highly effective boards. The studies revealed a large number of statistically significant relationships (*p-value* <.05) that also had small, medium and large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). These statistically significant and

substantively meaningful relationships were especially clustered in the socialization phases of Onboarding, Development and Exiting.

This chapter related the study results and analysis using a quantitative exploratory methodology. Aggregate responses of all board member participants were reported in figures. Subsequently, aggregate responses were disaggregated by year of service and reported in tables. Also reported in tables were relationship studies between dependent and independent variables which surfaced statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the study's findings with the researcher's interpretation, implications for research theory and practice, limitations of the study and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5: Discussion

School boards have endured decades of criticism for not effectively ensuring the achievement of educational benchmarks (Cooper et al., 2008; Finn & Keegan, 2004; Fusarelli & Cooper, 2009; Maeroff, 2010; NCLB, 2001; Reimer, 2015). While that criticism has risen to elevated heights during and after the recent pandemic and civil unrest, citizens of the United States of America still value their access to local governance, as evidenced by the continued voicing of their concerns at the school board table (Brooks, 2021; Kleckler, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Mitchell, 2020). The findings of this quantitative exploratory research support the concern that while school boards strive to govern effectively to be accountable to their constituents, they are struggling on a number of fronts. At the core of many of the current struggles is a misunderstanding of the current role of the school board (as defined in state statute) and how it differs from that of the superintendent (Denyer, 2017; Hayes, 2001). This

misunderstanding is harbored by many community members and potential school board candidates, who carry the lack of clarity into their board service (Stevenson, 2021).

Consequently, school boards themselves have struggled to define their governance role and responsibilities (NSBA, 2020), and how to fulfill them effectively to be accountable to their state and to their electorate.

Additionally, an unprecedented number of school board members have recently reported feeling ill-prepared to handle the complexity and intensity of their school board role and responsibilities in the wake of the pandemic-related protracted state of emergency (Yoo, 2021). As reported in the literature, frequent board member changes due to election cycles exacerbate the issue of unpreparedness (Alsbury, 2003; Alsbury 2008; Tripses et al., 2015; Wanberg, 2012), with many boards being in a continual state of suboptimal efficiency (Baker et al., 2016; Bradt in Wanberg, 2012; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001). Over half of the members in this study reported they did not feel fully equipped to govern until the third year or beyond.

This research found that current school board member socialization programs are limited in scope, which may be contributing to board member feelings of ill-preparedness. Results of the study's survey of school board members in the state of Minnesota show that current school board socialization does little to prepare *potential* candidates for board service, strategically develop board leaders for succession planning, evaluate socialization programs or board governance effectiveness, or mitigate the risk of both cyclical and unpredictable board member changes with strategic offboarding policies/processes.

If school boards are to regain the trust of their constituents and reassume their authority and power as effective local governors, school board members must be able to demonstrate that they *understand their role* as it is currently defined in the era of equity, *be equipped* to fulfill their responsibilities, and *show evidence* to their community and the state that their governance responsibilities have been completed.

Interpretation of the Findings

Understanding the Role of the School Board

The role of the school board has remained relatively stable since boards were first granted authority by their state and tasked with the responsibility to oversee the education of the nation's children at the local level (MN Statute 123B.09.08). School boards are expected to 1) choose a governance model, 2) set a vision for the district after connecting with the community to learn their educational values, 3) establish end goals for the district, 4) hire and evaluate the performance of a superintendent, 5) socialize new board members, 6) approve the district budget and other financial items, 7) monitor results of the district and the work of the board, 8) communicate results to the community and the state, 9) participate in professional organizations, and 10) build relationships with elected officials (Alsbury and Gore, 2015, Carver, 2011; Ford & Ihrke, 2015, 2016a; Stover, 2005).

Continually eroding, however, is the school board's sphere of influence in which to fulfill its responsibilities due to federal and state mandates that have left little room for discretionary decision making at the local level (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Fusarelli & Cooper, 2009). Potential board members are often surprised to discover that much of the district's funding allocation is already prescribed, and that there are curriculum standards

that create parameters for the way in which districts must achieve state mandated academic benchmarks (MN ESSA Plan, 2018).

While boards lament that new board members do not understand their governance role, responsibilities and accountability, boards that employ strategic communication with their constituents (see Table 24) can capitalize on existing forums (in person, social media, print) to build a cadre of informed potential board members. Informed new board members are likely to more quickly engage in meaningful, deliberative board work and communicate more effectively with the community; uninformed board members can inadvertently put the board in legal or ethical jeopardy or derail board and district progress toward long term goals.

Even if a potential candidate for the board brings with them life or career expertise, or experience serving on another board, school board service has unique characteristics that must be learned by a new board member. This study revealed the importance of 1:1 communication in attracting potential board members to board service, clarifying the role and responsibilities of the board, preparing board members to serve effectively during their initial onboarding, and in tactically monitoring and evaluating board member and whole board governance effectiveness. Unfortunately, not every school board chair sees 1:1 onboarding of new members as their responsibility, and not every board encourages initial or ongoing mentorship of new board members. This study also supports what other researchers have found (Baker et al., 2016; Carnes, 2008; Chu, 2017; DeWitte & Schlitz, 2017; Fusarelli et al., 2018) that many school board members do not have access to comprehensive socialization programs that equip them, in a timely

manner, with the knowledge, skills and experience they need to govern throughout their term of service.

Equipping School Board Members for Effective Governance

The results of this quantitative exploratory study revealed that, contrary to the narrow scope of current school board member training programs, school board members report socialization *experiences* across a broad timespan beginning with their attraction to service on the board to their eventual exit from board service. This broader view of socialization, which has long been acknowledged in cross-discipline socialization theory (Klein et al., 2015; Kramer, 2010), opens up additional phases in which to impact school board member knowledge, skills and experience to increase their governance effectiveness. Socialization experiences in the exiting phase, such as preparing for change in board membership and completing an exit interview, showed somewhat surprisingly significant statistical and substantively meaningful relationships with the member's perception of the board's exhibited governance effectiveness characteristics. Regrettably, many school boards do little to prepare for a change in board membership and very few conduct exit interviews which can yield important information about a member's perception of their boards governance effectiveness. Such gathered information can be used to evaluate what a school board is doing well, and what the board may consider stopping or adding to their comprehensive socialization program and governance practices to increase effectiveness.

Merely adding to the number of socialization practices is not necessarily productive. What is of importance is that each socialization experience a school board member has be part of a research-based comprehensive socialization program, with

measurable and optimally timed strategic tactics, resulting in the achievement of the end goal of exhibited effective governance (Dellagardelle, 2015; Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; Land, 2002; Rice, 2010). While effective governance includes completing responsibilities for which a school board is accountable (WSSDA, 2018), it also includes exhibiting such characteristics as having shared vision and beliefs that form the structural ethos within which boards carry out their duties effectively to meet desired goals (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011).

School boards must ensure board member readiness to govern and continued board governance effectiveness by attracting and equipping new members (Denyer, 2017), developing members over the course of their term (Delagardelle, 2008; Jutabha, 2017; Lee & Eadens, 2014; Maeroff, 2010; Reimer, 2015) and planning for the eventual transition (Fusarelli et al., 2018) and exit of members to mitigate the risks of change on the board's long term vision for the school district (Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011). (See Implications for Practice, Table 43, which incorporates results of past studies and the current study in a proposed comprehensive socialization by phase model [Link, 2022]). Reported readiness to govern increased with a member's board tenure, but over half of the members reported they did not feel fully equipped to govern until the third year or beyond of their three or four year term. This great length of time to be fully equipped is problematic. School boards can experience turnover of one to four board members each year, and frequent turnover can cause both strain for seated board members (Alsburly, 2003; Alsburly 2008; Tripses et al., 2015; Wanberg, 2012) and disruption to governance effectiveness (Baker et al., 2016; Bradt in Wanberg, 2012; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010; Lamb, 2011; Lynn, 2001).

Documenting and Communicating School Board Member Effective Governance

Internal Documentation of School Board Effective Governance. Current school board governance literature includes the necessity of evaluating what actions boards complete to fulfill their responsibilities (Alsbury & Gore, 2015, WSSDA, 2018). This study revealed a significant lack of monitoring of the governance effectiveness of both individual board members and the board as a group. This research also revealed that school board socialization programs, if they even exist, are not generally monitored at all for their effectiveness to improve member readiness to govern or to increase board member observations of their board's exhibited characteristics of governance effectiveness. Noted business author and consultant Peter Drucker wisely discerned "Unless we determine what shall be measured and what the yardstick of measurement in an area will be, the area itself will not be seen." Recent observations by school board members of their own ill-preparedness lends urgency to the evaluation of current school board socialization programs for their content, implementation and effectiveness (Yoo, 2021). Data from this research can provide a starting point for both a research-based comprehensive socialization program and an evaluative instrument to monitor the socialization program's implementation and effectiveness.

External Communication of School Board Effective Governance. The findings of this research support prior studies by Hess (2002) and Maeroff (2010) which reported that school boards struggle to communicate with their electorate in a strategic and meaningful way. One third of the aggregate respondents of this study disagreed or somewhat disagreed that their board "collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure to engage them in setting district goals." This research also

revealed that the roles and responsibilities of the school board are often misunderstood, and that school board-community trust has experienced a downturn. Prior researchers assert that to build trust with and garner support of their community, boards must communicate in a variety of ways to *inform* their constituents about what the board is responsible for, *report* how the board is completing their responsibilities, *dialogue* with the community about current issues/values, and actively *listen* to community concerns with timely *followup* (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Donlan & Whitaker, 2019; Reimer, 2015). Since “robust” communication with the electorate is mandated in some states such as Minnesota (MN ESSA, 2018), building the capacity to communicate effectively should be an integral part of each school board member’s development. Carr and Cook (2012), and Quick and Sandfort (2014) promote training in meeting facilitation, conversation protocols, de-escalation, stress management, conflict management and public relations messaging and management. Alsbury and Gore (2015) further remind boards that partnering with the superintendent and the district communication director can ensure consistent messaging regarding trends, issues and results.

The findings of this study support the need for boards to improve communication with their communities about board roles, responsibilities, actions and accountability, and to increase collaboration with their communities regarding setting district goals that reflect a community-centered ethos. The researcher proposes that further research based on this study, and on the findings of aforementioned researchers (notably Alexander et al, 2019; Khalifa, 2021), might yield an actionable framework for community centered and purposeful school board and community engagement.

Implications for Theory and Research

Organizational Socialization Theory and Research

Organizational theory, in general, concerns itself with the attraction, hiring, development, succession planning and offboarding of employees. As such, it is not a perfect framework for socialization programs for elected officials such as school board members. School board members are not “employees” of the school district and community which they serve, and any citizen who meets the candidate criteria can run for a seat no matter their motivation or expertise. Considering the large number of elected officials serving the nation at the federal, state and local levels, it is curious that the socialization of elected officials is not more present as an organization “type” in general organization socialization theory. Perhaps it is because the process of socialization of an elected official is not very transparent, not comprehensive, not consistently implemented, not generally monitored for compliance, and few evaluation instruments are available to evaluate the effectiveness of the socialization process. The socialization of elected officials is a bit of a “black box.” This study revealed at least a portion of the process of school board members’ socialization, and ways in which the practices correlate with exhibited school board governance effectiveness characteristics.

What is evident from this study is that the current model of school board socialization is too narrow to adequately equip potential school board candidates with accurate information about school board service, to develop board members throughout their term including leadership development for succession planning, and to strategically

offboard and exit board members from service in a way that mitigates the risk of decreasing governance efficiency and effectiveness.

Effective School Board Governance Theory

Characteristics of Highly Effective Boards. The “characteristics of highly effective boards” that arose from the landmark Light House Studies (Devaics & O’Brien, 2011; Rice et al., 2000) have been codified as the gold standard to which boards aspire in their governance effectiveness (NSBA, 2015). This research affirmed that the research-based characteristics from this seminal research remain relevant and provide a basis for evaluation of school board governance effectiveness. In this study, the characteristics receiving the highest “agree or somewhat agree” rating were those of vision and underlying beliefs held by the board. The characteristics that received the highest “somewhat disagree or disagree” ratings were those of how the board operationalized the board vision. These findings reveal that boards report they have the vision and beliefs needed to govern effectively, but may be lacking knowledge, skills or experience to optimally bring that vision to fruition.

At the time the above characteristics of effective governance were researched was dubbed the Era of Accountability with achieving educational benchmarks of paramount importance. Since enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, a major emphasis has been placed on every student’s (personalized) equitable access to resources they need to succeed. This research argues that an additional characteristic be added to the above characteristics, using wording from the Minnesota ESSA Plan (2018): “Effective school boards ensure that each student has access to resources they need to

succeed, including high quality and effective teachers.” Based on the results of the study, actions that may contribute to a school board exhibiting this characteristic may include having overt equity-based policies, regularly monitoring the policies for compliance, and periodically evaluating the policy content.

School Board Governance Evaluation. The benefits of school board governance evaluation has garnered increased attention by contemporary researchers (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). This study discovered significant relationships between school boards conducting governance evaluations and their observation of their board’s exhibited effective governance characteristics. Yet over half the boards in this study reported their board did not complete any form of governance evaluation. Further research may be needed to develop tools that evaluate both board socialization and school board actions completed to improve school board governance effectiveness.

Quantitative Exploratory Research and Statistical Theories

This study confirmed the efficacy of the quantitative exploratory theory for quantifying school board members’ experiences, feelings and observations so that those responses could be tallied in the aggregate and parsed for comparison of various groupings of the study respondents. Also efficacious was the statistical theory for relating select independent and dependent variables to yield statistical and substantively meaningful relationships regarding school board member socialization experiences with their readiness to govern and their observations of their board’s exhibited effective governance characteristics, including those of equity.

Implications for Practice

This research provides evidence of statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationships between board member socialization experiences throughout their term, with member observations of their board's exhibited characteristics of governance effectiveness. The study data informed a revision of the researcher's initial *linear* School Board Member Comprehensive Socialization Phases model (Figure 1, page xxii, 48, 58). Based on the findings of this study, Figure 24 presents a *cyclical* model of comprehensive school board socialization, and Table 43 proposes a revised, comprehensive school board socialization program depicting the provision of knowledge, skills and experience for school board members, in a timely and cyclical manner, to equip them to fulfill their responsibilities to their state and to their electorate. The phases are described in more detail below.

School Board Member Socialization

The goal of school board member socialization is to equip school board members with the knowledge, skills and experience they need to govern effectively (Gothard & Austin, 2013; Jutabha, 2017; Walters & Marzano, 2006). This study surfaced experiences within each phase of school board member socialization that are statistically significant and substantively meaningfully related to a board member's perception of their board's exhibited governance effectiveness characteristics. The study's findings support the argument for a comprehensive school board socialization program. Presented below are implications for school board member socialization based on the study's results, followed by a table summarizing socialization experiences by phase (see Table 43).

Attraction and Preparation Phases. Many community members do not understand the role of the school board, and may harbor misunderstandings when they become school board candidates (Denyer, 2017; Hayes, 2001; Stevenson, 2021). Many potential candidates (especially members of minoritized groups including non-white individuals and women) may also face challenges to becoming a school board member (DeWitte & Schlitz, 2017; Wastvedt, 2017). To invite, inform and increase readiness of potential candidates, socialization in the Attraction and Preparation Phases should include information about the role of the board, what it means to govern effectively, and where to obtain more information about becoming a candidate and running for office. Whether obtained in a group or 1:1 format (either in person with a board chair/mentor or virtually), this information should include the board's policies, budget, and board handbook (if available). Observing a school board business meeting is beneficial to learn the process of board governance and to become acquainted with current issues with which the board is concerned. Some people are experiential learners, so participating in a workshop that enables a candidate to experience "being a board member" at a mock board meeting may be beneficial. Other individuals may benefit from reading peer reviewed articles or meeting with a board member from the district (or another district in the state) who shares their lived experience as an individual in a minoritized group.

Onboarding Phase. During the Onboarding Phase, board members should meet with the board chair/mentor to review board supplied materials, including those explaining the board's governance structure, the board budget, and the superintendent's contract. Board chairs/mentors should review ethical and legal aspects of being a board

member that are delineated in board policy and state statute. It is important that new board members are encouraged to take an active part in board business meetings in which board policies are introduced, approved, reviewed for content and monitored for compliance. They should have the opportunity to increase their knowledge through advanced governance training and receive constructive feedback on their governance from a board chair or mentor.

Developing Phase. During the Developing Phase, it is important that board members understand the cyclical nature of school board governance, evaluation and accountability (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). Gathering information from trusted sources, such as professional organizations, is important for making informed governance decisions. Boards should encourage continual collective development through training and workshops to improve their knowledge base and governance effectiveness. Boards should also conduct periodic evaluations of their board's collective governance and socialization program. Such evaluation is related to increased observations of exhibited board governance effectiveness characteristics (Baker et al., 2016; Torres, 2020).

Developing board members should be encouraged to assume leadership roles in preparation for leadership transition and changes in board membership (Fusarelli et al., 2018) such as a board committee chair, board executive, association representative or community engagement facilitator. Ongoing engagement with all district stakeholders is a major challenge of school boards, and one for which boards admit the need for further training and action (Hess, 2002; Maeroff, 2010). Comprehensive school board socialization programs might include a guide for developing a “strong communication

structure” with the community as advocated by Kalifa (2021) to enable board members to learn more about and engage more deeply with members of their community. Using community-centered engagement resources and protocols such as those proposed by Alexander et al. (2019) can help school boards to understand community values for the future direction of education in the district which is a necessity for effective governance (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Donlan & Whitaker, 2019; Khalifa, 2021; Reimer, 2015).

Regular communication with the community is also a state required responsibility of school boards, and expectations have expanded with authorization of ESSA (2015) and approval of state plans (CCSSO, 2017). Technology can rapidly convey information to and from the community, but not all boards are equally tech savvy (Carr & Cook, 2012; OSBA, 2016), and may benefit from a board workshop to learn how technology could support their community engagement goals. Boards that have a long range, purposeful and time bound plan for community-centered engagement and communication, aligned with the district mission, and monitored regularly, derive the most benefit for their community (Carr & Cook, 2012; CCSSO, 2017).

Exiting Phase. The exiting phase is rarely addressed in school board socialization literature, yet this study found it is an important phase for supporting members’ perception of the continuity of the board’s vision and governance effectiveness. Boards that do not complete any preparations for changes in their board membership (or those whose members are unsure if their boards prepare for change) are less likely to observe any of the seminal governance effectiveness characteristics. Preparing for changes in board membership by posting information about board service on the board’s website,

preparing information to share with potential candidates, and holding 1:1 or group meetings with candidates is positively related with a great many of the governance effectiveness characteristics.

To prevent legal or fiscal ramifications, school boards need a policy or process in place to offboard a departing member in an orderly manner, and board members need to be aware of the process. Boards without such a policy risk legal and financial risk as well as a lurch in their governance effectiveness and community trust as they struggle to fill an open seat. In like manner, the superintendent's contract details should be understood by the board members so that a fair performance evaluation can be conducted of the board's sole employee, and an orderly transition can occur, as necessary.

School boards rarely take advantage of the knowledge they can gain by conducting exit interviews with departing board members, and yet conducting exit interviews was positively related with **each** seminal governance effectiveness characteristic (Devaics & O'Brien, 2011; Rice et al., 2000).

Presented below are the researcher's initial proposed models for comprehensive school board member socialization (Figure 24 and Table 43) based on the results of the study.

Figure 24

Proposed Comprehensive School Board Member Socialization Model

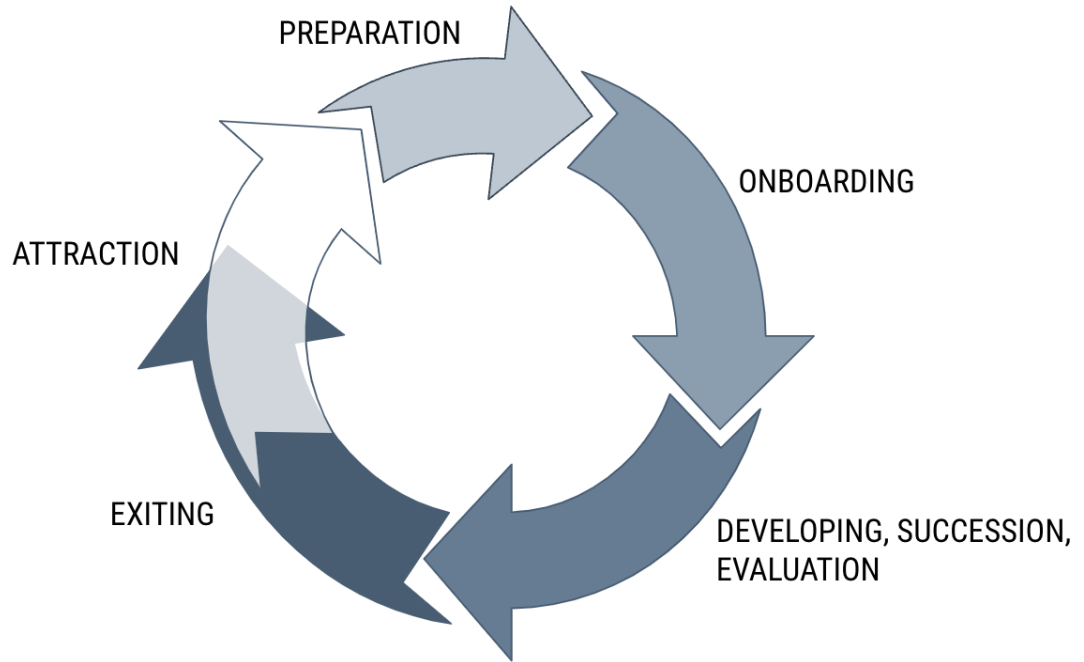


Table 43

Proposed Comprehensive School Board Socialization, By Phase

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Socialization Components		
			Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
<p>Attraction: Pre-recruitment</p> <hr/> <p>Board responsibilities: Set a vision for the district after connecting with the community</p> <p>Communicate results to the community and the state</p>	<p>Increase awareness of board’s purpose</p> <p>Initiate interest in serving on Board</p>	<p>Communication from district</p> <p>Communication from board</p> <p>One to one contact</p> <p>Invitation to participate in district committee, PTO, event, survey</p>	<p>Seek out, acquire and process information</p> <p>Participate in engagement opportunity</p> <p>Consider involvement in district</p>	<p>Board website</p> <p>Board link on other city websites, paper</p> <p>Board & community linkage event</p> <p>Community organizations/events</p> <p>1:1 meetings</p>	<p>District website</p> <p>District newsletter</p> <p>District surveys</p> <p>District committees</p> <p>District “conversations”</p> <p>Press releases</p>
<p>Attraction: Active recruitment</p> <hr/> <p>Board responsibilities: Communicate results to the community and the state</p>	<p>Engage with prospective candidate</p> <p>Inform regarding process of school board governance</p>	<p>Posted notice of upcoming election, info sessions</p> <p>Information sessions with board in person, hybrid, recorded</p> <p>Self-learning</p>	<p>Attend info sessions</p> <p>Access information about school board roles and responsibilities association websites and literature</p>	<p>Posted notice of upcoming election, call for candidates, dates of info sessions, website access for info</p>	<p>NA</p>

Socialization Components

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
<p>Attraction: Active recruitment, cont'd.</p>	<p>Actively strive to engage potential candidates from historically underrepresented groups to achieve equitable representation goals</p>			<p>Potential candidate info sessions:</p> <p>Board purpose, process, additional information sources (MSBS, NSBA, peer reviewed literature)</p> <p>Field questions</p> <p>Outline next steps for filing for candidacy, follow up with potential candidates</p>	
<p>Attraction: Post-filing candidate information sessions</p> <p>Board responsibilities: Socialize new board members</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Listen</p> <p>Clarify</p> <p>Equip</p>	<p>Information sessions with board and district admin.</p>	<p>Attend info sessions with board and district admin</p> <p>Attend board meetings, linkage events</p>	<p>Clarify board authority as granted by the state</p> <p>Differentiate governance resp. from management resp.</p> <p>Introduce board ends policies</p> <p>Review role, expectations of board member</p>	<p>Hold candidate information session: District budget Strategic plan</p>

Socialization Components

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
<p>Attraction: Post-filing candidate information sessions, cont'd.</p>				<p>General overview of campaign process</p> <p>Understand candidate's motivation for serving</p> <p>Field questions</p>	<p>Overview of district, strategic plan, district finance</p>
<p>Preparation: "Member-elect" orientation</p>	<p>Meet and greet</p> <p>Inform</p>	<p>Information sessions with board, mentor and district admin.</p>	<p>Meet with Board Chair and mentor</p>	<p>1:1 with Board Chair, mentor: Distribute board handbook, policies, processes, governance model, literature, calendar.</p>	<p>Meet with superintendent, admin assistant, cabinet members as appropriate</p>
<p>Board responsibilities: Socialize new board members</p>	<p>Equip</p>	<p>Active listening at board meetings, Q&A with mentor after meeting</p>	<p>Read board handbook, policies, processes</p> <p>Read about governance model, procedure</p> <p>Read recommended literature</p> <p>Attend board meetings</p>	<p>Understand member motivation for serving, strengths, interests</p>	<p>On-boarding logistics: Technology equipment, password, access, district ID, building access</p>

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Socialization Components		
			Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
<p>Onboarding First 6 months</p> <hr/> <p>Board responsibilities: Choose a governance model Set a vision for the district Establish end goals for the district Hire and evaluate the performance of a superintendent Socialize new board members Approve the district budget, other finances Monitor results of the district and the work of the board Communicate results to the community and the state Participate in professional orgs. Build relationships with elected officials</p>	<p>Gain knowledge, skills and experience to govern effectively</p> <p>Become contributing board member as quickly as possible</p> <p>Understand superintendent role, evaluation process</p> <p>Serve on board committee</p> <p>Engage with broader school board association</p> <p>Engage with electorate</p> <p>Engage with state representatives</p>	<p>Formal training-individual</p> <p>Hands-on learning during board meetings</p> <p>Committee assignments</p> <p>Professional development</p> <p>Community engagement</p>	<p>Attend state mandated training</p> <p>Attend governance Training</p> <p>Attend DEI training</p> <p>Attend board and committee meetings</p> <p>Attend professional association meetings</p> <p>Attend board-community linkage events</p> <p>Meet with state level elected officials</p>	<p>1:1 meetings with members</p> <p>Review board calendar, cycle of board responsibilities, board officer roles and how to become an officer</p> <p>Hold workshops on board agenda, Robert’s Rules, policy making and monitoring</p> <p>Hold workshop on superintendent contract, evaluation</p> <p>Hold workshop on district budget, finances</p> <p>Assign members to board committees, professional associations</p> <p>Hold community engagement event</p> <p>Invite elected officials to present at board meetings</p>	<p>1:1 informational/dialogue meetings with board members</p> <p>Ongoing board information workshops Budget Issues Trends Community surveys</p>

Socialization Components

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
Onboarding cont'd.	Understand own leadership style, others' styles	Formal training-group	Attend board development training/workshops	Schedule and fund onboarding trainings, review training results	Participate in/support onboarding trainings/workshops
	Check understanding and increase governance effectiveness	Mentorship Individual evaluation Whole board evaluation	Attend 1:1 with mentor/board chair Participate in evaluations	1:1 meeting with members Conduct/fund individual and whole board evaluations; review findings	
On-going development, evaluation	Highly functioning and effective board	Ongoing individual development	Attend advanced governance training Stay abreast of current education trends in district and beyond Follow legislative issues that impact our students/district	Identify, schedule and fund strategic individual member training, review results Development committee assists board in overall board development plan, logistics of training, assessment of member and whole board development	Info sessions on trends, issues One to one two-way informational meetings Community engagement sessions
Board responsibilities as listed above		Ongoing group development	Attend advanced Governance Training	Identify, schedule and fund strategic whole board training, assess results	Board education during business meetings, workshops

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Socialization Components		
			Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
On-going development, evaluation, cont'd.	Fulfill accountability to the state and electorate	Superintendent evaluation, contract negotiation	Review superintendent performance review and contract negotiation process	Hold superintendent performance review, contract negotiation	Support superintendent performance review, contract negotiation process
	Leadership development, succession planning	Committee work, reporting	Serve on, chair board committee	Assign members to committees	Support committee work within set parameters
		Board officer service	Serve as board executive	Election of board officers	Support board execs. Support referendum process
		Mentoring	Mentor members' ongoing development	Arrange mentorship	
		Referendum support	Support/chair referendum process	Champion referendum process	Support community engagement event
		Community engagement	Lead community engagement event	Hold community engagement event	
	Check understanding and increase governance effectiveness	Mentorship	Attend 1:1 with mentor/board chair	Conduct 2-way review process	Support ongoing board governance effectiveness
		Individual evaluation	Participate in evaluations	Schedule and fund evaluations, review results	
		Whole board evaluation			
		Evaluate comprehensive		Hold strategy meetings to plan for improving board	

socialization program

governance effectiveness

Socialization Components

Socialization Phase	Socialization Goal	Socialization Tactics	Socialization Components		
			Self directed	Board directed	Admin directed
Exiting-off boarding	Knowledge transfer	Succession planning	Participate in pre-recruiting, recruiting of potential candidates, lead orientation of member-elects	Hold pre-recruiting, recruiting and orientation of member-elects	Collect district/board owned materials from exiting member, unenroll exiting member from district communication network
	Closure of board service	Replacement planning	Pass along committee chair responsibilities, resources	Assign new members to fill vacated committee seats	Conduct optional exit interview with exiting member(s)
		Informing ongoing board effectiveness	Return district/board resources	Follow offboarding policy/procedures	
		Complete exit interview	Hold exit interviews to glean information to improve board's governance effectiveness.		

School Board Support, Consulting

A research-based comprehensive socialization program is a cost effective way to ensure a board's governance effectiveness over time (Alsbury & Gore, 2015). But few school board development committees have the resources or bandwidth necessary to develop and implement their own socialization program (Hayes, 2001; Kramer, 2010). School boards in some states have the advantage of the support of a statewide school board association (such as the Minnesota School Boards Association), or area association (such as the Association of Metropolitan School Districts) that provide training, timely topical information, legal resources, and avenues for lobbying for aggregate school districts' causes at the state level. Partnering with these associations, and other specialized consultants for governance effectiveness workshops eases the burden on the school board for equipping its members to govern well. However, over half of the members of the boards in the study reported that they did not complete any team development or advanced governance training as a group with their boards.

The study showed that many individual members of boards, and boards as a group, struggle with carving out time for individual or collective board responsibilities beyond their business meetings. And budgeting for advanced training or development is difficult for many districts, especially in states that do not subsidize mandatory training. Any such training must be time and cost effective (ideally state funded for equitable access), research-based, and practical rather than merely theoretical, with support during implementation of the learning. Areas in which school boards are lacking knowledge, skills or experience arose from this research and implications for practice in each area are presented below.

Community engagement. School boards are accountable for robust community engagement, but are struggling to do so effectively. Boards need hands-on workshops in which they craft an overall vision for community engagement that includes the purpose, goals, and time bound strategies and research-based tactics for communicating with their community in person, and via media. Training in planning and facilitating meetings for specific purposes is needed. School boards would also benefit from **practical**, hands-on workshops to learn to use facilitation tools such as conversation protocols, stress management, conflict de-escalation and resolution, and public relations messaging and management.

Advanced School Board Governance Training. Mandated training, if available generally provides school board members with an overview of their board's responsibilities and accountability. It may also include board officer training and superintendent evaluation. But this study showed that individual school board members and boards as a group would benefit from additional workshops such as 1) visioning, leadership styles, leadership development and succession planning, 2) policy writing, introducing new policy or policy change, monitoring, and evaluation, 3) deliberation, persuasion, collaboration, consensus building, conflict management, 5) referendum planning, writing, and strategic marketing for successful passage, and 6) board governance and socialization program evaluation.

Though onsite training enables more organic sharing of ideas amongst participants, real-time virtual training or on demand training modules may arise as the preferred method of learning for individual board members and their collective boards,

especially given the expertise boards have gained in the use of virtual meetings necessitated by the social distancing practices of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Professional Associations

This research showed that the a school board’s primary source of information for making governance decisions is their superintendent, but closely following that are professional associations such as the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. These associations provide essential information to school boards regarding district academic and governance issues and pending legislation, and lobby on behalf of school districts. These associations may consider fostering cross-district collaborations, perhaps between metropolitan and outstate district school boards, to help school boards gain additional perspectives on issues/governance practices throughout the state.

Local and State Government Interface

School boards are local level governors, granted authority to act by their state. Though they are accountable to the state, there is little direct contact between the local and state levels other than perhaps an association arranged “School Board Day at the Capitol” or an occasional state official’s presentation at a mandated training or an association meeting. School boards are called to foster relationships with legislators for the purpose of two-way communication regarding district issues or initiatives. School boards might consider inviting their elected state and congressional representatives to a school board workshop or a community linkage event for two-way targeted dialogue, or inviting them to attend an association meeting to gain perspective on issues or current

initiatives. School boards may also appreciate personal acknowledgement from the governor for their efforts to ensure that their district is achieving mandated benchmarks.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Certain assumptions were made during the course of the study. The main assumption was that school boards will continue to be the predominant elected or appointed body authorized by a state to govern education in their respective districts, and that improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the school board's governance is important for adequately overseeing the education of the country's youth. It was acknowledged that school boards continue to struggle to be demographically representative of their community. Also assumed was that the study's survey respondents answered truthfully.

The quantitative exploratory approach selected for this study was appropriate in that it yielded results that answered the research question, and added to the body of knowledge on school board member socialization theory and school board governance effectiveness theory. To increase the depth of the study, a qualitative component, such as a follow up personal interview with a select number of the participants, could capture additional or more in-depth school board member thoughts and feelings that the structure of the online quantitative survey did not allow (open ended questions such as "What 'wisdom' would you, as an exiting member, pass on to a member-elect or a developing member?").

To promote openness in research, the research-based survey developed for this study was saved in the Qualtrics application, and the preliminary data analysis processes

(to obtain *p-values* and Cohen's *d* calculations) are navigable from dropdowns on the application. The study survey could readily be made available for use with another population, such as a school board of another state.

To amplify the voice of those members who may not hold a majority of the board seats, and add credibility to the equity considerations of the study, the survey could also be used with a specific school board member sub group such as board members who identify as members of an underrepresented community or identify with a gender that holds less than half the seats on the school board.

The stored study clean data set could be used for additional studies. The relationship study data could be used to develop a best practice school board member socialization program to improve governance effectiveness. Such a program's implementation could be studied longitudinally with a cohort of school board members, over the tenure of their school board service, to document a board member's socialization experiences, their readiness to govern, and their board's governance effectiveness over time.

Unprecedented Societal Factors, Bias Management

No one could have predicted the Tsunami of cataclysmic events that occurred during the final year and a half of this study (2020-2022) which impacted the study's population, the researcher, and the study's procedures. These limitations were recognized by the researcher and mitigated when possible as described below.

Impact of the Events of 2020-2022 on the Study Population. The study population consisted of each and every school board member of the Independent School

Districts in Minnesota. The demographics of the study participants reflected that of the study population, yet that population itself lacks representative diversity in age, gender, race, education level, and socioeconomic status.

As a group, the study population experienced many unprecedented personal and economic impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and mandates, a contentious general election with ensuing riots, and the murder of George Floyd with ensuing riots and heightened global awareness of cultural inequity and demand for change at the systemic level. Each member's personal immersion in, reaction to, and impact by the events is idiosyncratic. What impact, if any, the events of 2020-2022 had on each member's decision to participate in the survey or on their responses is difficult to discern from the quantitative data, especially with no pre-2020 data with which to compare.

One impact that is well documented in a number of school board meeting recordings is an ongoing frustration of community members regarding mandates, curriculum and equity issues, which has led at times to contentious interchanges with fellow community members and the school board (Shockman, 2021). For community members, the school board is the nearest level of elected officials with which they can air their grievances and attempt to effect change. The school board does not have direct control over federal or state executive orders and ensuing mandates, state issued curriculum standards and testing, or equity mandates. However, the school board as a group can bring forward the community's concerns to its professional organizations that can lobby with the legislature for change, or communicate directly with their state legislators and senators, and their federal congressional representatives. Unfortunately, as boardroom kerfuffles in the study's state, Minnesota, rose to national attention, so did the

number of school board member resignations, which in 2021 reached an all time yearly high of 70 members which is approximately 3% of the roughly 2100 total board members (AP, 2021).

Impact of the Events of 2020-2022 on the Researcher and Study. The initial shutdown of academia in Minnesota due to mandates to curtail the spread of COVID-19, and then frequently fluctuating learning modalities, presented logistic challenges for the researcher as a graduate student and as a dissertation study project manager. The survey opened later than planned since the focus of the study's population was on the day-to-day district governance during the pandemic. Also the overall emotional "temperature" of the culture was uncharacteristically high due to collective personal frustration, civil unrest and a very contentious election. Running the survey during the crest of emotion might have skewed the results data.

To run the survey for two consecutive months with the same survey population, the survey opening needed to be after the 2020 election and swearing-in of new board members in January, 2021. To give new board members time to onboard, education in their districts to resume some sense of normalcy, and emotions to ebb somewhat, the survey did not open until mid-February, 2021. In addition, the researcher's personal dissertation progress was slowed due to her grief and logistical responsibilities following the pandemic-related death of her aged parent. Given the limitations described, some of which may potentially have long lasting effects, replication of this study with future Minnesota Independent Schools School Board Members may yield results different from this study.

Conclusion

For some time, the effectiveness of school board governance to ensure high levels of student achievement has been debated. School boards have recently come under even more intense scrutiny as they struggle with the educational ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened civil unrest, community mistrust, and ongoing issues of equitable access to resources needed by each student in their district to succeed. Boards will no doubt deal with ramifications of the last few years for many years to come.

The concept of effective school board governance in the United States, and in the State of Minnesota in particular, is in the midst of redefinition. Characteristics historically associated with effective school board governance (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; Rice et al., 2000) are still relevant and a standard to which boards can aspire. But in this era of equity (2015 to present), this study's data supports adding the governance characteristic of "having explicit equity policies in place and regularly monitoring them for content and compliance to ensure that each student has equitable access to resources, including high quality and effective teachers, that they need to succeed" (MN DOE, 2018).

This study showed that for Minnesota school board members, their readiness to govern, and their perceptions of their board's governance effectiveness have a statistically significant and substantively meaningful relationship with their socialization experiences. While Minnesota state mandated school board training currently focuses on initial onboarding only, the results of this study present evidence for a more comprehensive school board socialization program that spans a member's entire tenure (from attraction to board service until their exit from their board seat). While the study identified some socialization experiences that are currently related to effective governance, there may be

additional experiences needed to address current concerns, especially in the areas of community-centered engagement, board development as a group, and strategically preparing for changes in board membership. The study also supports the argument that routine monitoring and periodic evaluation of a board's governance, and its comprehensive socialization program, is critical to supply the board with important information it needs to continually improve its governance effectiveness (MSBA, 2018a).

Comprehensive school board socialization programs, that include evaluative feedback, can provide school boards with timely knowledge, skills and experiences they need to govern well. School boards, thus prepared, are more equipped to fulfill their governance responsibilities effectively, and to be accountable to their community and the state for ensuring that each student has access to a well-resourced, high quality education that prepares them for their future, in a manner that justifies the cost. Comprehensive socialization programs can build the governance effectiveness capacity of school board governors, but in the end, the goal is not to create "good" governors, it is increase the "good" those governors do when working together as an effective board.

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Appendix A

IRB Review Exemption

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

*Human Research Protection Program
Office of the Vice President for Research*

*Room 350-2
McNamara Alumni Center
200 Oak Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-626-5654
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EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

August 10, 2020

Nicola Alexander

612-624-1507
nalexand@umn.edu

Dear Nicola Alexander:

On 8/10/2020, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	School Board Members' Socialization Experiences and Their Perceptions of Their School Boards' Governance Effectiveness in the Era of Equity (2015 to Present)
Investigator:	Nicola Alexander
IRB ID:	STUDY00007955
Sponsored Funding:	None
Grant ID/Con Number:	None
Internal UMN Funding:	None
Fund Management Outside University:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed with this Submission:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STUDY00007955HLINK07152020DataAnalysisIndepVar, Category: Other; • STUDY00007955HLINK07152020SURVEY, Category: Other; • STUDY00007955HLINK07152020DataAnalysisDepVar, Category: Other; • STUDY00007955HLINKQuestEmails (1).pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • STUDY00007955HLINK-HRP587.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • 1STUDY00007955HLINK-HRP580SOCTEMPPROTOCOL .pdf, Category: IRB Protocol

The IRB determined that this study meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To arrive at this determination, the IRB used "WORKSHEET: Exemption (HRP-312)." If you have any questions about this determination, please review that Worksheet in the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) and contact the IRB office if needed.

This study met the following category(ies) for exemption:

- (2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects

Ongoing IRB review and approval for this study is not required; however, this determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a Modification to the IRB for a determination.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) on the IRB website.

For grant certification purposes, you will need these dates and the Assurance of Compliance number which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003).

IMPORTANT: All human research conducted at the University of Minnesota must adhere to the [IRB guidance and requirements](#), [Office of the Vice President for Research guidance](#), and [MHealth Fairview and Medical School guidance \(if applicable\)](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the IRB continues to review and approve research, this guidance takes precedence, meaning that some research activities, including enrollment of participants, may not take place at this time for certain types of research. All researchers should review the guidance often as it is updated frequently by the Human Research Protection Program.

Sincerely,

Clinton Dietrich, MA, CIP
Senior IRB Analyst

We strive to provide clear, consistent, and timely service to maintain a culture of respect, beneficence, and justice in research. [Complete a brief survey](#) about your experience.

Appendix B

Study Participation Invitation and Reminder Emails

An initial invitation to participate in the study, via online survey, was sent to each of the 2,169 school board members of the Independent School Districts of Minnesota. Board members who did not submit a completed survey from the initial invitation were sent up to three reminder emails until they responded with a completed survey. Following the close of the survey, a thank you email was sent to each study respondent.

Initial Invitation

Dear \${m://FirstName}

You are a school board member of an Independent School District in Minnesota, overseeing education for your school district. That is why we are asking you to take part in a research study about school board governance in Minnesota.

This IRB approved study is being conducted by a PhD student at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. The purpose of the study is to understand how Minnesota school board members are attracted to serve on their board, learn to govern, and then exit board service. This study also asks participants about things they notice regarding their school board's governance. You may choose whether or not to participate in this study, and your decision will not be held against you.

Click on this link to complete the 10-12 minute online survey
\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
\${l://SurveyURL}

Your responses will be stored confidentially, and the results of the study will only be reported in the aggregate. You will not receive any payment for your participation in the study. However, following the completion of the research, an executive summary of the aggregated results will be made available to participants.

Thanks in advance for your participation in this important research.

Holly Link, PhD Candidate
College of Education and Human Development
Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development-Educational Administration
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

First Reminder Email

Dear \${m://FirstName}

You were recently invited to take part in a U of MN research study about school board governance in Minnesota. Your experience as a school board member is an essential contribution to this study.

Please complete the 10-12 minute study by clicking on this link
\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
\${l://SurveyURL}

With gratitude for your participation,

Holly Link, PhD Candidate
College of Education and Human Development
Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development-Educational Administration
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Second Reminder Email

Dear \${m://FirstName}

The U of MN research study about school board governance in Minnesota is nearly complete. Whether you are a first year board member, are in your 2nd, 3rd or 4th year, or have faithfully served for many years, your unique voice is a vital part of this study.

Note: We have noticed that some participants have completed 97% of the survey, yet their survey is still "in progress." To make sure your responses are recorded, please click the **submit** button at the end of the survey.

Please complete the 10-12 minute study by clicking on this link
\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
\${l://SurveyURL}

Thank you for sharing your valuable experience and observations,

Holly Link, PhD Candidate
College of Education and Human Development
Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development-Educational Administration
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Final Reminder Email

Dear \${m://FirstName}

This is your FINAL opportunity to take part in a U of MN research study about school board governance in Minnesota. Many of your fellow board members have already responded. We want to make sure that your particular experience is included in this important study. Please remember to click the "Submit" button after the final question so that your responses are recorded.

Complete this study in 10-12 minutes. Begin by clicking on this link:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${l://SurveyURL}](#)

With gratitude for your participation,

Holly Link, PhD Candidate

College of Education and Human Development

Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development-Educational Administration

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Appendix C

Dates of Survey Distributions, Responses

Table XX

Dates of Survey Distributions and Responses Received

Distribution			Responses							Total
Date	Type	Number	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	
2/16- 2/22	Initial	2169	118	29	5	1	1	6	4	164
2/23- 3/1	1st remind.	2027	80	12	4	5	1	2	0	104
3/2- 3/8	2nd remind.	1918	35	11	4	2	2	3	2	59
3/9- 3/19	Final remind.	1841	47	9	6	2	0	1	1	66
	Total		280	61	19	10	4	12	7	393
3/30	Thank you	393				NA				393

Appendix D

Study Questionnaire

Note: This questionnaire may not be used in whole or in part without permission of the author. This questionnaire was developed by researcher Holly Link based on an extensive cross-discipline study on socialization, including corporate employees, volunteers, appointed officials and elected officials. The purpose of this research is exploratory, sampling school board members of Independent School Districts in Minnesota. Results are not generalizable to other populations.

2021 MN ISD School Board Socialization & Governance Effectiveness Study

Start of Block: Intro and Consent

INTR

Thank you for participating in this survey of school board members of Minnesota Independent School Districts. This research is being done by a PhD candidate in Educational Administration at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Your responses will provide the researchers with important information about practices your school board uses to help board members govern effectively.

Your responses are valuable and appreciated. They will be kept confidential and stored securely. Your responses will be combined with responses from other individuals and reported only in the aggregate.

CONSENT

Instructions:

The survey will take about 10-12 minutes and can be completed in more than one sitting. The survey software will automatically save your progress. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or to withdraw from the survey at any time.

If you experience difficulty with the survey, you may contact Nicola Alexander, Associate Professor CEHD, OLPD at the University of Minnesota at nalexand@umn.edu or the student researcher Holly Link, PhD Candidate at linkx064@umn.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 (Toll Free: 1-888-224-8636) or go to z.umn.edu/participants.

By clicking NEXT, you are consenting to participate in the survey.

End of Block: Intro and Consent

Start of Block: Attraction

A0 The first 4 questions ask how you were attracted to serve on your school board, and your length of service:

ADEM1 Which of the following statements, if any, are true for you about serving on the board? (Select all that apply)

- I wanted to give back to the community. (1)
- I wanted to impact education in the district. (2)
- I wanted to hold elected office. (3)
- Someone encouraged me to serve. (4)
- None of the above are true for me. (0)

ADEM2 Which of the following challenges, if any, did you overcome to serve on the board? (Select all that apply)

- Knowledge about the election/appointment process (1)
- Cost of campaigning (2)
- Time commitment required to serve on the board (3)
- Being a member of a community currently underrepresented on the board (4)
- Identifying with a gender that holds less than 1/2 the seats on the board (5)
- I did not experience the above challenges to serve on the board. (6)

A3 By which way, if any, did you learn about the role of the school board **before being elected/appointed**? (Select all that apply)

- Had a 1:1 conversation with a board member (1)
- Had a conversation with a district representative (7)
- Observed a board business meeting (2)
- Attended a candidate information session (3)
- Read a website/social media post (4)
- Read a printed document (5)
- I did not learn about the role of the school board before being elected/appointed. (6)

ADEM4 In what year of school board service are you?

- This is my first year of service on the board. (1)
- 2nd year (2)
- 3rd year (3)
- 4th year (4)
- I have served more than four years on the board. (5)

End of Block: Attraction

Start of Block: Preparation and Readiness to Govern

P0 The next 2 questions ask about your experience AFTER being elected but BEFORE being sworn in:

P1 Which of the following actions, if any, did you do as a **member-elect**? (Select all that apply)

- Met with the board chair/mentor (1)
- Met with the superintendent (2)
- Attended board meetings (3)
- Completed governance training (4)
- Reviewed board-supplied orientation materials (5)
- I did not complete any specific actions as a member elect. (6)

RTG 1 In **the week prior to being sworn in** as a board member, how equipped did you feel to govern effectively?

- Very equipped (4)
- Somewhat equipped (3)
- Somewhat unequipped (2)
- Very unequipped (1)

End of Block: Preparation and Readiness to Govern

Start of Block: Onboarding and Readiness to Govern

OB0 The next 3 questions ask about how you learned to govern as a school board director within the first 6 months of your term (also known as onboarding):

OB1 Which of the following materials, if any, did you receive during onboarding? (Select all that apply)

- School board member handbook (1)
- Documents explaining your board's governance structure (such as Policy Governance® or Coherent Governance®) (2)
- Board policies, procedures (3)
- District budget (4)
- Copy of superintendent's contract (5)
- I did not receive any onboarding materials. (6)

OB2 Which of the following onboarding actions, if any, did you do **after being sworn in** for board service? (Select all that apply)

- Met with the board chair/mentor (1)
- Met with the superintendent (2)

- Reviewed board-supplied onboarding materials (3)
- Participated in a governance workshop/retreat with my board (4)
- Completed required phases of MSBA training (7)
- Completed individual training with an outside governance consultant (5)
- I did not complete any onboarding actions. (6)

RTG2 After completing your first 6 months of school board service, how equipped did you feel to govern?

- Very equipped (4)
- Somewhat equipped (3)
- Somewhat unequipped (2)
- Very unequipped (1)

End of Block: Onboarding and Readiness to Govern

Start of Block: Developing, Governance Evaluation, Readiness to Govern

DEV0 The next 7 questions ask about how members of your board continue to develop and evaluate their governance and leadership skills during their term(s):

DEV1 Which, if any, of the following advanced board governance/leadership trainings have you completed? (Select all that apply)

- MSBA Phase 3 (Building a high-performance school board team) (1)
- MSBA Phase 4 (Representing your community through policy and engagement) (2)
- School board officer training (3)
- Superintendent evaluation training (4)
- Contract negotiation training (5)
- None of the above (0)

DEV2 In the past two years, has your school board completed team development/governance training as a **collective group**?

- Yes (2)
- No (1)

DEV3 When making governance decisions, from which source, if any, does your collective board gather information? (Select all that apply)

- The community (1)
- District superintendent/cabinet (2)
- Professional organizations (such as NSBA, MSBA, AMSD, etc.) (3)
- Professional literature research (4)

- None of the above (0)

RTG3 During what year in your school board service, if ever, did you **FIRST** feel **fully** equipped to govern effectively? (Select only one)

- During my first year (1)
- 2nd year (2)
- 3rd year (3)
- 4th year or beyond (4)
- I do not yet feel fully equipped to govern. (5)

DEV4 Which, if any, of the following leadership roles have you held during your term(s)? (Select all that apply)

- School board executive (chair, vice chair, treasurer, clerk) (1)
- School board committee chair (2)
- Representative to an outside school board organization (such as AMSD, MREA or an intermediate school district) (3)
- Facilitator of a meeting with the community (4)
- I have not held one of these leadership roles during my term(s). (5)

EVAL1 In which ways, if any, do you evaluate **your personal** governance practice? (Select all that apply)

- Ongoing self-reflection (1)
- Reflection with board chair, mentor (2)
- Annual written board member self-evaluation of governance practice (3)
- I do not evaluate my own personal governance practice. (4)

EVAL2 In which ways, if any, does your **collective board together** evaluate its governance effectiveness? (Select all that apply)

- Post-board meeting monitoring (1)
- Annual written board self-evaluation of governance (2)
- Periodic board evaluation with a consultant (3)
- Periodic community survey regarding the board's governance effectiveness (4)
- Our board does not evaluate its governance effectiveness. (5)

End of Block: Developing, Governance Evaluation, Readiness to Govern

Start of Block: Exiting

EX0

The next 3 questions ask about processes your board follows when members exit from board service:

EX1 Prior to an election cycle, what actions, if any, does your board do to prepare for possible changes to board membership? (Select all that apply)

- We prepare information about board service to share with potential candidates. (1)
- We hold group information sessions with potential candidates. (2)
- We post information about board service on our board website. (3)
- If requested, we hold 1:1 meetings with potential candidates. (4)
- We complete an action other than those listed above (5)
- We do not complete actions to prepare for changes to board membership (6)
- I am unsure of actions we complete to prepare for changes in membership (7)

EX2 Does your school board have a written policy/process for offboarding a member who exits board service (either planned or unplanned)?

- Yes (2)
- No (0)
- Not sure (1)

EX3 With whom, if anyone, does each exiting school board member complete an exit interview? (Select all that apply)

- With the board chair (1)
- With the superintendent (2)
- With someone other than the board chair or superintendent (4)
- Exiting board members do not complete exit interviews. (3)

End of Block: Exiting

Start of Block: Governance Effectiveness Characteristics

GE0 Thank you for answering the previous questions about how a member learns to govern on your board. There are only two short sections left to complete the survey.

GE 1-12

The statements below describe characteristics of some school boards. Choose how much you disagree or agree that each statement describes your school board:

	Disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Somewh at agree (3)	Agree (4)
1. Our school board has a shared vision of high expectations for student achievement. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2. Our school board has a shared vision for quality instruction with clear goals to achieve it. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Our school board has shared beliefs about students' ability to learn. (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Our school board has shared beliefs about the ability of our district's educational system to teach all students at high levels. (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Our school board is accountability driven, spending more time on policy development to improve student achievement than on operational issues. (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Our school board collaborates with the community through a strong communication structure to engage them in setting district goals. (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Our school board is data savvy, monitoring results to drive continuous improvement. (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Our school board aligns resources to meet district goals sustainably. (8) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Our school board leads as a united team with the superintendent, each from our respective roles, with strong trust. (9) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Our school board takes part in team development to improve our governance effectiveness. (10) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. Our school board has a shared understanding about the difference between equity and equality. (13) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Our school board has shared beliefs about each student's need for equitable access to resources and high-quality teachers. (14) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Governance Effectiveness Characteristics
 Start of Block: Gov Eff Equity Characteristics and Practices

EQ0 You have reached the final section of this survey.
 The final 6 statements are about practices of some school boards.

EQ1-6

Please choose whether you disagree or agree that a statement describes your board.

	Disagree (1)	Agree (2)
1. We have policies/processes that explicitly state that district resources are allocated equitably. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Within the past two years, our school board has REVIEWED THE CONTENT of our policies/processes that explicitly state that district resources are allocated equitably. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Within the past two years, our school board has MONITORED COMPLIANCE with our policies/processes that explicitly state that district resources are allocated equitably. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. We have policies/processes that explicitly state that each student has equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Within the last two years, our school board has REVIEWED THE CONTENT of our policies/processes that explicitly state each student has equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Within the last two years, our school board has MONITORED COMPLIANCE with our policies/processes that explicitly state each student has equitable access to highly qualified, effective teachers. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Gov Eff Equity Characteristics and Practices