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AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEIVED NEEDS AND PARTICIPATION OF
SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN
LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND STATEWIDE PROGRAMS OF INSERVICE
EDUCATION

Michigan State University

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SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS
IN LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND STATEWIDE PROGRAMS
OF INSERVICE EDUCATION

By

Jon N. Schuster

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEIVED NEEDS AND PARTICIPATION OF SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND STATEWIDE PROGRAMS OF INSERVICE EDUCATION

By

Jon N. Schuster

Statement of the Problem

The general purpose of the study was to contribute toward the improvement of local board of education decision making through an investigation of individual member perceived need for, and actual participation in, programs of inservice education.

Population

The population selected for study comprised a universe of the 322 elected and appointed members serving on the boards of education of the forty-six local public school districts within Southwestern Michigan.

Procedures

To assess the perceived needs and past participation of local board members, a three-page survey questionnaire was designed for the study. The included items, with one exception, solicited an "agree/disagree," "yes/no" response or necessitated the selection of a response on a five-point, forced-choice scale.

The mailing of an introductory letter preceded the initial distribution of instruments, and their accompanying letters, by one week. Three weeks after the initial mailing, a second instrument was mailed to each nonrespondent. Four weeks after the initial mailing of survey instruments, a telephone call was made to all nonrespondents.

Following the conduct of the survey, an interview was held with ten of the included forty-six board of education presidents.

Major Findings

The findings of the study were obtained through an analysis of the obtained data reported by the 277 board members (86.02 percent) who responded to the survey questionnaire. They were also based on interviews conducted with the ten board of education presidents.

1. The average member had served on the board for four years and two months. More than 60 percent of the board members had served for less than one elected term of four years.

2. More than 80 percent of the members agreed that continuous inservice education is vitally important to all who desire to perform their duties in a competent manner.

3. Nearly two-thirds of the members disagreed with a proposal calling for the completion of a required orientation program, by school board candidates, prior to their running for office.

4. More than two-thirds of the members agreed that newly elected or appointed members should be required to complete a locally determined inservice program during their first year of service.

5. Nearly two-thirds of the members had attended one or more inservice programs conducted at the local level.

6. Only one-half of the members had attended one or more of the regional inservice programs.

7. Fewer than one-third of the board members had attended any inservice program conducted on a statewide basis.

8. Board presidents believed that future inservice programs should be specifically designed for either experienced or inexperienced members and should be conducted on either a local or regional basis.

9. Board presidents suggested that local member inservice attendance would be enhanced if (1) board officers and central office administrators would assume greater responsibility for ensuring the attendance of individual members; (2) each board would establish inservice goals, based upon local needs; and (3) boards would be willing to defray those costs incurred as a result of member participation.

Conclusions

1. The sponsorship of inservice programs will continue as a primary method employed in the effort to enhance the capabilities of individual board members and ultimately the competence demonstrated by local boards of education themselves.

2. Newly elected or appointed board members should be required to complete a locally determined, planned program of inservice education during their first year of service.

3. Time and cost are the two most significant factors influencing the decision made by individual board members to attend inservice events.

4. Board members are most interested in those inservice topics related to client productivity and community involvement with the schools and least interested in those topics concerned with the technical aspects of the functioning of school districts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Locally elected or appointed school boards, comprised of lay citizens, have historically played a key role in the governance of American elementary and secondary public education. Raymond Callahan, Paul Jacobson, and Harold Webb described American school boards as a "unique invention," as one of democracy's "taproot institutions," and as a resultant consequence of our decentralized system of public education.¹ No other nation has so universally instituted "the pattern of having public schools directed and controlled by elected lay officials at the local district level."² As Jacobson wrote, "The school board is practically unknown overseas, and where it does exist, it does not have the policy functions which characterize it in the United States."³ In contrast with those practices established in most nations, the American public system of education has a long tradition of local control, a tradition in concert with "the democratic

¹See Raymond E. Callahan, "The American Board of Education, 1789-1960," in Understanding School Boards, ed. Peter J. Cistone (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1975), p. 19; Paul B. Jacobson, Foreword to The School Board, by Keith Goldhammer (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964), p. v; Harold V. Webb, Preface to New Dimensions in School Board Leadership, by William E. Dickinson (Evanston, Ill.: NSBA, 1969), p. iii.

²Callahan, p. 19.

³Jacobson, p. v.

principle that the people [should] have the option of deciding the kind and level of educational program they want."⁴

The governance of public education, when perceived within a legal context, is the responsibility of the various states. Local school boards enjoy only those expressed and limited powers of either a mandatory or discretionary nature granted to them by the state in which they are located.⁵ They are, as Goldhammer described them,

that agency of government created by the state legislature and given the legal power to govern the affairs of the local school district. . . . The key agency in the management of the school district [having] power to act in accordance with the mandates and authority granted by the state legislature.⁶

Although public education is legally a responsibility of the state, historically most of this responsibility has been delegated to local school boards.⁷ Lautenschlager wrote: "Boards of Education in the American educational system occupy a unique, and significant position, wielding tremendous influence in determining the kind and quality of our educational programs."⁸

The quantitative magnitude of the American elementary and secondary public education enterprise contributes directly to the

⁴Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "School Boards: Operations" by Jay D. Scribner.

⁵Kern Alexander, Ray Corns, and Walter McCann, Public School Law: Cases and Materials (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 1-6.

⁶Keith Goldhammer, The School Board (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964), p. 2.

⁷Jacobson, p. v.

⁸Harley M. Lautenschlager, "A Study of School Board Inservice Training Techniques" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1956), p.1.

influence attributed to school boards. More than 96,000 individual members comprise the governing boards of 15,834 public school systems conducting programs from kindergarten through the twelfth grade, having an estimated enrollment of 43,758,556 pupils. At the conclusion of the 1976-77 school year, approximately \$66.9 billion (excluding capital outlay and interest payments on debt) had been expended in operating the day programs of these public school systems, an amount equalling 4.87 percent of the nation's personal income.⁹

The external environment of the school board has undergone a profound and rapid transformation within the past two decades. A long-established tradition of decision making characterized by conditions of stability, congeniality, and a closed political atmosphere has largely disappeared under the powerful impact of recent social, economic, judicial, political, and cultural pressures. Cistone and Foster pointed out that today's school boards must contend with swiftly moving tides of change and that their decisions are typically made in a turbulent and problematic environment, a circumstance creating pressures that impinge upon school boards as well as constrain and shape their behavior.¹⁰ Usdan concurred and reported:

⁹See W. Grant Vance, "Public School Expenditures as a Percentage of Personal Income," American Education, December 1978, p. 50; ERS Research Digest, "Number of Public School Districts with 300 or More Pupils and Number of Pupils Enrolled in These Districts by State and by Enrollment Size of District" (Arlington, Va.: Educational Research Service, March 1979); Harold V. Webb, "A New Gallup Study; What the Public Really Thinks of Its School Boards," ASBJ 162 (April 1975): 36-40.

¹⁰See Peter J. Cistone, Understanding School Boards (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1975), pp. xiii-xiv; Badi G. Foster, Orientation and Training of School Board Members (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 114 930, 1975), pp. 8-10.

Local educational decision making until recently was made through somewhat stable processes and occurred in a relatively closed political environment that was dominated by a small group of influential participants, particularly the superintendent, and board members. This consensual and closed style of educational politics, with professional educators playing major roles, has undergone dramatic transformation. Within a brief period of time . . . major issues such as race, teacher militancy, community control, student activism, inflation and concomitant concerns about escalating school costs, and demands for accountability have cascaded upon boards of education.¹¹

Foster presented two paramount questions currently confronting school boards in asking:

How, in the face of constant change, are school boards to function both democratically and effectively? . . . How are they to absorb the continuous stream of information, requests or demands for change, and at the same time keep the school system on a steady course even while innovations are being developed and implemented?¹²

Today's public school boards must contend with "a crisis in authority at the local level of school governance,"¹³ a circumstance created in part by the duality of individual members being officers of the state--thereby being held accountable for the discharge of prescribed legal responsibilities--while simultaneously being expected to fulfill the demands of their local constituents.¹⁴ These roles have become more dichotomous than compatible, frequently

¹¹Michael E. Usdan, "The Future Viability of the School Board," in Understanding School Boards, ed. Peter J. Cistone (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1975), pp. 265-66.

¹²Foster, pp. 10-11.

¹³William Dickinson, New Dimensions in School Board Leadership: A Seminar Report and Workbook (Evanston, Ill.: NSBA, 1969), p. 10.

¹⁴Michigan Association of School Boards, Boardsmanship in Brief: A Handbook for Michigan School Board Members (Lansing: MASB, 1975), p. 5.

resulting in heightened public dissatisfaction over the perceived inability of school boards to cope with present-day educational problems. Manning suggested that "there was a time when everyone believed the schools, like the flag and motherhood, were sacred. However, the current public view is depicted as having soured and become a composite of discontent, anger, and cynicism."¹⁵ A credibility gap between promises made and not kept is reported, coming at a time when "no governmental body . . . is as vulnerable and exposed to a growing cynical public as the local board of education to which there can be such immediate and direct access."¹⁶

The expertise demonstrated by school boards in coping with a vastly different and novel external environment may well determine the future of local lay-control over public education, as well as the continued existence of school boards themselves. In reporting board members as being "relatively unskilled managers of diversity and change," Page suggested that "unless board members can function effectively to bring about necessary changes in education, either they will become merely diploma-conferring, cornerstone-laying dignitaries or they will simply become obsolete."¹⁷

The longevity of individual-member service on school boards, as well as their expressed views regarding the effectiveness of such

¹⁵William R. Manning, "The Credibility Gap That Is Neutralizing the Public Schools," ASBJ 159 (June 1972): 31-32.

¹⁶Usdan, p. 271.

¹⁷Ruth H. Page, What Makes an Effective School Board Member? (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1975), p. 1.

service, has been significantly influenced by the preceding considerations. A 1971 survey conducted by the National School Boards Association revealed that nearly as many members resign as retire. Further, two-thirds of those queried were "pessimistic about the ability of public schools to cope with their mounting problems."¹⁸ In his study of board-member longevity, Hurwitz reported the average tenure of New Jersey board members as 3.97 years, and he noted that nearly 50 percent of them were in their first term.¹⁹ Other studies have revealed: (1) in one particular year over 50,000 new board members assumed their positions, (2) a 25 percent turnover rate in school board membership is commonplace, and (3) each year one out of four members is new to the position.²⁰

A thoughtful consideration of the current demands implicit in school board membership, coupled with a realization that citizens seeking such service typically are not required to meet any legal qualifications in excess of those specified for all school electors, dictates a need for systematic and continuing programs of inservice education. St. John wrote that today's board members have a greater burden than at any time in the history of American public education, although they often begin and continue their duties without the

¹⁸Pat Russel, "Why Boardmen Quit," ASBJ 159 (November 1971): 26.

¹⁹Mark W. Hurwitz, "The Personal Characteristics and Attitudes of New Jersey School Board Members" (Ed.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1971), p. 90.

²⁰See Gloria Dapper and Barbara Carter, A Guide for School Board Members (Chicago: Follett, 1965), p. vii; Dickinson, p. 23.

assistance they desperately need.²¹ Nicoloff summarized the current situation in reporting that new members typically begin their terms of service with very limited knowledge of either their duties or authority and that during their tenure little formal training is available to them. Consequently, although continuous inservice education is essential in order that members develop adequate knowledge and appropriate skills in coping with their responsibilities, they typically fall back on their experiences in school as a referent in decision making.²² A study conducted by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association indicated that a minimum of two years of service is required before board members gain the background and confidence they need to perform effectively; further, that a "wide range of local, state and national orientation programs and continuous inservice training are imperative if you are going to keep good, well informed board members."²³

Despite the critical need for knowledgeable and skillful board members and the concomitant necessity to provide continuing opportunities for inservice education, a systematic approach to this problem is nonexistent. There are no statutory mandated programs of

²¹Walter St. John, Guidelines for Effective School Board Operation, Service, and Leadership (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona School Boards Association, 1969).

²²Lanning G. Nicoloff, "Perceived Inservice Education Needs of Members of Boards of Education in Illinois" (Ed.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1977), pp. 4-7.

²³Nick Goble, Getting Good Board Members and Holding Them (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 137 979, 1977), p. 5.

orientation or inservice education for candidates seeking, or individuals elected to, membership on public school boards of education. Although each state has a school boards association that, as part of its responsibilities, presents inservice programs, no sanctions are available to apply to board members who do not attend such presentations; nor has there been developed a systematic way for ensuring that those opportunities that have been made available are, in fact, appropriate to the perceived needs of the intended population.²⁴ As Snyder, in his review of the current situation, reported:

Effective membership on a board, calling for a certain amount of sophistication and knowledge, cannot be left to chance. An organized and formal training program appears to be the most viable alternative to insure more adequate performance.²⁵

What is essential, then, is of a two-fold nature: first, to determine the inservice education needs of local board members, as perceived by currently serving board members themselves; and second, to ascertain the past attendance of board members at those inservice education opportunities presented on a local, regional, and state-wide basis during the periods of their service. It is intended that the use of this information by those who plan future inservice presentations will result in enhanced board member interest and participation in such activities, with the ultimate objective being increased knowledge and improved skillfulness in decision making at the local level of school governance.

²⁴Interview with James Mecklenburger, National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C., 12 September 1978.

²⁵Milton L. Snyder, "The New School Board Member" (Ph.D. dissertation, United States International University, 1972), pp. 3-4.

Statement of the Problem

The governance of American public schools is the responsibility of the various states. With the exception of Hawaii, however, each of the states sanctions the establishment of multiple units of local school jurisdiction and delegates specific functions to their governing boards. These boards are most commonly referred to as school boards or as boards of education and are comprised of a specific number of lay citizens, as is statutorily defined.

While local boards of education have traditionally occupied a pivotal position in the overall schema for public education, their being popularly viewed as having sole responsibility for the outcomes of schooling is a resurgent phenomenon. Citizens are, in ever-increasing numbers, concluding that their local boards and individual board members are "in a better position than anyone else to have real impact in helping Americans move toward a better life."²⁶ This escalating perception, superimposed on a volatile external political environment in which school boards function, necessitates that today's board members demonstrate greater knowledge and improved decision-making skills regarding the educational enterprises they govern than was heretofore the case.

Providing inservice education opportunities is a favored technique employed by school boards associations in their efforts to enhance the understanding and performance of individual board members. Such is the case in Michigan where, since 1970, extensive and

²⁶Page, p. 13.

diversified inservice efforts have been annually made by the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB). Nevertheless, a review of MASB records revealed three serious deficiencies in the planning for and actual conduct of regional and statewide inservice presentations: (1) no systematic effort has been made to solicit the recommendations of local board members, with reference to their perceived informational needs, prior to the determination of those topics selected for presentation; (2) no record has been kept relative to which board members have attended the various presentations; and (3) no record has been kept regarding the inservice activities sponsored by the various county chapters affiliated with MASB.

Board members cannot be proficient in understanding every aspect of education or the overall operation of the schools. Nevertheless, as a result of their experience there are undoubtedly areas in which they feel a need to improve their competencies. They, therefore, should be considered a prime source of information from which future inservice education programs might be developed.

The problem addressed in this study is two-fold in nature:

1. To assess the needs of an area population of school board members for future inservice education presentations, as perceived by currently serving local board members themselves; and
2. To determine the participation of an area population of currently serving local school board members in previously conducted local, regional, and statewide inservice education presentations.

Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of the writer is to contribute toward the improvement of local board of education decision making through an investigation of individual member perceived need for, and actual participation in, programs of inservice education--programs that are presented for the purpose of providing them information vital to arriving at knowledgeable decisions.

More specifically, it is intended that this investigation will have direct implications for:

1. The enhancement of future emphasis given Southwestern Michigan board member inservice education at the local school district level;
2. The encouragement of improved Southwestern Michigan board member participation in inservice education presentations at the local, regional, and statewide levels;
3. The identification of specific topics of perceived Southwestern Michigan board member need for use in the planning of future local, regional, and statewide inservice education programs; and
4. The provision of current information to local, regional, and statewide level professionals having responsibility for planning future inservice education programs for school board members.

Definition of Major Terms

The following major terms are an integral part of this study and, as such, are defined to promote clarity and continuity for the reader.

Board of Education--A seven-member board, elected in accordance with the General School Laws of the state of Michigan, sponsoring a kindergarten through twelfth-grade public education program within one specific local school district.²⁷ The terms "board" and "school board" are used synonymously with "board of education" in this study.

Board Member--A citizen, duly elected or appointed to membership on a local school district board of education, whose term of active service is included during the period in which this study was conducted. The term "member" is used synonymously with "board member" in this study.

Southwestern Michigan--That geographic area represented by the combined service areas of the Berrien County, Lewis Cass, St. Joseph County, Kalamazoo Valley, and Van Buren County Intermediate School Districts. Included therein are forty-six local third- or fourth-class school districts sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth-grade programs.²⁸

Inservice Education--All of those activities and events conducted specifically for board members, separate and apart from their

²⁷Michigan, General School Laws and Administrative Rules. The School Code of 1976 (1977), pt. 3 and pt. 4, pp. 11-27.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 11, 20.

regular responsibilities, which are intended to enhance a board member's capability and performance as a board member. The terms "inservice" and "inservice training" are used synonymously with "inservice education" in this study.

Local Programs--All of those activities and events organized and sponsored under the authority of a local board and conducted within the geographic area served by that same board.

Regional Programs--All of those activities and events conducted at various locales throughout Michigan; sites selected on the primary basis of their accessibility to local board members. Such programs are sponsored by a chapter or chapters of the Michigan Association of School Boards or by MASB itself. Past events, sponsored by MASB on a regional basis, have been termed "special topic seminars," "drive-in conferences," and "academies of boardsmanship."

Statewide Programs--Included are the "Saturday mid-winter conferences" and "state conventions" annually sponsored by MASB for the dual purpose of conducting organizational business and providing inservice experiences.

Design

To assess the perceived needs of local board members and their participation in past inservice education programs, a survey questionnaire was mailed to the study population. The study population consisted of all currently serving board of education members of the forty-six local public school districts sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth-grade programs, located in Southwestern Michigan (N = 322).

The survey instrument, together with an accompanying letter of introduction, was mailed to the study population requesting participation and indicating the importance of the study. The confidential treatment of responses was assured and was so indicated in the letter of introduction and on the survey instrument. Each survey instrument mailed to the study population was numerically coded to permit follow-up requests of those who failed to respond within two weeks of the date of mailing. Three weeks after the original mailing of survey instruments, a second written request and another instrument were sent to those who failed to respond. Additionally, a written request for assistance was sent to the superintendents of those districts from which a board member failed to respond. Four weeks following the original mailing of survey instruments, a telephone call was made to each nonrespondent personally, requesting compliance with the survey request.

Because of the nature of the problem, the writer used a normative survey method to gather data for this study. This method, as Best explained, permits the researcher to gather data

from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. It is not concerned with characteristics of individuals as individuals. It is concerned with the generalized statistics that result when data are abstracted from a number of individual cases. It is essentially cross-sectional.²⁹

A second major contribution of the normative method of study lies in its enabling the researcher to collect data about the subject as it now exists. As Van Dalen reported:

²⁹ John W. Best, Research in Education (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 107.

Before much progress can be made in solving problems, men must possess accurate descriptions of the phenomenon with which they work. Hence, the early developments in educational research, as in other fields, have been made in the area of descriptions. . . . Determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices, and attitudes seeking accurate descriptions of activities, objects, processes and persons--is their objective. They depict current status and sometimes identify relationships that exist among phenomena or trends that appear to be developing.³⁰

In the determination of an acceptable response rate for the survey instrument, the researcher adopted those response rates recommended for survey research by Babbie and other authorities.³¹ While it was assumed that all members included in the sample would complete and return their survey instruments, a 100 percent response rate is rarely achieved. Therefore, as Babbie suggested, the following response rates were used as guidelines for data collection and analysis in this study: Fifty percent is deemed adequate for analysis and reporting, a response rate of 60 percent is considered good, and a response rate of 70 percent or more is termed very good.³²

The analysis of survey data is reported in a descriptive statistical format, which is accompanied by a narrative for those statistical measures used to examine the data.

³⁰Deobold Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 184.

³¹See Earl R. Babbie, Survey Research Methods (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 165-69; K. A. Brownlee, "A Note on the Effects of Nonresponse on Surveys," Journal of the American Statistical Association 52 (1957): 29-32; Marjorie N. Donald, "Implications of Nonresponse for the Interpretation of Mail Questionnaire Data," Public Opinion Quarterly 24 (January 1960): 99-114; Gene F. Summers, ed., Attitude Measurement (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1971).

³²Babbie, pp. 29-32.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The study is limited to the extent that:

1. Subjective judgments are called for in response to several questions included in the survey instrument;
2. The writer has identified and framed the significant inservice issues as raised in the literature on this subject, which thus may limit the range of response;
3. The survey instrument is reliable;
4. The method and exactness applied in the coding of questions and quantification procedures used for descriptive statistical analysis is appropriate; and
5. The geography might impose some conditions on the responses.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to:

1. The responses from those 322 elected or appointed members currently serving on the boards of education of the forty-six public school districts sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth-grade programs and located within the Southwestern geographical area of the state of Michigan;
2. The inservice education needs of board members as perceived by the board members themselves;
3. The participation of board members in local, regional, and statewide inservice education programs as reported by the board members themselves; and

4. Library research to include ERIC, Dissertation Abstracts, and DATRIX information searches; National School Boards Association and Michigan Association of School Boards records and reports; books, periodicals, and reports on file at the Michigan State University Library, Andrews University Library, and the State of Michigan Library; and books and materials owned or borrowed by the writer.

Organization of the Study and Overview of Subsequent Chapters

The study is presented in five chapters.

Chapter I includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, the purposes of the study, a definition of major terms, the design, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and a statement of the organization of the study.

Chapter II contains a review of the literature relating to the study and includes the results of previously completed studies.

Presented in Chapter III is the design of the study, including the design of the survey instrument, a description of the population being studied, the planning and conducting of the survey, the interviews with board presidents, and the statistical treatment of the data.

The findings generated from the obtained and analyzed data are found in Chapter IV.

Chapter V contains a summary of the entire study, followed by conclusions and implications for further research, and the writer's recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature relevant to inservice education for school board members is both limited and intermittent in nature. There is, however, increasing evidence of a heightened concern over the need for more knowledgeable and skillful board members and for the continued existence of local, lay-control in the schema of educational governance. This writer has examined these concerns by focusing on the functions of school boards, the significant characteristics of the contemporary environment in local school governance, and the survival probability for local, lay-controlled school boards. The increasing demands made of school board members and a profile of American school board members are also presented. In addition, the socialization of new board members, the value of systematic and continuous programs for local school board members, and those past inservice education programs sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards are reported. Finally, ten research studies relating to the topic of inservice education for local board members are reviewed and summarized.

The Functions of School Boards

Numerous early writers attempted the construction of lists in which the exact duties or responsibilities common to all local school boards would be specified. Among twentieth century commenters, however, this endeavor has generally been abandoned--largely due to a realization that the decentralized system of educational governance unique to the United States, in combination with the policy-making capability peculiar to our school boards, precludes a precise listing of those specific functions of common involvement. Cubberly was among the first to apprise this situation and, as a result, expressed a concern with the generalized functions common to the role of school boards. He wrote: "The real work of the board is to determine policies, select experts, decide on expenditures and tax levies, select school sites, and generally act as a board of school control."³³

Each local school board is an agency of the state in which it is located. As such, it becomes part of that "network of administrative agencies" specifically created to implement the enactments of the legislative branch of state government. Those powers granted by state legislatures to their constituent school boards are generally of an executive, quasi-legislative, and quasi-judicial nature.³⁴ Regardless of the powers expressly granted to them, school boards are not free to act in an independent manner. The complex environment in

³³ Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public School Administration, cited by Raymond E. Callahan, Understanding School Boards (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1975), p. 37.

³⁴ Alexander, Corns, & McCann, p. 124.

which their decision making currently takes place tends to inhibit, if not preclude, independence of action. As Goldhammer emphasized, there are five levels of control over the specific actions of any local school board. These are: (1) the state constitution, (2) legislative enactments (statutory law), (3) the rules and regulations of the state board of education, (4) court decisions, and (5) societal demands.³⁵

The general functions of school boards and, in particular, the specified responsibilities granted to them in the process of educational governance, are not well discerned by local citizens. As a consequence, individuals and groups typically have unrealistic expectations for, and make demands of, local school governors that cannot be satisfied. Bendinger, in his analysis of the popular view regarding the responsibilities of local boards, reported:

Of all the agencies devised by Americans for the guiding of their public affairs, few are as vague in function as the school board; fewer still take office in such resounding apathy--and none other, ironically, is capable of stirring up the passions of the community to so fine a froth. . . . For the school board is really neither legislative nor administrative in function, and only in a most limited way [is it] judicial . . . it is local philosopher, it is watchdog, and it is whipping boy.³⁶

Commonly held community expectations of school board members, whether realistic or not, were reported by Goldhammer in his extensive research into the governance of local schools. He noted that the public views its local school representatives as being (1) promoters of the public

³⁵Goldhammer, pp. 4-8.

³⁶Robert Bendinger, The Politics of Schools: A Crisis in Self-Government (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 3.

interest in education--the most commonly held belief, (2) defenders and upholders of the most commonly held values of the community, (3) an appellate body to hear complaints and grievances, (4) close supervisors over professional personnel, (5) conservators of resources, (6) promoters of individual rights and interests.³⁷

Such views, then, tend to form the perimeter within which it is popularly assumed school boards will form policies and reach decisions consistent with local desire.

Within the past two decades, numerous writers have examined the current functions common to local school boards. Their findings, although reported in differing ways, evidenced considerable agreement. Page wrote "that the establishment of clearly defined goals and objectives for the school system is the board's most important function." Rossmiller maintained: "School boards have two major functions--policymaking and evaluation"; and that "the board's competence in performing these two functions will in large measure determine its effectiveness." Foster reported five current areas of generalized board involvement: "(1) making policy; (2) developing programs; (3) employing personnel; (4) providing educationally related services; and (5) managing the use of the physical facilities of the school district." Goldhammer similarly summarized five primary areas of school board responsibility as: (1) "determination of major goals," (2) "general formulation of operating policies," (3) "selection of key personnel," (4) "resource procurement and allocations," and

³⁷Goldhammer, pp. 11-14.

(5) "evaluation." Savard, in presenting one of the more detailed accounts on the functions of school boards, listed ten separate considerations as follows:

1. Interpret the educational needs of the community;
2. Interpret the requirements of the professional staff;
3. Develop and state policy in accordance with the law and the needs of the people;
4. Select executive personnel;
5. Approve plans or methods by which the professional staff carry out policy;
6. Obtain financial resources;
7. Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the system--generally;
8. Evaluate the performance of the superintendent;
9. Inform the public of programs, problems, and proposed solutions; and
10. Receive information, complaints, expressions, and concerns from the community.³⁸

All state school boards associations, in recognition of the preeminent position of state governments in local educational governance, have addressed the "functions of local school boards" issue.

³⁸ See Foster, p. 8; Goldhammer, pp. 100-103; Page, p. 6; Richard A. Rossmiller, Opportunities Unlimited: A Guide for Wisconsin School Board Members, 5th ed. (Winneconne, Wis.: Wisconsin Association of School Boards, 1977), p. 21; and Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "School Boards: Relation of School Boards to Their Communities," by William G. Savard.

Accordingly, the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) has listed those functions of particular concern to its affiliates as follows:

1. To comply with the laws of the state and the regulations of the state education authority;
2. To determine the goals or objectives of public education in the school district;
3. To choose the superintendent of schools and work harmoniously with him;
4. To contribute to the development and improvement of educational opportunities of all children and youth in the district.
5. To develop the policies that will attract and retain personnel needed to realize the educational objectives of the district.
6. To provide for an educationally efficient plant;
7. To help obtain the financial resources necessary to achieve the educational goals;
8. To keep the people of the district intelligently informed about the schools;
9. To be sensitive to the educational hopes and aspirations of the people of the district; and
10. To appraise the activities of the school district in light of the goals or objectives previously established.³⁹

³⁹Michigan Association of School Boards, p. 9.

Although the responsibilities of school boards have traditionally been determined by agencies and social forces external to them, there is a growing concern that school boards, themselves, must begin to exert substantial influence over their roles. Page suggested that, in the future, boards should become enablers rather than regulators and that each local board "must become a catalyst for candid discussion and positive change rather than a seeker of political accommodation," as well as "a planning agency that helps a community decide what it wants its schools to be."⁴⁰ Dickinson was more definitive in offering the following general mandates for consideration by those boards seeking to remain viable in future arenas of educational governance:

1. School boards must be positive forces for advancing the ideal of the open society;
2. School boards must lead the way in the creation of a more human educational system;
3. School boards must become managers of social change and controversy;
4. The school board must work creatively with many other agencies that are also in the education business;
5. School boards must use political muscle in getting the money needed for education;
6. School boards working together must guide and goad the universities into producing the school executive talent the times demand;

⁴⁰Page, p. 1.

7. School boards must help recruit, train, and find ways to retain the kind of board members the times demand; and
8. School boards must hold themselves chiefly accountable for the quality of the public schools.⁴¹

The Contemporary Environment in Local School Governance

The environment within which school boards operate, and the problems that confront them, are "considerably more varied and complex today than when they were first established."⁴² Throughout most of our nation's history, local boards held a preeminent position in the process of educational governance; they conducted school business and reached decisions without significant interference from external sources. "Packing all of the wallop of the state at their finger tips, local boards enjoyed . . . what perhaps no other governmental bodies enjoyed before or since--a share of all three branches of government's powers, executive, legislative and judicial."⁴³ They were, as Bendinger described them, "the most common of all American units of government--and the one least subjected to critical examination,"⁴⁴ functioning in a relatively closed political domain hallmarked by conditions of insularity and stability.

⁴¹Dickinson, pp. 11-28.

⁴²Foster, p. 8.

⁴³M. Chester Nolte, "It Keeps Getting Riskier by the Year to Be a Boardman," ASBJ 158 (July 1970): 12-13.

⁴⁴Bendinger, p. ix.

Within the past twenty years, the external environment of school boards has undergone a rapid and profound change. A cascade of political, economic, societal, and judicial considerations has converged on local boards, demanding or compelling changes in their traditional roles as local school governors. Webb stated: "Never before have the lay leaders of public education faced such a multitude of pressures and demands at all levels of our society."⁴⁵ Never before have lay leaders been confronted with such an avalanche of societal expectations, such an accelerated rate of change, or with demands of such intensity and magnitude.

From a historical perspective, general topics relating to "the role of the board, the objectives of public education, communications, and finance" comprised the primary matrix of school board decision making.⁴⁶ The contemporary board, however, is more likely to be involved with specific concerns similar to the following:

1. conflicting and changing concepts of the role and function of the school;
2. the inclusion of more and varied groups demanding a share of governance and social reforms;
3. demonstrations, protest actions, and recall elections;
4. employee militancy and organized efforts;
5. legislative enactments;
6. judicial decisions;
7. insufficient financial support and the effects of inflation;

⁴⁵Webb, p. iii.

⁴⁶Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "School Boards: Education of Members," by Maurice E. Stapley.

8. the expanded demands of state boards of education and their expanded roles; and
9. federal involvement.⁴⁷

One scholar described the current milieu in terms of "the plight" of school boards, a setting in which budgets are regularly defeated by taxpayers or gutted by municipal councils in cities, teachers are manning picket lines and invading state legislatures, and the nation's largest minority group is torn between conflicting desires for quick integration.⁴⁸ While the sources of the multifarious issues are numerous and diverse, they are unanimous in demanding that local boards no longer remain isolated and aloof from the problems society encounters and that board members become a party of the solution of those problems. Bendinger characterized the popular perception in emphasizing that school boards are "whipping boys for whatever goes wrong in society," particularly since it is "an old American tradition that when the times are out of joint, the trouble somehow must be sought in faulty education."⁴⁹ The current expectations, demands, and requirements have combined to create an environment in which the "local governance of public schools is sorely troubled," wherein the accountability clamored for often "exceeds the capacity and capabilities [of the school] in dealing with complex social, political, and economic problems that transcend the school." Among these are the elimination

⁴⁷Foster, p. 8.

⁴⁸Bendinger, p. x.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 4.

of poverty, crime, drug abuse, social injustice, inequity of opportunity, unemployment, and environmental defilement.⁵⁰

Bell and Goldman depicted the contemporary environment as reflecting a popular struggle to secure the original intent of local control of public education. As such, current demands made of local boards continue

in the tradition of more than 300 years of searching for a viable form of educational governance that is at once responsive to individual needs, community customs and values, state and federal ambitions and desires, and demands for social change which spring from a rapidly emerging post industrial society.

School systems are described as reflecting the three dominant characteristics--industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization--prevailing in contemporary American society, having become larger in order to provide more service at reduced costs to a wider variety of people.

The result has been the emergence of large, complex organizational structures characterized in the extreme by boards of education isolated from parents, teachers, and students, presiding over a bureaucracy with complex communications and regulations, diffuse and often unintelligible aims and goals, clouded accountability, lack of responsibility, and an agonizingly slow ability to change.⁵¹

A recurring and intensified concern that school boards neither comprehend the magnitude of those diverse changes occurring in

⁵⁰Richard Wynn, Foreword to What Makes an Effective School Board Member? by Ruth H. Page (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1975), p. .

⁵¹See Daniel Bell, "Notes on the Post-Industrial Society (11)," Public Interest 7 (Spring 1967): 102-108; and Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "School Board Relations: Control of the Schools," by Samuel Goldman.

contemporary society, nor are they capable of contending with a vastly different environment has been expressed. As Bailey suggested:

A plausible case can be made out for the proposition that the school board is to American education what the House of Lords is to British politics--a largely useless ceremonial body, all set about with pomposity, but irrelevant to the determination of major issues. The argument here is that by the time the Federal government, state education departments, local professional staffs, militant teacher organizations, John Birch societies, textbook and hardware salesmen, black parents and Panthers, and the local media have completed their macabre Whirling-Dervish dance, local school boards appear to be nothing but awkward wallflowers perversely held responsible for the success of the party.⁵²

It has also been suggested "that local school boards have outlived their usefulness" and, in the future, society will increasingly seek state and federal intervention in resolving those problems facing local schools. It is, therefore, essential that future school boards better comprehend the cosmopolitan origin of those expectations held for them, since "what happens on other turfs, and in distant places, has an enormous impact upon schools, and consequently on the work of school boards." Bailey emphasized:

It will . . . make a difference whether school board members understand the world we are entering. For their only chance of playing a meaningful role in the future of American education is to develop a clear notion of what the new script is all about, and who the other actors are with whom they must cooperate.⁵³

⁵²Stephen K. Bailey, "New Dimensions in School Board Leadership," in New Dimensions in School Board Leadership: A Seminar Report and Workbook, ed. William E. Dickinson (Evanston, Ill.: NSBA, 1969), p. 97.

⁵³See Bailey, p. 98; and Wynn, p.

Can Local Lay-Controlled School Boards Survive?

A careful consideration of the escalating expectations, pressures, and mandates confronting school boards has caused considerable concern for the future of the strongly rooted tradition of local control, unique to American educational governance. Goldman explained, "Local control has meant that those most directly affected by a school have both the power and the means to influence its philosophy and operation"; further, that "from the very beginning, the American citizenry has zealously guarded its prerogative to influence and direct public education so as to make it responsive to the conditions and needs of the locality served." However, after carefully reviewing current local decision-making practices, he asserted: "Its [local control's] original conceptualization bears only moderate resemblance to its present implementation. At best, local control seems to be limited to certain areas of decision-making prescribed by overriding state and federal laws, and at worst it is relatively nonexistent."⁵⁴ Wiles and Conley went even further in suggesting that the concept of local control, as originally instituted and practiced, is an anachronism in current educational governance. They maintained:

The American school board has reached the point where what was mere inadequacy has come close to total helplessness, where decline and fall are no longer easily distinguished. Perhaps the kindest definition of the local board's present control relation in educational policy making today is a mediation of adjudication role between contending factions.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Encyclopedia of Education, Goldman.

⁵⁵David K. Wiles and Houston Conley, School Boards: Their Policy-Making Relevance (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 100 022, 1974), p. 4.

Dickinson appropriately summarized the prevailing concern regarding the future viability of local control when he asked: "Is this present chapter--the one in which school boards are acting out their parts right now--to be the final one for the citizen board in public education? Are we witnessing the last hurrah for the layman as local school governor?"⁵⁶

In all likelihood, the existence of a highly decentralized network of public schools ensures the future presence of some form of local governance. The real issue, as Jones maintained, "is one of lay control, not local control. That is, shall the essential direction of American education be decided by the public, or shall it be delegated entirely or primarily to the professional educator?"⁵⁷ Numerous proposals have been suggested as alternatives to lay-controlled local school boards. Among the more recurrent are:

1. A professionalized school board--(a scheme of augmentation calling for the addition of members having demonstrated skill and knowledge, in educational matters, to local school boards);
2. A national board of education--(one single board of control modeled after the Federal Reserve Board);

⁵⁶ National School Boards Association, Meeting the Challenges of School Board Leadership (Evanston, Ill.: NSBA, 1975), pp. 94-95.

⁵⁷ Philip G. Jones, "How to Train a New School Board Member--and Ways to Help Seasoned Veterans Brush Up, Too," ASBJ 160 (April 1973): 21-29.

3. The city council takeover--(a simple transfer of authority to the local municipal legislative body);
4. The professional manager solution--(replacement of the elected or appointed board with a business executive or efficiency expert); and
5. A city commissioner of education--(intended for large urban areas; such a commissioner would be a member of the mayor's official family).

Such alternatives to elected or appointed local lay-controlled school boards may be extreme or impractical. However, they are "definite symptoms of widespread discontent about the governance of America's public schools and if nothing else, they evoke the realization that the American school board is at the crossroads."⁵⁸

Two surveys, conducted in the early 1970s for the purpose of ascertaining public attitudes regarding local school boards and educational leaders, produced singularly disquieting results. A 1972 Harris poll revealed a substantial erosion in public confidence in its educational leaders--both lay and professional--in comparison with those results achieved six years earlier: 61 percent expressed "a great deal of satisfaction in 1966; 33 percent in 1972." Similar findings were expressed by National School Boards Association (NSBA) Executive Director Harold Webb in his reporting the results of the 1974 NSBA national study of public attitudes toward local governance:

⁵⁸NSBA, p. 96.

The public's notion of what school boards are and what they do is dismally distorted, constituting perhaps even a threat to the concept of local, citizen control of schools. . . . Those many school board members who complain that the public doesn't understand them or appreciate them have good reason to complain. . . . The poll's findings show clearly that most adults in the United States don't understand what their local school boards are doing, nor indeed what their local school boards are. Moreover, a majority of U.S. adults does not believe that school boards should have final authority (over the decisions of their school administrators) in several crucial areas of educational policy making in which school boards, by law, do have final local authority. At least as disquieting as what the Gallup pollsters did hear is what they didn't hear. The Don't Knows nearly always comprised a plurality of the responses when specific questions were asked. . . . 34% have no opinion about their local school boards, 63% can't name a single thing their local school boards have done during the past year, only 42% believe the board, in a dispute, works to further the best interests of students, 53% don't know how many members are on the school board, [and] only 38% believe boards act as representatives of the public. . . . When presented with 11 areas in which boards are by law the final authority (school budget and taxes, building new schools, teacher salaries and contracts, transportation, changing attendance boundaries, hiring, subjects to teach, textbooks, discipline, teacher methods to use, and hiring of principals/superintendent) only [the] hiring of principals and superintendent [were] picked by a majority of adults as an actual legal responsibility of boards.⁵⁹

More recent research, however, suggests a positive change in the public's attitude toward its elementary and secondary schools, as well as toward school boards. Gallup suggested "the year 1976 may well prove to be the turning point in the public's attitude toward the public schools. Evidence . . . indicates a leveling off in the downward trend of recent years . . . toward the public schools." Two years later he reported that 61 percent of those queried had either "a great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in their local board and elaborated:

⁵⁹ Jones, p. 21; and Webb, p. 36.

Citizens of the nation give their school boards a vote of confidence. School boards get their highest vote of confidence in the Midwest and South and in smaller communities. The lowest vote is recorded in the cities with one million population or more. Northern blacks, of all groups, give their school boards the lowest rating. And . . . they also give their schools the lowest rating. Southern blacks, on the other hand, give their school boards a rating above the national average.⁶⁰

The recent changes in the public's opinion and interest in its schools have been directly attributed to the dramatic increase in educational costs, a circumstance that has converted a state of "near total apathy" into one of "vital concern." As Webb noted: "In this era of educational consumerism--call it accountability if you must--the public is coming to realize that it owns its public schools."⁶¹

Educational administrators are by no means unanimous in their expressed opinions regarding the future viability of school boards. Two prominent practitioners, Joseph Cronin, Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois, and Mark Hurwitz, Executive Director of the New Jersey School Boards Association, typify the divergent views existent within the professional community. Cronin suggested that local, lay-controlled lay boards cannot survive much longer and offered four primary reasons for their ultimate demise: (1) the consolidation of school districts--a continuing trend in which more than 114,000 independent units ceased to exist during the years

⁶⁰See George H. Gallup, "Eighth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan (October 1976): 188; and idem, "The 10th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan (September 1978): 42.

⁶¹R. Winfield Smith, "The First Hard Look at School Boards," ASBJ 161 (August 1974): 8; and Webb, p. 38.

1935-1973, (2) a plethora of state mandates--which have stripped local boards of authority in ever-expanding areas of decision making, (3) an expansion in regional planning, and (4) court suits and judgments. He wrote:

Just as the jet plane overtook the passenger train, the school policies of the 1950s may not survive the competition from the out-of-school education influences of the late 1970s and 1980s. School boards may continue to exist . . . but the frustration factor with which they must contend is bound to increase if the trends of the last 30 years continue.

Conversely, Hurwitz maintained that local boards would survive since "systems of government operate in the realm of political reality and not academic theory." He asserted, albeit somewhat cynically:

Boards of education make perfect scapegoats (or buffers if you prefer) for the mistakes of state government. . . . [They] will be around for a long time because teachers find them convenient to wrest money from, administrators need their support, and the voters, taxpayers, parents and students need a voice at the local level that can be provided by neither state nor professional.⁶²

Public education in the United States is likely to remain both tax-supported and compulsory, and school boards are popularly viewed as "the mechanism whereby schools can be made more responsive to their constituents."⁶³ NSBA has described the continuing need as follows:

The local school board in America is needed to guarantee the establishment of wise and humane policies. It is needed to articulate the aspirations of the community for its children.

⁶²Mark W. Hurwitz and Joseph M. Cronin, "Can Local Lay School Boards Survive Much Longer With Any Real Power?" ASBJ 161 (January 1974): 55, 57-58.

⁶³L. Harmon Zeigler and M. Kent Jennings, Governing American Schools: Interaction in Local School Districts (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974), pp. 253-54.

It is needed to set high goals and reachable objectives--and to make sure that these objectives are met. It is needed to make local schools respond fully to the needs of all children. It is needed to make sure that the schools in which our children spend their days are not what they are sometimes said to be--grim and joyless places. It is needed to protect children. The local school board is needed to inspire, inform, and illuminate.⁶⁴

Such views are in concert with the expressed beliefs of the general public which, although it may at best have a nebulous understanding of the responsibilities of school boards, nevertheless "holds to the principle that local school policies should be set by local school boards." Studies of public attitudes toward local educational governance have invariably found that Americans overwhelmingly favor "the final decision-making authority" remaining vested in their local school boards and that they are "greatly opposed to giving up local responsibility for the public schools, no matter what the encroachments of the state and federal governments."⁶⁵

The continued longevity of lay-controlled local school boards may depend, in large part, upon the efficacy of the public schools in satisfying those societal expectations held for them. It is, therefore, crucial that boards recognize "the school system can be no better than the board."⁶⁶ Consequently, the future decision-making skill and knowledgeableness evidenced by local boards may well either

⁶⁴NSBA, p. 101.

⁶⁵See George H. Gallup, "Ninth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan (September 1977): 42; and idem, "Eighth Annual Gallup Poll . . . ," p. 195.

⁶⁶Page, p. 7.

enhance their viability or ensure their demise. As Smith explained:

It is possible that boards will become merely ceremonial, a vestigial remnant of past governance. Such a result can--and should--be avoided. Boards are the mechanisms whereby schools can be made more responsive to their constituents. Whatever the perils that more responsive schools may bring, the costs of insulation from the community are greater.⁶⁷

The Escalating Imperatives of Boardsmanship

The recent proliferation in societal expectations held for, and demands made of, public schools has had significant consequences for members of local school boards. Historically, citizens (whether elected or appointed to membership) have been "expected to be promoters of public interest in education and . . . to be defenders and upholders of the basically accepted values of the community."⁶⁸ In these capacities, it was sufficient that they acted so as to attempt to reflect the community will, as an appellate body, and as conservators of the financial resources of the district. However, such a restricted definition of purpose is no longer germane to those responsibilities thrust upon board members. In studying the current situation, Dickinson reported:

The need for intelligent, responsible leadership . . . has never been more urgent. School boards are on the front line in a war that's getting hotter. The nation's grave problems of race and poverty, the phenomenon of student unrest, the taxpayers' revolt, teacher militancy--all these forces are testing the mettle (and the staying power) of the nation's school board members.

⁶⁷Smith, p. 8.

⁶⁸Jacobson, p. v.

Rose concurred and emphasized:

At one time board members were esteemed by the community; now, caught in the middle in negotiations or racial problems, they are frequently criticized, vilified, and personally harassed . . . and even those sturdy enough to stand the heat, the great demands on their time make school board membership an expensive public service.⁶⁹

Svenson and Bryson called attention to the increasing burdens inherent in board membership as follows:

The board member of the last third of this century has become not only a functional manager of public education; he is, whether he likes it or not, a decision maker with considerable cultural impact. The school board member now establishes standards of behavior, patterns of relationships, and measurements of the quality and quantity of the teaching/learning process. It is the boardman who establishes the relationship between the school and the community.⁷⁰

In his study of new school board members, Snyder found that role expectations for all boardsmen had drastically changed during the preceding decade. He concluded that the consolidation of districts, decentralization efforts in urban districts, and greater citizen involvement were primary precipitating factors of this change and asserted that future board members would need to accommodate all of the following in order to fulfill their duties adequately:

(1) demonstrate greater expertise in facilitating the technical and legal problems encompassing education; (2) evidence greater understanding of the accountability movement; (3) exhibit refined techniques

⁶⁹See Dickinson, p. 9; and Lowell C. Rose, "Can Local School Boards Survive?" Education Digest 36 (November 1970): 20.

⁷⁰Arthur L. Svenson and Joseph E. Bryson, "Good-bye Forever, Old Rubberstamp School Board Members," ASBJ 157 (June 1970): 27.

in policy making; (4) manifest greater understanding of the complex, inner workings of the school district; (5) demonstrate more knowledge of the district's financial structure; and (6) possess improved individual and problem problem-solving techniques.⁷¹

As previously mentioned in this study, the ever-escalating demands made of board members have resulted in a serious national problem--turnover. For a multiplicity of reasons, among which the most frequently cited is "being a board member takes too much time," an expanding number of experienced members have refused further service. In reporting those causes cited by former members, Downey explained:

The complaints about time were not unexpected. More troubling by far was the pervasive sense of frustration, powerlessness, even bitterness that all but a handful of ex-board members expressed. Regulatory interference, inadequate school revenues, intransigent teacher union demands, discordant relationships between governance and management, bickering among board members, and a chronic condition of hostility and suspicion among taxpayers were disquieting factors cited time and again by people who had served on school boards in systems of all sizes, in all types of communities across the United States.⁷²

In addition to those members who voluntarily retire from active service, an increasing number of incumbents are being voted out of office. "In our present time of complicated finance and sophisticated machinery and high powered employer/employee relations, board members who do not have the time or who are not sufficiently informed to perform their jobs as policy-makers with efficiency, are being

⁷¹Milton L. Snyder, "The New School Board Member" (Ed.D. dissertation, United States International University, 1973), pp. 49-50.

⁷²Gregg W. Downey, "Why School Board Members Quit--and Why They're Sometimes Glad They Did," ASBJ 165 (February 1978): 26.

replaced rapidly."⁷³ Dyer maintained that this situation is a logical consequence of the escalating expectations publicly held for school systems and concomitant standards of performance demanded of local school governors. She emphasized that, in the future,

board members would view themselves as politicians [and] should understand that their destinies are shaped in the shadow of the ballot box. They must be accountable to their constituents, a feat that often requires toughness and independence that school board members have neither known or cared to muster in earlier eras.⁷⁴

It is ironic that, at a time when "leaders of sophistication and intelligence are needed on local school boards as never before," board members "in most states need little more than a warm body and sufficient votes to be elected."⁷⁵ Margaret Buvinger, president of NSBA, emphasized the need for members possessing superior qualifications, in order to meet the challenges confronting school boards, as follows:

What counts, at a time when school board members are increasingly required to make major decisions on complex matters, are qualifications that defy legal definition. The day of one-hour board meetings in which business matters are dealt with tidily is long gone, and most boards find that the complexity of current problems requires an ever increasing commitment of time. Lacking this commitment . . . the strongest belief in public education, and in the lay direction of this education . . . is of no avail.⁷⁶

⁷³Louise Dyer, "The American School Board Member and His--and Her--Era of Fierce New Independence," ASBJ 160 (July 1973): 20.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁵See NSBA, p. 97; and Bob F. Steere, "Should the State Train Board Candidates if Only to Shield the Public From Bunglers?" ASBJ 160 (April 1973): 29.

⁷⁶Margaret J. Buvinger, "Board Members: Are You Qualified?" ASBJ (April 1979): 66.

Considerable effort has been expended, over the years, in cataloging those attributes requisite of local school board members. A specific listing of the qualifications deemed essential for "effective" members is included in "every school boards association handbook."⁷⁷ In commenting on those qualifications crucial to effective boardsmanship at the present time, Buvinger specified the following: (1) a love for and belief in people (the most important); (2) an open mind and a willingness to learn; (3) a willingness to devote sufficient time and attention to the particular concerns of a local system; (4) an understanding of the fundamentals of budgeting and accounting, the principles of labor-management relations, the process of good public relations, and the techniques of long-range planning; and (5) a belief in lay-direction of public education.⁷⁸ An interesting contrast, however, was noted in the findings of a survey jointly conducted by Caroline Mullins and The American School Board Journal--research intended to determine those qualifications or conditions administrators desired in board members. The results indicated that central office administrators believed "the qualifications . . . necessary to good boardsmanship are . . . more likely to be found in professional and upper-level management people." Three specifically desired qualifications were reported as follows: (1) a college degree in a profession--preferably medicine or dentistry, (2) a personal concern with the local system predicated upon having children in

⁷⁷Dickinson, p. 23.

⁷⁸Buvinger, p. 66.

attendance, and (3) an identification with a particular segment of the local community--particularly a minority group. Additionally, the respondents were nearly unanimous in their disapproval of board members who had earned professional degrees in education and with those having degrees in classroom teaching, in particular.⁷⁹

It has been asked whether any mere human, regardless of qualification or motivation, would be capable of satisfactorily resolving the diverse problems currently confronting local boards. The answer, as Dickinson responded, is: "Society will . . . have to be satisfied with a big self-improvement project in the Board member line rather than with the invention of new model human beings."⁸⁰

A Profile of American Public School Board Members

An understanding of the demographics of the more than 96,000 men and women who comprise the membership of American local school boards is of considerable importance. Nevertheless, a severely limited effort has been made to establish a profile of the governors of local schools; further, longitudinal research has, thus far, been restricted to one study.

In 1974, Zeigler and Jennings reported the results of a six-year research project involving eighty-six local school districts and 541 board members. Their profile of the "typical board of education member" was as follows: (1) Caucasian, (2) male, (3) forty to

⁷⁹"What Makes a Good Board Member? Superintendents Answer," Education Summary 27 (October 15, 1974): 3.

⁸⁰Dickinson, p. 23.

fifty-nine years of age, (4) earns in excess of \$20,000 annually, (5) has lived in the community for thirty-six or more years, (6) has completed one to four years of college, (7) is professionally or technically employed, (8) owns his own house, (9) is a Protestant and attends church weekly, (10) is a Republican, (11) was elected rather than appointed, and (12) has served the school system or the community "in a lesser capacity" prior to being first elected.⁸¹ Hurwitz, in his study of the personal characteristics and attitudes of New Jersey board members, reported similar findings. He wrote that New Jersey board members (1) "are predominately married, male caucasians in their middle forties who prefer the Republican party and the Protestant religion"; (2) "are predominately college graduates with a media[n] income of \$19,000 who are engaged in white collar and professional occupations"; and (3) "devote 17.45 hours per month to their school board duties, have served an average of 3.97 years on their board, and consider themselves neutral on a liberal-conservative scale."⁸²

The most recent endeavor to establish a profile of school board members, on a nationwide basis, was jointly conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and the State University of Virginia. Although

⁸¹Zeigler and Jennings, pp. 22-37.

⁸²Mark W. Hurwitz, "The Personal Characteristics and Attitudes of New Jersey School Board Members," Dissertation Abstracts International 32/4-A (October 1971): 1786-87.

the complete results of the 1,268 board member study have not been finalized, Underwood et al. have reported the following:

American school board members are typically suburban, white, middle or upper-middle class, and middle aged. The number of female members has increased from . . . 11.9 percent to 26 percent. Female members are most common in the central part of the nation. . . . All [members] are relatively affluent and have achieved a high level of education. . . . The vast majority of respondents have served from one to ten years; 37 percent are in their first term--61 percent have been elected or appointed to more than one term. . . . The top issues of concern are--

For Male Members

1. Collective bargaining
2. Declining enrollments
3. Discipline
4. Curriculum reform
5. Cutting programs & public apathy

For Female Members

1. Collective bargaining
2. Declining enrollments
3. Curriculum reform
4. Cutting programs
5. Accountability⁸³

The Socialization of New School Board Members

The process by which new members selectively acquire the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge current within the board on which they have become members has been explained in markedly dissimilar ways. There is, however, agreement that school boards "must transmit their norms to their novice members if they are to ensure the continued operation of the system; and, novice members must learn [these] norms if they are to be fully functioning, effective, and integrated members of the system."⁸⁴ An appreciation for the socialization process has become increasingly important as a

⁸³ Kenneth E. Underwood, Lawrence McCluskey, and George Umberger, "A Profile of the School Board Member," ASBJ 165 (October 1978): 25-26.

⁸⁴ Peter J. Cistone, "The Socialization of School Board Members," Educational Administration Quarterly 13 (Spring 1977): 20.

direct result of the previously reported ever-escalating turnover rate among board members, one out of four being new to the position in any given year. Jones explained that the new member "is likely to begin his tenure with only a limited understanding of his duties as a board member, the role of a board of education today, and--perhaps most importantly--of the consequences his actions on the board may hold for the future of lay control of education." Stapley concurred and emphasized: "The typical new school board member has devoted his energies to a business, profession, or trade and has had only incidental contact with the operations of the schools."⁸⁵

In an early study of the socialization process, Kerr reported new members as being both unskilled and unfamiliar with the intricacies of school governance. He found that novices are, as a consequence, socialized toward the "legitimizing [of] the policies of the school system to the community, rather than representing the various segments of the community to the school administration." He explained that both administrators and experienced members participate in the induction process and that the following three major forces quickly converge to shape the attitudes and performance of new members: (1) school board politics, (2) pressure for conformity throughout the socialization process, and (3) community pressures. Kerr concluded that, as a result of their introductory experiences, new members are effectively absorbed into the existent governance modus

⁸⁵See Jones, p. 23; and Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "School Boards: Education of Members," by Maurice E. Stapley.

operandi and rapidly, regardless of pre-election promises or personal background, act to perpetuate the status quo.⁸⁶

Ronald Gray, Director of Public Relations for the British Columbia School Trustees Association, concurred with Kerr's analysis and summarized the new board member socialization process as follows:

Ostensibly, the trustee represents the people, as taxpayers, citizens and parents; a role which by its very nature requires no specialist training. To perform effectively the trustee needs an attitude of concern and an effective means of communicating with the public he represents. In effect, however, what happens is that the trustee sits down at the first meeting of the board with very little knowledge of what is expected of him, what his duties are to be and, more importantly, no concept of his relationship with the non-elected people facing him across the table. The new trustee is therefore perfectly set up to be absorbed with a minimum of fuss and disturbance into the educational establishment in the school district and to be manipulated with varying degree of subtlety by the professional staff.⁸⁷

Later research, however, disputed Kerr's findings. Cistone, in reporting the results of his 1976 study of Ontario's novice board members, stated: "The research shows that the skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary for functioning as a board member already have been acquired as a consequence of recruitment, preincumbent experience, and anticipatory socialization," before their election or appointment. He explained:

Board members don't run for office on a whim; they have worked in other activities that lead into service on a school board. . . . Instead of relying on the collective wisdom of experienced school board members, or the influence of a school superintendent, new . . . members make decisions on what they have learned prior

⁸⁶ Norman Kerr, "The School Board as an Agency of Legitimation," Sociology of Education 38 (Fall 1964): 45-55.

⁸⁷ Ron Gray, "In-service Training for School Trustees," Education Canada 11 (June 1971): 24.

to their election or appointment . . . and most . . . members come from surprisingly similar backgrounds. The difference in attitudes between new and veteran . . . members is indeed small. School board members seem to be, in fact, almost a self-perpetuating species.

Cistone maintained that a new board member, unlike "a conscripted soldier [who] has to undergo a compulsory socialization--boot camp--before he begins to identify himself with the army," comes to his position "with a set of notions that change little during [his term] of office." On the basis of his findings, he asserted that overt socialization endeavors are of relatively minor significance, and those that do occur tend to lead the novice in the direction of those positions advocated by the superintendent--despite the counterposition between boards of education and their chief executive officers.⁸⁸

The Value of Systematic and Continuous Programs of Inservice Education

The expertise evidenced by boards of education in meeting those present and future challenges confronting them will likely determine whether or not local, lay-leaders continue to enjoy a substantive role in educational governance. Since local boards can be no more effective than the composite wisdom evidenced through the knowledge and skill demonstrated by their individual members, "the education of board members becomes . . . increasingly important."⁸⁹ The imperatives of the cybernetic age, as well as continuing social

⁸⁸See Cistone, pp. 19-32; and idem, "School Board Members Learn Their Skills Before They Become Board Members," ASBJ 165 (January 1978): 32-33.

⁸⁹Encyclopedia of Education, Stapley.

and educational reforms, necessitate the services of highly skilled, knowledgeable local members, perhaps more so than at any other time in our nation's history. Citizens must, therefore, understand that the most direct way they "can influence their schools is through the type of school board members they elect," and boards, themselves, "must be certain that their communities are served by informed and capable . . . members."⁹⁰ Thompson reported the current need as follows:

The changing focus of educational needs is having a visible impact on the role of the members of local school boards. Board members must be much more knowledgeable to function effectively. They must understand the issues in public elementary and secondary education as well as the techniques of policy development and decision-making.⁹¹

The education of today's board members cannot be left to chance. Since "the first requirement for an effective school board member is that he have the information and knowledge on which to base his decisions,"⁹² it is imperative that purposive, systematic, and continuous programs of inservice education be developed and implemented and that board members avail themselves of such programs. The continued reliance upon longevity of service as the chief vehicle for the enhancement of personal and corporate performance would likely prove calamitous. Although "some improvement usually results from

⁹⁰See Neal Gross, Who Runs Our Schools? (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), p. 126; and Rose, p. 21.

⁹¹Barbara Thompson, Foreword to Opportunities Unlimited: A Guide for Wisconsin School Board Members, by Richard A. Rossmiller (Winneconne, Wis.: WASB, 1977), p. iii.

⁹²Gross, p. 94.

experience on the job, most substantial progress is not likely to occur unless purposeful and intensive efforts are made by various means to improve the competence of local school board members."⁹³

Weitman summarized the urgent need to enhance school board performance as follows:

It is evident from the legal status and from the large amounts of financial wealth under the control of school boards that they are in a very important position so far as public schools are concerned. The importance of this position does not lend itself to the administering by persons who have little knowledge and skill in such management, and who, in many instances are not provided the opportunity to learn their proper functions. The boards are required by law to make far-reaching decisions. It seems entirely wise that they at least should be given the opportunity to learn more about their functions so as to make such decisions with knowledge and understanding.⁹⁴

The costs associated with inservice programs for board members have frequently been a subject of citizen concern and criticism. In defending such expenditures, Weinheimer compared school systems to corporations and explained:

Corporate officers of every large corporation in the community, who have the fiscal and legal responsibilities comparable to that of the local board of education, must spend time and money for training and in-service of its officers and key staff in order to keep abreast of the times. Without that training, the corporation would soon close its doors. It wouldn't make any difference how old the corporation was or how experienced the officers or staff previously were.⁹⁵

⁹³W. E. Becker, "How to Make Better Boards," ASBJ 155 (October 1967): 25.

⁹⁴Ronald E. Weitman, "An Analytical Study of the In-service Educational Needs of Chairmen of Boards of Education in Georgia" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1960), p. 17.

⁹⁵Norman P. Weinheimer, "Tell It Right Up Front," MSBJ 26 (October 1979): 5.

A recent Pennsylvania School Boards Association Commission concurred with Weinheimer and reported its recommendations relative to board member inservice, and the costs associated therewith, as follows:

School business, like many other aspects of modern living, requires a broader perspective of all the influences affecting society and public education. School directors, who do not take their responsibilities seriously and do not engage in personal inservice education, are doing a disservice to the board and the community-at-large. School directors, who seek personal inservice opportunities and the broader perspective of group inservice, will unquestionably have improved their capabilities to perform on behalf of the public interest. . . . Being responsible for the operation of a public school system . . . is a challenging task and requires a broad base of knowledge and information in order to make intelligent decisions. . . . Inservice education and training can provide the understanding needed to ensure proper management and control of the educational system and the public's tax dollars. Boards not appropriating funds for proper inservice training are short-changing their community in terms of understanding the nature and needs of effective school operations.⁹⁶

The Commission advocated "that adequate financial resources must be allocated at the local level . . . to achieve stated [board member] inservice goals and objectives." It recommended: (1) "boards should adopt appropriate policies which encourage participation in preservice, new orientation programs, and on going inservice activities"; (2) "school districts should provide adequate funds annually for school board . . . inservice training"; and (3) "boards . . . should be encouraged to attend inservice programs at the local, state and national level[s]."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Pennsylvania School Boards Association, PSBA Commission to Strengthen the Working Relationships of School Boards and Superintendents (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 1977), pp. 14-15.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

Despite the apparent need and justification for board member inservice education, systematic approaches to the development of sequential programs have been virtually ignored, and those efforts that have been made have not generally been taken seriously. St. John wrote: "The area of . . . inservice training for board members is shunted around or laughed at or simply ignored so frequently that it hurts. . . ." ⁹⁸ Francois found that "the average boardman's orientation and training consists of little more than being given reading materials, having a private conference with the superintendent, and touring a few schools." ⁹⁹ In a majority of states, 75 percent of the newly elected members receive no formal training from their school boards association, and in those states where the associations do offer new member training workshops, as many as 90 percent of the intended population do not attend. ¹⁰⁰ This continuing circumstance caused the editors of The American School Board Journal to comment:

New members are welcomed aboard as if they are dewy-eyed college freshmen pledging Tri-Delt or Sigma-Chi. Then, after the hearty rounds of post-election glad-handing, they're advised to sit tight, shut up, and leave the first year's decision making to the vets and, of course, the pros. ¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Walter D. St. John, "Why Boardmen Need Better Training--and What They Need to Know," ASBJ 158 (February 1971): 27.

⁹⁹John Francois, "Better--Lots Better--Training Is Needed for New Board Members," ASBJ 158 (July 1970): 9-10.

¹⁰⁰Jones, p. 22.

¹⁰¹"After You Shake Their Hands, Try This New Way to Train New Board Members Quickly and Profitably," ASBJ 161 (May 1974): 33.

Although the value of systematic and continuous inservice programs for all board members has been widely acclaimed, few examples of plans for possible implementation have been developed. That attention paid to this subject has, in the main, involved suggested orientation activities for new members.¹⁰² St. John was among the early contemporary writers to stress the desirability of continuing "relevant and effective" inservice training throughout a member's period of service. He suggested that in order "to put the wheels in motion," educational leaders should actively solicit (1) the adoption of rules and regulations, regarding orientation and inservice programs, by states' boards of education and departments of education, (2) the adoption of "appropriate resolutions" by the national and states' school boards associations; and (3) the adoption of "policies specifically relating to improved programs for members" by local boards of education. He recommended including the following specific topics in local inservice programs:

1. Board operation and responsibilities;
2. Needs of individual members;
3. Problems, pressures, and frustrations of board members;
4. Legal and fiscal matters;
5. Relations with news media representatives;
6. Relations with community power structures and special interest groups;

¹⁰²See Encyclopedia of Education, Stapley; and Edward M. Tuttle, School Board Leadership in America (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Press, 1958), p. 127.

7. Basic information about education;
8. Management skills and techniques;
9. Staff member relations;
10. Community relations; and
11. Needs and trends in society and their implications for educational services.¹⁰³

The training of newly elected or appointed board members has been a topic of continuing interest. Although there was general agreement that the single best way to design inservice sessions for novices has been "to expose them to real life problems,"¹⁰⁴ a considerable difference of opinion regarding the length of time required for them to become fully functioning, effective board members was reported. Snyder concluded that from six months to one year of "on-the-part-time-job-training was necessary; White reported that the "largest number of new board members indicate their apprenticeship . . . took a full year"; and Goble wrote that "at least two years of . . . service [were required] before board members gain the background and confidence to perform effectively and confidently."¹⁰⁵ There was reported, however, unanimity in the perceived value of

¹⁰³ St. John, Boardmen, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁴ Jones, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ See ERS Information Aid, "Citizen Boards at Work: New Challenges to Effective Action" (Arlington, Va.: Educational Research Service, 1975); Goble, p. 6; NSBA Research Report 1973-2, "Training New School Board Members: A Survey" (Evanston, Ill.: National School Boards Association, 1973); and Eilene White, "How to Show New Board Members the Ropes--Without Being Strangled," Executive Educator 1 (November 1979): 21.

inservice programs, especially for new members, and in the belief that the included experiences would "shorten the time needed by the new board member to become a functioning member of the school board team."¹⁰⁶

The feasibility of mandating, by state statute, new member participation in prescribed inservice programs has been a recurrent issue. Although no state has established such a requirement, "recent surveys of new and old board members, superintendents and executive directors of state school boards associations indicate that more and better--perhaps formalized and mandatory--training for new school board members is both necessary and foreseeable."¹⁰⁷ In his study, Snyder found that 67 percent of the new board members and 57 percent of the superintendent respondents believed new members should be required to participate in training programs.¹⁰⁸ Steere went one step further in advocating a plan for the training of prospective school board candidates. He suggested that all candidates be invited and urged, although not required, to participate in a program designed by the state department of education; further, that those who completed such training be specially indicated on the ballot.¹⁰⁹

Stapley has suggested the application of an integrated four-phased approach in the training of new board members, as follows:

¹⁰⁶ Rossmiller, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, p. 22.

¹⁰⁸ NSBA Research Report 1973-2, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Steere, p. 29.

(1) orientation--comprised of general activities designed to introduce the member to the overall operation of the system, and his responsibilities as a board member, and occurring prior to taking office (when the interval between election/appointment and slating is sufficient) or within the first three months after taking office;

(2) local inservice education programs--activities designed to probe, in depth, various topics of immediate relevance; (3) participation in state and national meetings; and (4) selected readings. He emphasized that the local board and its superintendent, as well as the state and national school boards associations, are equally important "sources of data" to be exploited in the determination of local programs appropriate to the needs of new members.¹¹⁰ The New York School Boards Association recommended that a seminar approach be used by its constituent local boards in their training of new board members; it developed a prototype model and listed the following skills that participants, as a result of their involvement, should be able to demonstrate:

1. Analyze the job of the school board member,
2. Recognize important educational problems,
3. Make effective decisions,
4. Improve the board's channel of communications to and from the board, and
5. Determine good school board policies.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Encyclopedia of Education, Stapley.

¹¹¹New York School Boards Association, A Seminar for New School Board Members (Albany: New York School Boards Association, 1972), p. 1.

In Portland, Oregon, a weekend retreat for new members is annually conducted. All board members and key central office administrators present a series of topical sessions, in an informal atmosphere, "aimed at defining roles; [the] policy function; policy vs. administration [considerations]; evaluation; and 'how the system works.'"¹¹²

Whatever design configuration is ultimately selected for inservice presentations at the local level, it should enable the new member "to identify his role and . . . provide him with sufficient basic information . . . to make a reasonable assessment of proposals put forward by the board's professional advisors"; its ultimate objective should not be "to teach new board members all the answers, but to train them to ask the right kinds of questions. . . ."¹¹³

The orientation and inservice education of new board members, while crucially important to the successful performance of local school boards, would be inadequate in satisfying the total requirement. What is needed is a continuous, sequential program of inservice activities for all board members. As Goldhammer explained:

Board members should constantly seek to improve their ability to perform their duties. . . . Board members should avail themselves of opportunities to participate in school board association meetings, in-service training programs, clinics, and school board conferences. . . . It is necessary constantly to upgrade and improve the contributions which each school board member makes to his community and to the furtherance of the educational program of the public schools.¹¹⁴

¹¹²White, pp. 20-21.

¹¹³See Gray, p. 25; and Jones, p. 25.

¹¹⁴Goldhammer, p. 107.

Nick Goble, Public Relations Officer of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, expressed the following maxims for consideration by local boards seeking to develop systematic inservice programs:

1. The pre-service time period and the first few years of board service are most important in developing board leadership;
2. State-level resources should complement and support local district activities and educational programs;
3. Local boards should set aside adequate funds in the budget to support local, state, and national training programs for board members; and
4. Successful orientation and school board training programs need the same careful attention, planning, and commitment as other school district concerns.¹¹⁵

Wiles and Conley reported that "the idea of expecting only the professional personnel to be trained is focusing training too narrowly" and emphasized that the current environment "necessitates application of a lifelong learning plan for school board members as well as other members in the organization." They suggested a continuing inservice program specifically designed to assist board members in developing skills in the following topical areas:

1. Organizational Skills
 - a. Methods and responsibilities of school board members
 - b. Improving organizational communication

¹¹⁵Goble, pp. 5-6.

- c. Motivational factors
- d. Methods of team building in work groups
- e. Planning and setting priorities
- f. Diagnostic procedures
- g. Change strategies
- 2. Management Concepts and Methods
 - a. Personnel management
 - b. Program evaluation
- 3. Policy Problems and Governmental Relationships
 - a. Intergovernmental relations
 - b. Energy use and conservation
 - c. Environmental concerns in public management
 - d. Occupational safety and health¹¹⁶

An overall responsibility for developing board member inservice education programs has never been established. It had been generally assumed that the local superintendent was accountable for establishing training experiences appropriate to the needs of his board members and that, in educating of new members, he had a "primary responsibility" although "the whole board should be involved in [the] training sessions."¹¹⁷ Local administrators, to be certain, "must make a conscious and continued effort to educate the local board and not depend entirely upon outside organizations and

¹¹⁶Wiles, pp. 3-5.

¹¹⁷"How Do You Educate Board Members? Very Carefully!" Education USA 17 (March 10, 1975): 161.

activities."¹¹⁸ However, many authorities maintained that a multi-faceted approach in which "school district personnel, school board members, school boards associations, as well as state and federal officers share responsibility to assure that competent educational policy-makers govern America's school systems" was most appropriate.¹¹⁹ The individual board member, too, has a primary duty to improve his capabilities by availing himself of those inservice experiences provided for his benefit. Regrettably, as Stefonek pointed out: "As is often the case in other areas, board members who need the most help in understanding issues and learning how to function as effective members are the same people who don't have the interest or make the commitment to participate in self-improvement inservice activities."¹²⁰

A phenomenal rate of change, which has increasingly been characteristic of local board members' service, has had a profound impact on every aspect of public educational governance, the development and conduct of inservice activities for local members being no exception. As George Tipler, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, stated: "With the advent of rapid turnover of school board members, an organized approach to inservice is somewhat difficult."¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Tom Stefonek, Viewpoints of Local School Board Presidents: Educational Problems, Achievements, and Challenges (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 151 944, 1978), p. 14.

¹¹⁹ NSBA Research Report 1973-2, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Stefonek, p. 14.

¹²¹ Interview with George Tipler, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Winneconne, Wisconsin, 3 October 1978.

The development and implementation of continuing inservice programs, appropriate to the needs of local members, has been reported as being foundational to improving overall school board performance and to retaining qualified, experienced board members.¹²² Since being an effective member "will tax the intelligence, the aspirations, and the stamina of an individual," there can be little doubt that "one of the keys to retaining dedicated board members is to keep them informed and to provide them with the necessary tools to do an effective job."¹²³ As Nicoloff explained:

What is needed . . . is improved and increased inservice education for board members throughout their period[s] of service. If these inservice opportunities address themselves to the felt needs of board members, there can be little doubt that they will be utilized and result in the betterment of the nation's school systems.¹²⁴

Inservice Programs Sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards

The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) has provided the primary impetus for board member inservice education in this state. A systematic and extensive effort, intended to enhance the knowledgeableness and decision-making skills of those serving as local educational governors, was initiated in 1979. Since then, ninety-five separate inservice opportunities have been sponsored by MASB

¹²²PSBA Commission, p. 15.

¹²³See Lloyd W. Ashby, The Effective School Board Member (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1968), 111; and Goble, p. 6.

¹²⁴Lanning G. Nicoloff, "Perceived Inservice Education Needs of Members of Boards of Education in Illinois" (Ed.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1977), p. 7.

at the regional and statewide levels. These events have been categorized as follows:

1. Statewide Conferences

Ten annual conferences, of a 2-1/2 to three-day duration, have been held. A majority of these events have been conducted in either Detroit or Grand Rapids. Members have been encouraged to participate in the conduct of Association business, as well as in a variety of inservice presentations.

2. Mid-winter Conferences

Ten annual events, each held on a Saturday, have been conducted in Lansing. While Association business has been conducted during these meetings, the overwhelming majority of time has been devoted to the presentation of timely topics of "presumed board member interest."

3. New Member Orientation Workshops

Thirty-four regional events, of 1-1/2 days duration, strategically held throughout Michigan have been conducted. Eight of these have included activities specifically intended for newly elected board officers--primarily presidents and treasurers.

4. Special Topic Seminars

These training sessions, increasingly termed "Academies of Boardsmanship," were initiated in 1973 and have typically been of 1-1/2 days duration. They are provided on a regional basis throughout Michigan, and the majority have been conducted on Friday afternoons and Saturdays.¹²⁵

5. Drive-in Conferences

Beginning in 1978, these one-day (usually Friday) regional events have been conducted for the benefit of both administrators and board members. To date, the following presentations have been made: "The Michigan Civil Rights Act" (three conferences), "Handicapped Laws" (one conference), "Unsettled Teacher Contracts" (one conference), "Collective Bargaining Contract Administration" (two conferences), and "Implementing the Open Meetings Act" (three conferences).

¹²⁵The Special Topic Seminars are listed in Appendix A.

In addition to those efforts made directly by MASB in support of inservice education for board members, the organization of local "chapters" has also been provided for in Article VIII of MASB's By-Laws. Membership in a chapter is usually comprised of all local districts within a one- or two-county area, or within the geographic area included in an intermediate school district. Within Southwestern Michigan, four chapters of MASB have been formed, as follows:

The Berrien-Cass Counties Chapter of MASB
The Kalamazoo Valley Chapter of MASB
The Van Buren County Chapter of MASB
The St. Joseph County Chapter of MASB

The fundamental goal of local chapters has been to enhance board member capability through their participation in inservice activities specifically tailored to those needs and interests existent in a limited geographical area. Upon the formation of a chapter, MASB rebates 3 percent of all state association dues collected from those districts within the included territory, as an incentive to conduct inservice education and to defray the expenses associated therewith. Chapter officers are required to submit an annual report to MASB detailing their budget, operating procedures, and inservice presentations. However, MASB "merely accepts and files" these reports "without comment." There are, at present, twenty-one chapters located throughout Michigan, encompassing approximately 50 percent of the 526 local K-12 school district boards of education in this state.

The lack of a formal research base, relative to past inservice presentations and local member participation, has been termed a "serious inhibitor" to present MASB efforts in this arena of activity.

The organization has not maintained statistical records on inservice participation, nor has "any effort been made to achieve statistically significant data regarding the perceived inservice needs of local board members." The "sum total of [inservice] survey work to date" has been reported in "A Survey of Michigan School Board Association Members," conducted in 1976 for the purpose of determining local member participation in MASB-sponsored workshops. Of a randomly selected sample of 350 local board members, 133 responded; 59 percent (78) affirmed their "past involvement" in "workshops" events.

The MASB Board of Directors, "in recognition of the vital importance of inservice education for local board members," appointed its first Director for Inservice Education and Community Relations on November 10, 1978.¹²⁶

Studies Relating to Inservice Education for School Board Members

Ten dissertations, describing various aspects of inservice education for board members, have been written within the past twenty-three years.

In 1956, Harley Lautenschlager utilized a detailed, structured interview method to determine those "techniques" board members perceived themselves to have used in understanding "the characteristics of a modern school program and its operation." His sample consisted of forty-five currently serving board members from Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan--individuals selected by the executive secretaries of

¹²⁶ Interview with Mary Kay Ashmore, Michigan Association of School Boards, Lansing, Michigan, 14 November 1978 and 7 June 1979.

state and regional school boards associations. Lautenschlager found that board members overwhelmingly viewed the superintendent as "the key person" in providing them information relative to the program and operation of the school system. Conversely, national and state school boards associations were not considered an "important [source of] help." In smaller districts, "personal contacts" were reported as an important way to "keep in touch" with citizens; in larger districts, members indicated a greater reliance on formal reports for "community input." The majority indicated that they relied heavily on those reports submitted by the superintendent and other staff members in evaluating the performance of their schools, whereas some asserted successful results in using lay-advisory groups. Published reading materials were not described as an "important source of assistance," the majority having reported reading few materials related directly to education, unless specific items were referred to them by the superintendent as being of "immediate concern" to topics of interest in their school systems.¹²⁷

In his 1960 study, Ronald Weitman conducted an assessment and analysis of the inservice education needs of the chairmen of boards of education in Georgia. He developed a detailed, forced-choice questionnaire, in which "broad areas of school board functions" were categorized, and sent a copy to all public school board chairmen and to their superintendents. The participants were asked to indicate their responses on a four-point continuum ranging from "no felt need"

¹²⁷ Lautenschlager, *passim*, Chapter 4.

to "great felt need." He found that the needs expressed by board chairmen, as well as those needs perceived by superintendents as being applicable to board chairmen, had, in all instances, significant correlation coefficients. However, superintendents rated the needs for board chairmen significantly less than did the chairmen themselves. While chairmen expressed "some felt need" for further knowledge in all categories included in the survey instrument, "great felt need" was reported in the areas of "The School Board and the Educational Program" and "The School Board and Broad Issues." No significant relationship was found between those needs expressed and the following variables: (1) length of service on the board, (2) the educational level achieved by the chairman, (3) the method of becoming a board member (appointment or election), and (4) age--excepting that those respondents over seventy reported significantly less need for additional inservice assistance.¹²⁸

In 1968, Benjamin Kammer sought to determine whether or not available inservice activities were meeting the needs of Colorado local school board members and, more specifically, to answer the question: Does board member "effectiveness" correlate positively with their level of inservice participation? His study included a random selection of 177 Colorado superintendents and two members, chosen at random, from each of their boards of education. A questionnaire was sent to the superintendents indicating thirty-two "criteria" to be considered in determining the "effectiveness" of school board member

¹²⁸ Weitman, *passim*, Chapters 4 and 5.

"behavior." A separate questionnaire indicating ten "typical" inservice activities was sent to the board members in an effort to ascertain their levels of inservice participation. Indices of "perceived average effectiveness" were then determined for both participants and nonparticipants in inservice activities. Kammer found a strong positive correlation between effectiveness, as perceived by the superintendents, and board member involvement in each of the following activities: (1) participation in regional, state, and national school boards or administrators meetings; (2) participation in the development of orientation activities designed to assist new board members; (3) the reading of professional publications and materials; (4) attendance at on-campus college conferences; and (5) participation in the discussion of, and actual involvement in, the revision of the board's policy manual. Superintendents also reported "progressive increases" in perceived board member effectiveness in relationship to the amount of personal education attained; the size of the school district--the larger the district, the more effective the board members were deemed to be; age--the "most effective" were between forty and fifty; and occupation--salesmen were perceived "most effective," followed (in descending order) by managers or proprietors, professionals, ranchers and farmers, housewives, skilled workers, and semi-skilled or unskilled workers. He stated the following conclusions: (1) board member inservice training, as perceived by superintendents, does improve effectiveness; (2) expanded and improved training is particularly necessary in the areas of understanding and accepting the "purposes and objectives of a modern school, suspending judgment on controversial

issues until all facts presented, willingness to devote time away from the community in promoting the welfare of the public schools, a willingness to devote time to promoting the welfare of the schools within the community in addition to the time spent in board of education meetings, a feeling of responsibility for improving education at the state level, displaying both tact and firmness, rigorously seeking financial support for schools, [and] effectively interpreting school programs to the community"; (3) there is a need to increase board member attendance at regional, state, and national meetings; and (4) there is a need to continue and expand orientation programs for new board members.¹²⁹

As an integral part of his 1970 dissertation, Billy Knight examined the emphasis Northeast Texas public school boards placed on eight general areas of their responsibility (curriculum and instruction, student personnel, employed personnel, finance and business, the school plant, public relations auxiliary services, and board activities) from two perspectives: (1) school district size and (2) the extent of board member "participation in professional meetings such as workshops and conventions." Thirty districts were selected on a stratified random basis according to size, as determined by average daily attendance, from among the 149 K-12 districts located within the twenty-five county area comprising Northeast Texas. A "predetermined tabulation instrument" was used to achieve a content analysis

¹²⁹ Benjamin A. Kammer, "Effective School Board Behavior as It Relates to School Board Inservice Activities in the State of Colorado," Dissertation Abstracts International 29/04-A (October 1968): 1078.

of the official school board minutes of each included district, thus enabling a classification of board actions as being primarily "policy, ministerial, administrative, [or] miscellaneous" in nature. Concurrently, a questionnaire was sent to each board member requesting information relative to his attendance at workshops and conventions. The obtained data were correlated on the basis of the three size groupings and the aforementioned areas of board involvement, with an additional comparison being made following further subdivision of member inservice responses into "board as a whole" low, medium, and high attendance groupings. Correlation coefficients of .01 "were attained in all instances." Knight found that all boards devoted insufficient attention to the curriculum and instruction and public relations areas of their responsibility and that they tended to be overly involved with administrative matters, while devoting too little regard to their legislative and evaluative functions. He further reported that "when comparing the various groups by percentage, similarity of action rather than disparity tended to be the prevalent relationship," although those boards whose members were more active in attending workshops and conventions had "more equitable distributions of actions."¹³⁰

In 1970, Frederick Sales studied those new board member orientation programs conducted by local school districts in the suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area. He sought to determine and evaluate

¹³⁰ Billy Rowe Knight, "Action Emphases of Northeast Texas School Boards," Dissertation Abstracts International 31/09-A (March 1971): 4421A-4422A.

the specific activities employed in the orientation of new members, who is responsible for the conduct of orientation programs, the length of time required for new members to become oriented, and the opinions of the participants regarding techniques that could have been employed to make their experiences more meaningful. A detailed questionnaire approach was used in conjunction with a random sampling of board members and superintendents from forty-nine districts located within the four counties comprising the suburbs adjacent to Philadelphia. The results were based on the responses of 187 board members and twenty-six superintendents. Sales found that although both groups agreed new member orientation programs are "very important," the expressed enthusiasm for "need" was not matched with "deeds in so far [sic] as the quality or quantity of orientation programs provided is concerned." The need for orientation was also reported as being "continuous," especially since as many as one-third of the board members were "new" at any given point in time. Board members reported receiving the greatest amount in curriculum and instruction. Although they expressed having received "less than half of the specific information" they would have liked, the quality of orientation programs was rated as "good" or "excellent" in all areas excepting curriculum and instruction. Members also felt that orientation programs should "begin as soon as a new member is elected or appointed and continue through the early months of office." They also stated that their employers were "either supportive or permissive in their attitudes" regarding employees being on a school board; therefore, "some time away from work for orientation would appear to be feasible." There

was no common agreement on the length of time required to complete the orientation process: Board members suggested from six months to one year; superintendents maintained that one year to eighteen months was essential. Board members were not in agreement regarding who should be held responsible for the orientation of novices, although a majority of superintendents felt the responsibility "rested with the superintendent." Among Sales' recommendations were the following: (1) superintendents were urged to provide leadership in planning and providing orientation programs for new school board members, (2) superintendents should give new members more than a "brief conversation" since they want "facts and they want them presented in an organized manner," (3) orientation should begin as soon as a new member is seated and continue throughout his early months in office, and (4) new members "should realize orientation is viewed by superintendents as taking from six months to one year longer than members believe it does."¹³¹

In his 1971 dissertation, James Andrews sought to identify the kinds of information and experiences that should be provided in orienting new school board members to their responsibilities and authority as boardsmen. He conducted a structured interview with ten Indiana superintendents--individuals selected by a "jury of professors" from Indiana University as having done "an outstanding job of orienting new school board members." Additionally, twenty new board

¹³¹Frederick Carl Sales, "A Survey of the Orientation of New Board Members Practiced by Selected Local School Districts" (Ed.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1970).

members, selected randomly on the stratified variable of school district size, were interviewed. Finally, data from state school boards associations, relative to the process of orienting new members, were gathered and reviewed. Sales found unanimous agreement that the orientation process should be as soon after the election or appointment of new members as possible and that the superintendent and more experienced members were adjudged, by the new members, to have provided the greatest assistance to them. The most common techniques employed by superintendents in orienting new members were: (1) superintendent/board member conferences, (2) attendance at board meetings prior to assuming office, (3) attendance at regional and state-level meetings conducted by the Indiana School Boards Association, and (4) tours of local educational facilities. The major problem areas for new members were found to be in the areas of public relations and finance. On the basis of his findings, Andrews concluded that the degree to which each individual member is "informed or uninformed" will reflect in the qualitative decisions reached by the board of education; therefore, it is imperative that "adequate information and proper training" be made available to new members at the onset of their terms of office. He noted that little communality exists in school board orientation procedures among the various state school boards organizations and that "extensive research" in the area of new member orientation has not been conducted. He determined that superintendents were "most helpful" in assisting new members becoming acclimated to their

responsibilities and stated that novices should be encouraged to attend board meetings before taking office.¹³²

One of the more comprehensive studies relating to the training of new school board members was completed by Milton Snyder in 1972. Snyder conducted a detailed, structured interview with thirty newly elected members, their board presidents, and superintendents of schools from thirty school districts in four Southern California counties. He found "strong support" for the conduct of new member training programs: 95% of the board members and 80 percent of the superintendents concurred that if such programs were available, new members would be interested in participating in them, whereas 67 percent of the members and 57 percent of the superintendents responded that "the training of new members should be mandatory." The majority (56 percent) of the three respondent groups preferred having training programs conducted by the California School Boards Association; they also "favored holding training programs prior to [new members] taking office or within three months after taking office." The preferred training technique was reported as being "the weekend short-seminar incorporating small group orientation." The respondents suggested that six months to one year of involvement was required "for new school board members to become comfortable in their positions," that training programs should be "continuous," and that such programs should be expanded "to incorporate training for experienced members."

¹³²James R. Andrews, "A Study of the Perceptions Held by New School Board Members Toward Their Training for Board Membership," Dissertation Abstracts International 32/06-A (December 1971): 2931.

All respondent groups ranked "working relations with the superintendent" as the top priority in a training program, whereas board presidents ranked "legal responsibilities" second and superintendents viewed "selection of the superintendent" as second in importance. Among the lowest subjects in perceived importance were: "maintenance, inter-district relations, career education, and community policies." Approximately 60 percent of all respondents expressed the concern that new members were "least prepared" to carry out their duties as community representatives. Snyder noted that superintendents viewed themselves as being "most important" in the training of new members and that novices, themselves, reported the "reading of education codes and district policies" as the "most important" preparation they had experienced.

Snyder concluded that the additional time required for the training of new members should "be highly task oriented, scheduled for short periods . . . and directed by highly competent instructors." He recommended that training programs "should have written objectives, . . . be tailored to suit local districts' needs . . . [and] use the most effective methods possible." Further, that the following areas "should be basic" to all new member training programs: (1) working relations with the superintendent, (2) the evaluation of educational programs, (3) the establishment of broad program goals, (4) community relations, and (5) the interpretation of the budget.¹³³

¹³³Snyder, *passim*, Chapter 5.

In 1973, James Harper, Jr., completed his exploratory study designed to determine whether or not new board members in the recently decentralized (regionalized) Detroit Public Schools were perceived by themselves and by "major board observers" as having training needs in seven selected functions of school operations: finance, negotiations, policy making, curriculum administration, human relations and personnel, group dynamics, and general education topics. (The term "new board member," as used in this study, refers to individuals elected to membership on the newly created Detroit regional boards of education; such persons may have had previous experience as local school governors on other school boards.) A stratified sampling technique was used in gathering data from a "universe" of all members comprising the eight regional boards, plus an additional 186 "major board observers"; in total, 242 individuals participated in this study. Statistically significant data were achieved through an analysis of the responses indicated on the following "custom designed" instruments: "Selected Functions of School Operations Survey," "Needs Analysis Survey," "School Board Rating Survey," "Time Survey Instrument," and "Major School Board Observer's Questionnaire." Harper found that new board members having more formal education were perceived by major board observers as being "more capable" in all seven selected functions of school operations. However, with the exception of the finance arena, the board members' responses relative to their perceptions of effectiveness did not correlate significantly with achieved formal education, the expenditure of time in performance of duties, or the number of personal memberships in noneducational

organizations. Both members and observers perceived a need for additional training, although neither group responded that inservice experiences should be mandatory. An organized training program was viewed as necessary "because today's job [as a board member] demands it" and should be accomplished by "outside organizations" using a "variety of methods" after members are elected and prior to their taking office. Harper concluded: "There is a need to know more specific information about boardmen's proficiency in each of the seven functions of school operations" and to develop a "highly accurate diagnostic instrument" that properly assesses the need for training new board members. Among his recommendations were the following: (1) training experiences should be "reassuring and as ego-building as possible"; (2) initial training should serve to acquaint members with the schools, the community, and all departments within the administrative organization; (3) regional superintendents should periodically conduct "localized inservice training for new members; and (4) "standards for certifying board members" should be developed and instituted.¹³⁴

In 1974, Charles Calloway sought to develop a preservice training program for prospective school board members, one that would also be appropriate to the inservice needs of members already serving. To accomplish this purpose, he established the following specific objectives:

¹³⁴James Harper, Jr., "Decentralization: An Exploration of Boardmanship Training Needs of New School Board Members in Selected Functions of School Operations," Dissertation Abstracts International 33/11-A (May 1973): 6011.

(1) to determine if Tennessee and Tennessee's bordering states have preservice or inservice training programs for school board members; (2) to determine the qualifications for serving as a school board member in Tennessee and in Tennessee's eight bordering states; (3) to determine if some type of preservice training program should be required of all prospective school board members; (4) to determine the types of activities a school board member should be familiar with before assuming his job; (5) to determine what a preservice and/or inservice training program for school board members should consist of and based on these needs to develop such a training program; and (6) to field test a preservice and/or inservice training program, once developed, with a group of school board members and prospective school board members.

To gather appropriate data, Calloway sent a letter requesting information concerning board member preservice and inservice training programs, as well as information relative to that which should be incorporated into such programs, to the state school boards associations and departments of education of Tennessee and Tennessee's eight bordering states. Additionally, a survey questionnaire designed to identify current local school board training programs was sent to the board chairman, superintendent, and one additional board member (chosen at random) of each of the 146 public school systems in Tennessee. The sample consisted of 438 participants. Calloway found "practically no research dealing directly with preservice training" for board members. He noted that the respondent states "vary widely" in their training programs for board members and that "very little formal, organized training" is available in Tennessee, although all Tennessee respondents "believed there should be better training available" to them. Training programs were reported as an "invaluable tool" in assisting members and prospective members in becoming "better versed" and "more learned" in those "competencies" needed to become

effective board members. While both members and superintendents "were interested" in upgrading "the quality of school board membership," neither group believed participation should be mandated--either before or after election or appointment.¹³⁵

In his 1977 dissertation, Lanning Nicoloff sought to determine the most important inservice education needs of currently serving Illinois public school board members, as assessed by board members themselves and superintendents, and to determine a ranked order of the inservice needs of boards of education--considered as a whole. He selected a stratified random sample comprised of eighty elementary (K-8), eighty secondary (9-12), and eighty unit (K-12) districts in such a manner as to assure an equitable distribution from among the six regions within Illinois and among the size of districts, based upon enrollments, within each of the aforementioned strata. From each included district, the superintendent, board president, one experienced member (more than one year of service), and one new member (less than one year of service) were selected for participation. The "experienced" and "new" members were chosen at random by the local superintendent. Four identical survey questionnaires, one for each category of respondents, comprised of ninety-eight items of "possible concern" to board members were constructed. All board member respondents were asked to rate their "personal need for further inservice education" on a five-point forced-choice scale from "little or no

¹³⁵Charles Calloway, "A Preservice and/or Inservice Training Program for Board of Education Members," Dissertation Abstracts International 35/10-A (April 1975): 6356.

need" to "critical need." Board presidents, experienced members, and superintendents were asked to rate the inservice needs of the "board as a whole" on a second scale that was included on their survey questionnaires. Nicoloff found that the ten highest inservice needs, as expressed on the "personal needs scale," in order of perceived importance were: (1) retaining local control of education," (2) "new ideas for providing funds for schools," (3) "influencing state and federal legislation affecting education," (4) "coping with inflation," (5) "effective teacher evaluation techniques," (6) "cutting back school expenditures in a financial crisis," (7) "characteristics of a good educational program," (8) "dismissal of teachers," (9) "negotiations," and (10) "improving teacher-board relations." For the "board as a whole," the ranking was the same, except "board of education self-evaluation" was substituted for "improving teacher-board relations." Although "some variation" (based on district location) and "substantial variation" (based on district size) were found to exist in relationship to those needs perceived to be most important, the various categories of board members agreed on the most important inservice needs and on the need for a program of local board member inservice education. Members and superintendents also concurred that local boards particularly need inservice experiences in each of the following areas, listed in descending order of importance: (1) "increasing the power and influence of local boards of education," (2) "improving the financial operations and financial condition of the schools," (3) "dealing more effectively with teacher personnel,"

(4) "providing quality education," and (5) "building better boards of education."¹³⁶

Summary

Local boards of education have traditionally played a crucial role in the schema of American public educational governance. The expressed degree of popular satisfaction with, and concomitant support for, public school programs and products has been directly influenced by the composite actions taken by school boards at the local level. As a consequence, those citizens elected or appointed to school board membership share the heavy responsibility to satisfy the expectations of the local citizenry and, concurrently, accommodate the escalating requirements of the various branches and agencies of the state and federal governments.

Throughout most of our nation's history, school boards functioned in a relatively stable and congenial environment. Within the past twenty years, however, they have increasingly had to cope with accelerated demands and mandates for change, a situation that has challenged the capacity of board members to resolve numerous problems that frequently transcend the schools. The contemporary environment, hallmarked by ever-escalating imperatives of boardsmanship, has caused many authorities to conclude that school boards are at a crossroads--that the continuation of local, lay-control over public schools may constitute an anachronism in educational governance.

¹³⁶Nicoloff, pp. 80-165.

Various authorities concur that today's school board members must evidence greater knowledge and be more skillful in the art of decision making if they are to meet those challenges confronting them. A primary method for facilitating the existent need is through the provision of continuous and systematic programs of inservice education, activities predicated upon the perceived needs of currently serving board members and designed to enhance their capacities as local school governors.

While all authorities concur that improving the capabilities of school board members is a key to enhancing the overall operation of America's public schools, a limited effort has thus far been made in studying the many facets of the inservice education for board members issue.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The writer, in Chapter II, confirms an intensifying concern relative to the critical need for more knowledgeable and skillful local school board members and the concomitant necessity to provide them with systematic and continuous programs of inservice education. It also substantiates the merit of involving currently serving board members in the determination of those inservice topics most appropriate to their needs.

The design of the study is presented in this chapter. Described are the design of the survey instrument, the population selected for study, the planning and conducting of the survey, the interviews with board presidents, and the statistical treatment of the obtained data.

Design of the Survey Instrument

A three-page survey instrument entitled "Inservice Education Questionnaire of Southwestern Michigan Public School Board Members" was designed for the study. It was constructed by the writer with the assistance of his committee chairman, a professor of measurement and evaluation, a professor of research design, and professional staff members of the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB).

The instrument consisted of thirty items and was subdivided into four parts, as follows:

1. Part I, "Your Opinion," presented the respondents with three general statements regarding local board member participation in inservice activities. Each statement necessitated a personal conclusion regarding its merit and solicited an "agree" or "disagree" response.

2. Part II, "Your Service," asked the respondents to indicate numerically how many years and months they had served on the local school board as of the date the survey was conducted.

3. Part III, "Planning for the Future," was further subdivided into six topical sections, each composed of three or more related statements, categorized as follows: (1) "Community Relations," (2) "Administration," (3) "Business and Finance," (4) "Teacher Personnel," (5) "Student Affairs," and (6) "General Topics." Each of the twenty included statements was followed by the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in ascending order. The directions to the respondent defined 1 as "unimportant," 2 as "of minor importance," 3 as "somewhat important," 4 as "very important," and 5 as "of crucial importance." Respondents were instructed to "circle the degree of importance you attach to each of these topics for future board inservice programs." Additionally, a blank line was provided following each of the topical sections, and respondents were encouraged to "add any topic you believe to be of sufficient importance to merit a future board inservice program."

4. Part IV, "Your Past Participation in Local, Regional, & State-Wide Inservice Education Programs," presented the respondents with six separate statements intended to determine their previous participation in local, regional, and/or state-wide inservice programs or in events having been sponsored by either the local county (or counties) chapter of MASB or by MASB itself. A "yes" or "no" response to each item was solicited.

All questionnaires were identical except for the inclusion of a specific code number, which was conspicuously handwritten on the first page. The confidential treatment of all responses was stated, with the individual instrument number being indicated for use "only to identify those who have responded."

Those items included in the survey instrument were developed following a review of the related literature, particular attention having been paid to those local board member surveys reported during the eight years immediately preceding the study. The two surveys, independently conducted by Nicoloff and Snyder, were of special interest and were, therefore, analyzed with extraordinary care.¹³⁷ An original pool of more than 200 potential items was reduced by fusing related topics and by eliminating those questions irrelevant to the purposes of the study. The instrument was revamped on four separate occasions and, in its final form, represented a consensus of experts and local board members regarding validity, reliability, clarity, length, and ease of administration.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ See Nicoloff, Appendix A; and NSBA Research Report 73-2, pp. 3-6.

¹³⁸ A copy of the survey questionnaire is included as Appendix B.

Description of the Population

The population selected for study comprised a universe of the 322 elected and appointed members serving on the seven-member boards of education of the forty-six Southwestern Michigan local public school districts sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth grade programs (K-12) at the time the study was conducted. Current board membership was the sole delimiting criterion used in the selection of participants. It was believed that the responses received from a population serving within a relatively small, homogeneous geographical area would be best suited to the stated purposes of the study.

In Table 3-1, an alphabetical listing of the included forty-six K-12 local school districts is presented; additionally, the communities in which their post offices are located, their 1979 official student enrollments, and the official district classification of each are indicated.¹³⁹

In Figure 3-1, that portion of the state of Michigan inclusive of the studied population, hereinbefore termed "Southwestern Michigan," is shown. It is predominantly a mixed rural, suburban, and urban area, having no metropolis served exclusively by a single public school district. All of the included local K-12 school board members serve in districts that are categorized as being of either the "third" or "fourth" class, a determination predicated upon their student

¹³⁹1980 Michigan Education Directory and Buyer's Guide
(Lansing: Michigan Education Directory, n.d.), pp. 118-218.

Table 3-1.--Alphabetical listing of K-12 local school districts, communities in which post offices are located, 1979 student enrollments, and official classification.

District	Location of Post Office	1979 Student Enrollment	Official Classification
Bangor Public Schools	Bangor	1730	4
Benton Harbor Area Schools	Benton Harbor	9028	3
Berrien Springs Public Schools	Berrien Springs	2164	4
Bloomington School District 16	Bloomington	1204	4
Brandywine Public Schools	Niles	2007	4
Bridgman Public School District	Bridgman	881	4
Buchanan Community Schools	Buchanan	2200	4
Burr Oak Community Schools	Burr Oak	375	4
Cassopolis Public Schools	Cassopolis	1800	4
Centreville Public Schools	Centreville	1000	4
Climax-Scotts Community Schools	Climax	785	4
Coloma Community Schools	Coloma	2624	3
Colon Community Schools	Colon	1090	4
Comstock Public Schools	Comstock	2745	3
Constantine Public Schools	Constantine	1601	4
Covert Public Schools	Covert	732	4
Decatur Public Schools	Decatur	1362	4
Dowagiac-Union School District	Dowagiac	3506	3
Eau Claire Public Schools	Eau Claire	1031	4
Edwardsburg Public Schools	Edwardsburg	2079	4
Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools	Galesburg	1487	4
Galien Township Schools	Galien	750	4
Gobles Public Schools	Gobles	1135	4

Table 3-1.--Continued.

District	Location of Post Office	1979 Student Enrollment	Official Classification
Gull Lake Community Schools	Richland	2856	3
Hartford Public Schools	Hartford	1449	4
Kalamazoo School District	Kalamazoo	14083	3
Lakeshore Public Schools	Stevensville	3555	3
Lawrence Public Schools	Lawrence	830	4
Lawton Community Schools	Lawton	1000	4
Marcellus Community Schools	Marcellus	1045	4
Mattawan Consolidated Schools	Mattawan	2189	4
Mendon Community Schools	Mendon	858	4
New Buffalo Area Schools	New Buffalo	1175	4
Niles Community Schools	Niles	5285	3
Parchment Schools	Parchment	2000	4
Paw Paw Public Schools	Paw Paw	2177	4
Portage Public Schools	Portage	9302	3
River Valley School District	Three Oaks	1962	4
St. Joseph Public Schools	St. Joseph	3244	3
Schoolcraft Community Schools	Schoolcraft	882	4
South Haven School District	South Haven	3214	3
Sturgis Public Schools	Sturgis	3098	3
Three Rivers Community Schools	Three Rivers	3300	3
Vicksburg Community Schools	Vicksburg	2794	3
Watervliet Public Schools	Watervliet	1500	4
White Pigeon Community Schools	White Pigeon	1522	4



Figure 3-1.--The geographical area, termed Southwestern Michigan, which included the population of the study.

enrollments, as annually enumerated and reported in accordance with the Michigan General School Laws.¹⁴⁰

In Figure 3-2, the current distribution of the forty-six Southwestern Michigan K-12 public school districts, by official classification, is shown. Thirty-two districts, serving fewer than 2,400 students, are of the "fourth" class; fourteen districts, serving more than 2,400 but fewer than 30,000 students, are of the "third" class. Within the population selected for study, 224 members (69.57 percent) serve on the boards of "fourth"-class districts; 98 members (30.43 percent) serve on the boards of "third"-class districts.

Planning and Conducting the Survey

In order to obtain an accurate listing of those citizens who had served as members on the included local school boards since 1970, and, more specifically, those who currently held membership, it was necessary to secure the assistance of each intermediate district and local district superintendent. A phone call was made to the five intermediate school district superintendents, explaining the forthcoming survey and its intended purposes. The cooperation of each was secured, and lists revealing that 716 individuals had served during the period January 1, 1970, through July 15, 1979, were sent to the writer. The five lists were then reconstituted into a separate listing for each of the forty-six local school districts and were sent to the superintendents in the local districts, together with an

¹⁴⁰Michigan, General School Laws and Administrative Rules, pp. 11, 20.

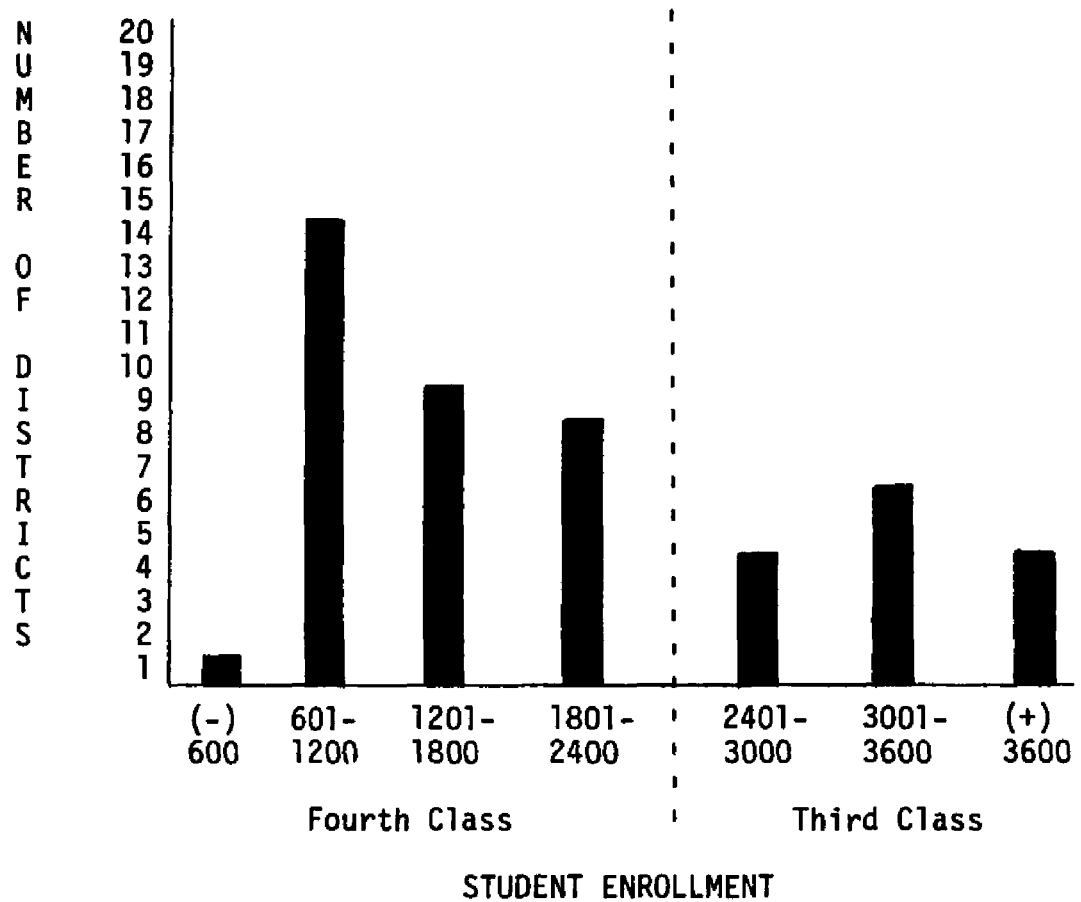


Figure 3-2.--Distribution of the forty-six Southwestern Michigan K-12 school districts by student enrollment and official classification.

accompanying letter explaining the project and requesting their assistance in verifying the included information.¹⁴¹ On the basis of the returned data, a revised listing, including the names and addresses of 679 former and present board members, was constructed. This listing was subdivided into two parts, so as to present separately in alphabetical order the 357 persons who, although having previously served since 1970, were no longer board members, and a similar listing of those 322 persons currently serving on local school boards.

A pretest of the survey instrument was conducted during the month of August, 1979. Seventy-five of the 357 former members (21 percent) were randomly selected for participation. Responses were received from fifty-eight (77.34 percent) former members. Their comments, especially those pertaining to the format of the instrument and to the individual questions, proved invaluable in refining the questionnaire into its final form.

A telephone call was made to each local district superintendent in early September, 1979, in an effort to ascertain whether or not there had been any changes in board membership since the preceding verification. Three corrections to the listing were made as a result of this effort.

On September 24, 1979, a copy of the questionnaire and an accompanying letter explaining the purposes, scope, and time scenario of the survey were sent to the local superintendents for their review

¹⁴¹The letter to local superintendents is included as Appendix C.

and consideration.¹⁴² One week later, an introductory letter signed by the author and by the Executive Director of MASB was sent to each local board member.¹⁴³ Approximately one week following the mailing of the introductory letter, in which board members were alerted to the importance of the project, a copy of the survey instrument and an accompanying letter--together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope--were mailed to the population of the study.¹⁴⁴ Three weeks after the initial mailing of survey instruments, a follow-up procedure, intended to maximize responses, was instituted, as follows: (1) a second survey instrument, coded the same as the first, and an accompanying letter--together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope--were mailed to all nonrespondents;¹⁴⁵ (2) at the same time, a letter was sent to each superintendent, indicating those of his board members who had not responded, requesting his personal intervention;¹⁴⁶ and (3) four weeks after the initial mailing of survey instruments, a personal telephone call was made to each of the sixty-two board members who had not yet responded.

¹⁴²The second letter sent to local superintendents is included as Appendix D.

¹⁴³The introductory letter sent to school board members is included as Appendix E.

¹⁴⁴The letter, accompanying the survey instrument, sent to school board members is included as Appendix F.

¹⁴⁵The second letter, sent to nonrespondents, is included as Appendix G.

¹⁴⁶The third letter, sent to local superintendents requesting their assistance with nonrespondents, is included as Appendix H.

The survey was completed on December 1, 1979, at which time 277 of the population of 322 local board members (86.02 percent) had responded. A review of the list of board members revealed that a 100 percent response was achieved from eighteen school boards, encompassing 126 members; twenty-seven other boards, encompassing 189 members, evidenced a majority (four or more of the seven members) response; from only one board did a majority of the members (four of the seven) fail to respond.

Interviews With Board Presidents

As an adjunct to the conduct of the survey, an interview was held with ten of the included forty-six board presidents. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain their opinions regarding the survey instrument, the general results, and those actions that might be instituted to increase local board member participation in future inservice education programs. It was felt that the presidents, by virtue of their leadership role, could provide valuable insights regarding the obtained data and that they would be best able to recommend appropriate courses for future inservice initiatives. The ten presidents, selected at random, were contacted regarding their willingness to participate in an interview; all agreed to do so. A questionnaire, on which the percentage of responses for Parts I, III, and IV had been recorded, was mailed to each participant. An interview guide sheet and an accompanying letter of explanation were also included in the mailing.¹⁴⁷ An interview schedule was arranged at

¹⁴⁷The letter and interview guide sent to board presidents is included as Appendix I.

the convenience of each board president, and interviews commenced one week following the mailing of the aforementioned documents.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

The statistical treatment of the data was accomplished through the use of those facilities at the Computer Center operated by Andrews University at Berrien Springs, Michigan. The data were processed through a Xerox Sigma-VI computer, which had been specifically programmed for the statistical analysis of educational research surveys. Each questionnaire was checked for completeness and submitted to the Center for transfer to punch-cards and verification. With the exception of those handwritten responses indicated on the blank line following each of the six topical sections, comprising Part III of the questionnaire, the raw score method and variance for a population formula were used throughout in computing the results. The obtained data were reported on ordinal and/or interval scales.

The computer provided an individual-item summary including the frequency, percentage, mean, median, standard deviation, and semi-interquartile range for each of the included twenty-three statements and seven questions. In addition, a mean, median, standard deviation, and semi-interquartile range were calculated on each of the six topical sections comprising Part III of the questionnaire, each section being considered, for the purposes of these calculations, as a whole.

The computer's calculations were checked at random to verify the results and accuracy in accordance with program directions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The writer sought to ascertain the current inservice education needs, and the past participation in inservice education events, of a currently serving population of local school board members. To these ends, a survey questionnaire was mailed in the fall of 1979 to each of the 322 members, elected or appointed to office, on the forty-six Southwestern Michigan boards of education sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth grade programs.

In this chapter the writer reports the findings of the study through an analysis of the obtained data, as reported by the 277 board members (86.02 percent) who responded to the survey questionnaire. Also presented is a narrative report of the summarized opinions of ten randomly selected board presidents relative to the survey instrument, the generalized results of the survey, and actions that could be taken in an effort to increase local board member participation in future inservice education events.

The Importance of Inservice Education to Board Members

In the first three questions, board members were asked to "agree" or "disagree" with statements pertaining to the importance of school board candidate orientation and board member participation in

inservice education programs. Approximately two-thirds (63 percent) of the respondents disagreed with a requirement that would mandate the completion of an orientation program, relating to the responsibilities of board members, by school board candidates prior to their running for office. However, when asked whether or not newly elected or appointed members should be required to complete an inservice program, as defined by local board written policy and during their first year of service, more than 66 percent of the respondents agreed. Additionally, more than 81 percent of the respondents also agreed that continuing inservice education "is vitally important" to any board member who desires to perform his or her duties well. (See Table 4-1.)

Length of Service on the School Board

As Table 4-2 shows, Southwestern Michigan board members ranged in longevity of service from less than one month to more than twenty-eight years and three months, with a mean longevity of four years-two months and a median of three years-three months. The distribution of respondents demonstrated a pronounced negative skew, as follows: 168 members (60.65 percent) had served less than one elected term of four years; a total of 234 members (84.48 percent) had served for less than two elected terms of eight years; and only forty-three members (15.52 percent) had served on the local board for more than eight years.

Table 4-1.--Respondent opinions on school board candidate and board member participation in inservice education programs.

Statement	No Response		Agree		Disagree		Mean	Mdn.
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Candidates for local boards should be <u>required</u> to complete an orientation program relating to school board member responsibilities <u>before</u> running for office	1	.36	101	36.46	175	63.18	1.63	1.71
Newly elected or appointed members should be <u>required to complete</u> an inservice <u>program</u> , as spelled out in local board written policy during their <u>first year</u> of service	2	.72	185	66.79	90	32.49	1.33	1.24
Continuing inservice education is vitally important to any board member who wishes to perform his/her duties well	3	1.08	225	81.23	49	17.69	1.19	1.11

Table 4-2.--Length of service of Southwestern Michigan board members (in years).

Years of Service	f	%	Years of Service	f	%
0	47	16.97	17	2	.72
1	38	13.72	18	1	.36
2	40	14.44	19	0	...
3	43	15.52	20	0	...
4	22	7.94	21	0	...
5	10	3.61	22	0	...
6	22	7.94	23	0	...
7	12	4.33	24	0	...
8	13	4.69	25	0	...
9	8	2.90	26	0	...
10	6	2.18	27	0	...
11	2	.72	28	1	.36
12	2	.72	Total	277	100.00
13	2	.72			
14	4	1.44	Range	.1-28.3 years	
15	1	.36	Mean	4.2 years	
16	1	.36	Mdn.	3.3 years	

Figure 4-1 graphically illustrates the distribution of board members according to length of service on their local school boards.

The Need for Future Inservice on Community Relations Topics

Each of the three topics listed was rated by a majority of respondents as being between "somewhat important" and "of crucial importance," as follows: (1) "Improving Communications With the Public," with a mean of 4.30, had the highest average rating within the "Community Relations" category. The vast majority (87 percent) of respondents indicated that this subject was either "very important" or "of crucial importance," while less than 2 percent viewed it as

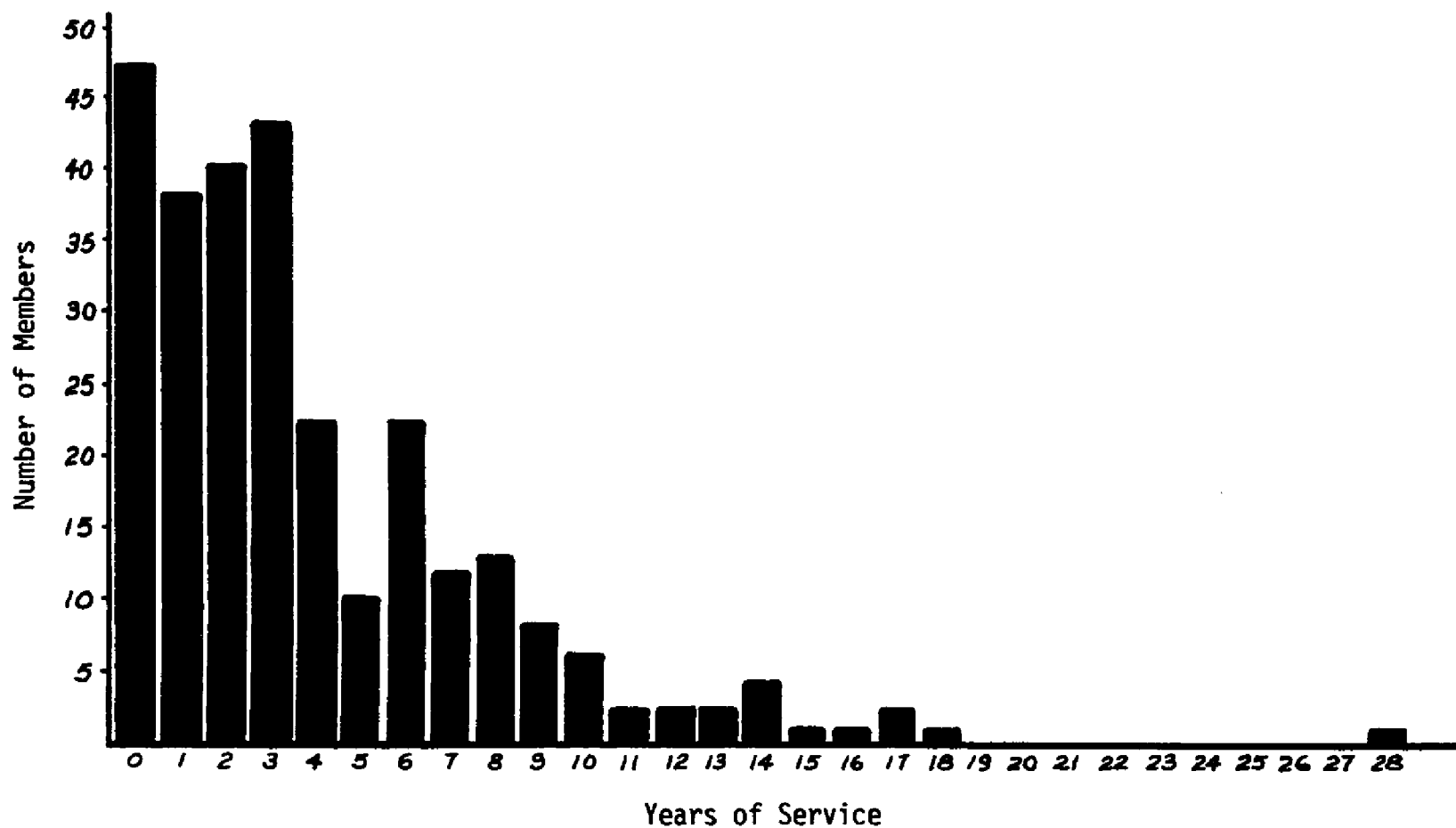


Figure 4-1.--Graphic illustration of the distribution of Southwestern Michigan board members (by years of service).

being "unimportant"; (2) "Building a Permanent Base of Community Support" had a mean of 4.23, with more than 82 percent of respondents viewing this subject as being either "very important" or "of crucial importance" to their inservice needs; and (3) although "The Role and Function of Advisory Committees" was viewed as being substantially less important than the preceding two topics, it had a mean of 3.30, with 230 respondents (83 percent) having reported it as being "somewhat important," "very important," or "of crucial importance." (See Table 4-3.)

Additional Community Relations Topics Submitted by Respondents

Respondents submitted twelve additional topics, which they believed to be of sufficient importance to merit a future inservice program, within the "Community Relations" category, as follows:

(1) Desegregation; (2) Why Millage Elections Must Be Planned for at Great Lead Times; (3) Policy Matters Versus Administrative Matters; (4) Negotiations Inservice for the Public; (5) Millage Campaign Programs; (6) How to Encourage Attendance at Board Meetings; (7) How to Take Valid Opinion Polls; (8) Ways of Using the Local Media; (9) When or When Not to Have Closed Session Meetings; (10) Informing the Public of Vital Issues; (11) Increasing Public Involvement; and (12) Working Relationships With the City Council.

The Need for Future Inservice on Administration Topics

Each of the three topics listed was rated by a majority of the respondents as being between "somewhat important" and "of crucial

Table 4-3.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on Community Relations topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance						Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q
	No Response	Unimportant	Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance						
	f %	f %	f %	f %	f %	f %						
Improving Communications With the Public	3 1.08	3 1.08	1 .36	28 10.11	121 43.68	121 43.68	4.30	.75	4.37	3.80	4.93	.57
Building a Permanent Base of Community Support . . .	6 2.17	2 .72	4 1.44	36 13.00	116 41.88	113 40.79	4.23	.79	4.31	3.72	4.90	.59
The Role and Function of Advisory Committees . .	7 2.53	7 2.53	33 11.91	121 43.68	89 32.13	20 7.22	3.30	.87	3.29	2.73	3.97	.62

importance," as follows: (1) "Improving Administrator Morale" had a mean response of 3.57. The largest number of board members (41 percent) indicated this subject as being "very important," while less than 2 percent perceived it to be "unimportant." (2) A total of 117 respondents (42 percent) viewed "Setting Administrator Salaries & Fringe Benefits Programs" as being "somewhat important"; an additional 141 respondents (50 percent) said that it was either "very important" or "of crucial importance" to them. The topic had a mean of 3.57. (3) "Developing a Strong Administrative Team" had a mean of 4.15 and was clearly perceived as the most important "Administration" topic presented. A total of 219 respondents (79 percent) indicated this subject as being either "very important" or "of crucial importance" to them. (See Table 4-4.)

Additional Administration Topics Submitted by Respondents

Respondents submitted an additional thirteen topics for consideration under the "Administration" category, as follows:

(1) Superintendent Evaluations, (2) Evaluation of the Administrative Team--Collectively and Individually, (3) Development of Board and Administrator Relations, (4) Inservice Programs for Administrators, (5) Weeding-out Weak Administrators, (6) Administrator Performance Reviews, (7) Setting-up an Evaluation System for Administrators, (8) Does Strong Administrative "Team" Effort Limit Creative Problem Solving?, (10) The Responsibilities of Administrators, (11) The Communication of Common Goals Between Boards and Administrators, (12) Improving Communications, and (13) Administrator Unions.

Table 4-4.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on Administration topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance						Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q
	No Response	Unimportant	Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance						
	f	%	f	%	f	%						
Improving Administrator Morale	4 1.44	5 1.81	19 6.86	99 35.74	114 41.16	36 13.00	3.57	.87	3.62	2.95	4.22	.64
Setting Administrator Salaries & Fringe Bene- fits Programs .	3 1.08	3 1.08	13 4.69	117 42.24	108 38.99	33 11.91	3.57	.80	3.54	2.95	4.17	.61
Developing a Strong Admin- istrative Team	5 1.81	6 2.17	9 3.25	38 13.72	105 37.91	114 41.16	4.15	.93	4.29	3.64	4.90	.63

The Need for Future Inservice on
Business & Finance Topics

Respondents rated each of the three topics included in the "Business & Finance" category as being between "somewhat important" and "of crucial importance," as follows: (1) "Understanding State Aid Calculations" had a mean of 3.69, with 119 board members (42 percent) viewing this subject as "very important." (2) Somewhat surprisingly, "Going After & Getting Federal Dollars" had the lowest mean rating (3.44) within the category. Although the largest single number of respondents indicated the subject as being "very important," the distribution of responses was more evenly divided than was true in either of the other two categorical topics. Only 15 percent said this subject was "of crucial importance," while more than 18 percent reported it as being either "unimportant" or "of minor importance." (3) "Coping With Inflation" had the highest mean (4.08) within the category. More than 77 percent of the respondents reported this subject to be either "very important" or "of crucial importance" to them, while less than 7 percent reported it as being either "unimportant" or "of minor importance." (See Table 4-5.)

Additional Business & Finance Topics
Submitted by Respondents

Respondents submitted an additional thirteen topics for consideration under the "Business & Finance" category, as follows: (1) Budget and Accounting Procedures, (2) Understanding Your Schools' Budget; (3) School Accounting Principles, (4) Putting Pressure on the State to Give More Money Due the Schools, (5) Setting Priorities for

Table 4-5.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on Business & Finance topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance						Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q						
	No Response	Unimportant	Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance												
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%									
Understanding State Aid Calculations .	4	1.44	6	2.17	22	7.94	74	26.71	119	42.96	52	18.77	3.69	.94	3.79	3.04	4.36	.66
Going After & Getting Federal Dollars . . .	3	1.08	14	5.05	38	13.72	78	28.16	102	36.82	42	15.16	3.44	1.07	3.57	2.71	4.24	.76
Coping With Inflation . .	3	1.08	8	2.89	9	3.25	43	15.52	108	38.99	106	38.27	4.08	.97	4.21	3.58	4.85	.64

Budget Cuts, (6) Understanding Local Budgets, (7) Understanding Business Policies, (8) Budget Analysis, (9) Getting the Best Business Agent as Administrative Assistant, (10) The Pros and Cons of Year-Round Schools, (11) Administrator Responsibilities in Paring Budgets, (12) Getting the Most With Limited Finances, and (13) The "Price" of Federal Dollars.

The Need for Future Inservice on
Teacher Personnel Topics

As Table 4-6 shows, all three topics in this category were viewed by respondents as being between "somewhat important" and "of crucial importance," as follows: (1) "Selecting and Retaining Excellent Teachers" had a mean of 4.23--the highest of the three items indicated. More than 79 percent of the respondents said this subject was either "very important" or "of crucial importance" to them. Of the 219 board members responding in this manner, 146 (52 percent) indicated the subject to be "of crucial importance." (2) "Inexpensive Techniques for Staff Improvement" had a mean of 3.80, the lowest within the category. The largest number of respondents (40 percent) rated this subject as being "very important," while less than 1 percent perceived it to be "unimportant." (3) The majority of respondents (73 percent) reported "Improving Teacher-School Board Relations" as being either "very important" or "of crucial importance." This subject had a mean rating of 3.99. (See Table 4-6.)

Table 4-6.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on Teacher Personnel topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance						Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q
	No Response	Unimportant	Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance						
f %	f %	f %	f %	f %	f %							
Selecting & Retaining Excellent Teachers	5 1.81	7 2.53	16 5.78	30 10.83	73 26.35	146 52.71	4.23	1.03	4.57	3.71	5.03	.66
Inexpensive Techniques for Staff Improvement . .	6 2.17	2 .72	19 6.86	74 26.71	113 40.79	63 22.74	3.80	.90	3.86	3.13	4.46	.66
Improving Teacher-School Board Rela- tions	6 2.17	4 1.44	9 3.25	55 19.86	120 43.32	83 29.96	3.99	.88	4.06	3.50	4.68	.59

Additional Teacher Personnel Topics
Submitted by Respondents

An additional twenty-one topics were submitted, by the respondents, under the "Teacher Personnel" category. The topics, representing the largest supplement of items received under any one of the categorical headings, were as follows: (1) Training Administrators in Teacher Selection Procedures, (2) Legal Aspects of Teacher Employment, (3) Improving Teacher Morale--two submissions, (4) Developing Alternative Methods of Compensation, (5) A Thorough Evaluation of the Teaching Staff, (6) The Role of the Board in Teacher Evaluation Procedures, (7) Understanding Relationships Within a Teachers' Union, (8) How to Eliminate Poor Teachers, (9) Discharging Tenured Teachers, (10) Eliminating Ineffective Teachers, (11) Understanding the Power of the Michigan Education Association, (12) Finalizing Teacher Contracts Before the Opening of School, (13) Self-evaluation for Teachers, (14) Developing Gifted & Talented Programs Using Present Staff and Facilities, (15) Administrator Responsibilities in Teacher Evaluation, (16) Teachers' Morale, (17) How to Maintain a High Level of Staff Morale, (18) Improving Teacher Morale, (19) Understanding Union Domination of the Local Negotiations Process, and (20) Understanding the Staff Reduction Process.

The Need for Future Inservice on
Student Affairs Topics

"Improving Student Achievement" received a mean of 4.36, the highest of the three topics listed in the "Student Affairs" category. More than 50 percent of the respondents indicated this subject

to be "of crucial importance," while less than 3 percent perceived it to be "unimportant" or "of minor importance."

"Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities" had a mean of 3.55, with the largest single number of board members indicating the subject to be "somewhat important."

The most even distribution of responses, within the "Student Affairs" category, was recorded in response to the topic: "Establishing a Minimal Competency Testing Program." With a mean of 3.41, this topic was viewed, on the whole, as being between "somewhat important" and "very important." (See Table 4-7.)

Additional Student Affairs Topics Submitted by Respondents

Respondents submitted an additional fifteen topics for future inservice consideration in conjunction with the "Student Affairs" category, as follows: (1) Methods of Building Better Parent-Teacher-Student Communications at the High School Level, (2) Health Education in the Schools, (3) Improving Minority Student Achievement, (4) Improved Student and Administrator Communications, (5) Getting Parents to Care, (6) Understanding Standardized Testing, (7) Keeping "Dope" Off the Campus, (8) Establishing and Maintaining an Excellent Curriculum, (9) Measuring Success in Education, (10) Improving Student Involvement and School Pride, (11) Ways of Recognizing Good Student Citizenship, (12) Counseling Students for the Future, (13) Motivating Students, (14) Discipline, and (15) Understanding Student Values.

Table 4-7.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on Student Affairs topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance						Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q
	No Response	Unimportant	Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance						
	f %	f %	f %	f %	f %	f %						
Improving Student Achievement . .	3 1.08	4 1.44	4 1.44	23 8.30	102 36.82	141 50.90	4.36	.81	4.53	3.87	5.01	.57
Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities . .	3 1.08	7 2.53	21 7.58	106 38.27	95 34.30	45 16.25	3.55	.94	3.53	2.88	4.25	.69
Establishing a Minimal Competency Program	7 2.53	16 5.78	42 15.16	75 27.08	89 32.13	48 17.33	3.41	1.12	3.52	2.63	4.28	.83

The Need for Future Inservice on General Topics

Board members were asked to respond to five items included within the "General Topics" category. In doing so, they rated two of the topics as being between "unimportant" and "somewhat important" to their future inservice needs. These two, "Consolidating School Districts" and "Minorities Awareness Training," received the lowest ratings of all of the topics included in the survey instrument.

The topic, "Collective Bargaining in an Era of Limits," had a mean of 3.77. More than 40 percent of the respondents indicated this subject to be "very important" to them, while a total of 176 board members indicated it as being "somewhat important," "very important," or "of crucial importance."

In rating "Minorities Awareness Training," only fifty board members (18 percent) indicated this subject as being either "very important" or "of crucial importance." Conversely, 114 respondents (41 percent) said it was "unimportant" or "of minor importance." The mean of this topic was 2.70.

With a mean of 1.09, "Consolidating School Districts" received the lowest rating in the "General Topics" category and in the entire survey. More than two-thirds (67 percent) of the respondents viewed this subject as either "unimportant" or "of minor importance." Only 10 percent reported it as being "very important" or "of crucial importance."

The topic perceived to be of greatest importance within the category was "Influencing the State Legislature." With a mean of

3.85, 182 respondents (65 percent) viewed the topic as being either "very important" or "of crucial importance."

The final topic, "Self-evaluation for Boards of Education," had a mean of 3.64 and was reported by 247 board members as being between "somewhat important" and "of crucial importance" to them. (See Table 4-8.)

Additional General Topics Submitted by Respondents

Respondents submitted an additional ten topics, within the General Topics category, as follows: (1) Unbiased Facts About School Integration, (2) Programs for the Gifted, (3) Special Education Mandates, (4) Vocational-Technical Training Awareness, (5) The Differences Between Setting Policy and Directing Actions, (6) Special Education in the 80s, (7) Influencing Federal Legislation, (8) Establishing Goals for School Programs, (9) Home and Classroom Student Discipline, and (10) Lawsuits & Legal Liabilities.

Ranking of All Inservice Program Topics by Mean Scores

As Table 4-9 shows, six of the twenty topics (30 percent) included in the survey questionnaire had mean scores of 4.0 or higher and were, therefore, viewed by respondents as being between "very important" and "of crucial importance" to their inservice education needs. An additional twelve topics (60 percent) had means between 3.0 and 3.99 ("somewhat important" and "very important"). Only two topics (10 percent) were rated as being between "of minor importance" and "somewhat important" (means between 2.0 and 2.99). None of the

Table 4-8.--Board members' rating of perceived needs for future inservice programs on General topics.

Topic	Rating of Importance										Mean	Std. Dev.	Mdn.	Q1	Q2	Q
	No Response	Unimportant		Of Minor Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Of Crucial Importance									
		1	2	3	4	5										
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%							
Collective Bargaining in an Era of Limits . .	5 1.81	6 2.17	16 5.78	74 26.71	115 41.52	61 22.02	3.77	.94	3.85	3.12	4.44	.66				
Minorities Awareness Training . .	6 2.17	32 11.55	82 29.60	107 38.63	35 12.64	15 5.42	2.70	1.02	2.70	1.94	3.33	.70				
Consolidating School Districts . .	10 3.61	101 36.46	85 30.69	51 18.41	21 7.58	9 3.25	2.07	1.09	1.88	1.16	2.78	.81				
Influencing the State Legislature .	3 1.08	8 2.89	18 6.50	66 23.83	97 35.02	85 30.69	3.85	1.03	3.96	3.14	4.69	.78				
Self-eval- uation for Boards of Education . .	3 1.08	14 5.05	13 4.69	88 31.77	103 37.18	56 20.22	3.64	1.02	3.71	2.97	4.38	.70				

Table 4-9.--Ranking of all inservice program topics (by mean scores).

Rank	Topic	Mean
1	Improving Student Achievement	4.3577
2	Improving Communications With the Public	4.2993
3	Building a Permanent Base of Community Support	4.2325
4	Selecting and Retaining Excellent Teachers	4.2316
5	Developing a Strong Administrative Team	4.1471
6	Coping With Inflation	4.0766
7	Improving Teacher-School Board Relations	3.9926
8	Influencing the State Legislature	3.8504
9	Inexpensive Techniques for Staff Improvement	3.7970
10	Collective Bargaining in an Era of Limits	3.7684
11	Understanding State Aid Calculations	3.6923
12	Self-evaluation for Boards of Education	3.6350
13	Improving Administrator Morale	3.5751
14	Setting Administrator Salaries & Fringe Benefits Programs	3.5657
15	Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities	3.5474
16	Going After & Getting Federal Dollars	3.4380
17	Establishing a Minimal Competency Testing Program	3.4111
18	The Role & Function of Advisory Committees	3.3037
19	Minorities Awareness Training	2.7011
20	Consolidating School Districts	2.0712

topics presented was perceived by respondents, on the average, as being less than "of minor importance."

"Improving Student Achievement," with a mean of 4.3577, received the highest average rating from respondents. "Consolidating School Districts," with a mean of 2.0712, had the lowest mean and was, therefore, viewed by the respondents as the least important topic presented.

Interestingly, all of the five topics having the highest average ratings in importance are what might appropriately be termed "people oriented"; they directly relate to groups with which board members must continuously interact--students, the public, teachers, and administrators. Conversely, those five topics receiving the lowest average ratings in importance are more "technically oriented"; they present subjects with which board members may not have been, or may choose not to become, involved.

Ranking of All Inservice Program Topics by Median Scores

Ranking the inservice topics by median scores reveals that ten of the twenty items (50 percent) remained in the same order as when they were ranked by their mean scores. However, seven topics (35 percent) achieved median rankings of 4.0 or higher and were indicated by respondents as being between "very important" and "of crucial importance." An additional eleven topics (55 percent) had median ratings of 3.0 and 3.99 ("somewhat important" and "very important"). Finally, two topics (10 percent) had median ratings between 1.0 and 2.99 ("unimportant" and "of minor importance").

The nineteenth and twentieth rankings, as determined by both mean and median, were accorded the same two topics: "Minorities Awareness Training" and "Consolidating School Districts." (See Table 4-10.)

Ranking of Inservice Categories of Topics
by Mean Scores

The "Teacher Personnel" category of topics received the highest average rating of importance and was the single category having a mean (4.0074) between "very important" and "of crucial importance." Each of the other five categories had a mean score between 3.2113 and 3.9472 ("somewhat important" and "very important"). The "General Topics" category was viewed, on the average, as having topics of least importance to the respondents. (See Table 4-11.)

Ranking of Inservice Categories of Topics
by Median Scores

As Table 4-12 shows, respondents ranked the "Teacher Personnel" and "Community Relations" categories of topics as the two most important to their inservice program needs. Each of the remaining four categories of topics had a median score between 3.29 and 3.89 ("somewhat important" and "very important"). The "General Topics" category was, as in the case of the mean ranking, viewed as least important.

A comparison of the ranks reveals that four of the six categories of topics remained in the same positions when ordered by their mean and median scores. Only the fourth and fifth ranks,

Table 4-10.--Ranking of all inservice program topics (by median scores).

Rank	Topic	Median
1	Selecting & Retaining Excellent Teachers	4.57
2	Improving Student Achievement	4.53
3	Improving Communications With the Public	4.37
4	Building a Permanent Base of Community Support	4.31
5	Developing a Strong Administrative Team	4.29
6	Coping With Inflation	4.21
7	Improving Teacher-School Board Relations	4.06
8	Influencing the State Legislature	3.96
9	Inexpensive Techniques for Staff Improvement	3.86
10	Collective Bargaining in an Era of Limits	3.85
11	Understanding State Aid Calculations	3.79
12	Self-evaluation for Boards of Education	3.71
13	Improving Administrator Morale	3.62
14	Going After & Getting Federal Dollars	3.57
15	Setting Administrator Salaries & Fringe Benefits Programs	3.54
16	Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities	3.53
17	Establishing a Minimal Competency Testing Program	3.52
18	The Role & Function of Advisory Committees	3.29
19	Minorities Awareness Training	2.70
20	Consolidating School Districts	1.81

"Administration" and "Business & Finance," were reversed, in order of perceived importance, when the dual comparison was made.

Table 4-11.--Ranking of inservice categories of topics (by mean scores).

Rank	Category	Mean
1	Teacher Personnel	4.0074
2	Community Relations	3.9472
3	Student Affairs	3.7738
4	Administration	3.7619
5	Business & Finance	3.7357
6	General Topics	3.2113

Table 4-12.--Ranking of inservice categories of topics (by median scores).

Rank	Category	Median
1	Teacher Personnel	4.12
2	Community Relations	4.03
3	Student Affairs	3.89
4	Business & Finance	3.86
5	Administration	3.81
6	General Topics	3.29

Participation of Board Members in
Local Inservice Programs

When asked if they had participated in local inservice programs sponsored by the county or counties school boards association, 180 of the respondents (64 percent) answered affirmatively; 94 (33 percent) indicated that they had not attended such functions. (See Table 4-13.)

Table 4-13.--Participation of board members in local inservice programs.

Activity	No Response		Yes		No		Mean	Mdn.
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Local programs sponsored by the county (or counties) school board association	3	1.08	180	64.98	94	33.94	1.34	1.26

Participation of Board Members in
Regional Inservice Programs

As Table 4-14 shows, the past participation of board members in the three regional inservice activities sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) evidenced the most significant variation among any of the three levels of inservice programming. More than 44 percent of the respondents had attended at least one of the one-day drive-in conferences, while 54 percent had not done so. Slightly more than one-half of the respondents (50.5 percent) had attended a one-and-one-half day orientation workshop for new board

members and board officers; 48 percent had not participated in this event. However, only 57 respondents (20 percent) had attended a special topic seminar; 216 respondents (77 percent) had not done so.

Table 4-14.--Participation of board members in regional inservice programs.

Activity	No Response		Yes		No		Mean	Mdn.
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
One-day drive-in conferences sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards	3	1.08	113	44.40	151	54.51	1.55	1.59
One-and-one-half day orientation workshops for new board members and board officers sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards . .	3	1.08	140	50.54	134	48.38	1.49	1.48
One-and-one-half day special topic seminars sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards	4	1.44	57	20.58	216	77.98	1.70	1.87

Participation of Board Members in
Statewide Inservice Programs

The vast majority of respondents had never attended either of the two statewide inservice programs sponsored by MASB. Fewer than 30 percent had participated in the annual Saturday mid-winter conferences, while more than 69 percent had not done so. The annual fall conferences, which are of the longest duration of all MASB activities,

had been attended by 82 board members (29 percent), although 190 board members (68 percent) reported never having attended this function. (See Table 4-15.)

Table 4-15.--Participation of board members in statewide inservice programs.

Activity	No Response		Yes		No		Mean	Mdn.
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Saturday mid-winter conferences sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards	7	2.53	78	28.16	192	69.31	1.71	1.80
Two-and-one-half to three day fall conventions sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards	5	1.81	82	29.60	190	68.59	1.70	1.78

Interviews With Board Presidents

The ten presidents of local boards of education, having been selected and given, in advance, survey information in accordance with that procedure described in Chapter III, were asked to respond to the following three questions: "What is your overall opinion of the Questionnaire?" "What is your opinion regarding the general results (responses from local school board members)?" and "What can be done, in the future, to increase local board member participation in inservice education activities at the local, regional, and state levels?"

What Is Your Overall Opinion
of the Questionnaire?

Nine of the presidents (90 percent) described the survey instrument as being complete and evidencing good organization. They said that it "framed the right questions" and that it "presented issues which local board members either are or should be concerned with." The terms "comprehensive," "straightforward," and "well thought out" were used in describing the questionnaire.

One president (10 percent) said the instrument "came across as a list of probable problem topics of school districts, rather than as a possible list of topics with which members should be concerned for their inservice education." Although he said that the individual items presented "a good cross-section of current subjects of interest to board members," he suggested that "inservice presentations should not be linked to the here-and-now, but rather to expanding individual horizons into the future."

What Is Your Opinion Regarding the
General Results (Responses From
Local School Board Members)?

Five of the presidents (50 percent) said that the responses, overall, "were about what I expected them to be." The majority indicated that the significance which individual board members attached to the "Community Relations" category should have been anticipated, since "it is the most important thing a board of education does." While two presidents (20 percent) expressed "disappointment" that "so few board members felt orientation for board candidates should be required before permitting them to run for office, the majority

view was best stated by one president, as follows: "Overall, it seemed the responses indicated a desire for top-flight education with the least concern for money, money management, or employee morale--at least as inservice topics."

Individual board presidents expressed "surprise" over the results reported for each of the following questionnaire items:

1. The overwhelming agreement accorded the proposal that newly elected members should be required to complete a locally determined inservice program during their first year of service.

2. That so little apparent importance was attached to Items 12 ("Going After and Getting Federal Dollars"), 18 ("Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities"), 20 ("Minorities Awareness Training"), and 22 ("Consolidating School Districts").

3. The fact that a majority of local board members had attended one or more of the one-and-one-half day regional orientation workshops given for new members and board officers.

4. The lack of attendance, by local board members, at both of the statewide functions (mid-winter conferences and fall conventions).

5. The fact that questions "obviously administrative in nature" would be "of concern" to board members, who should "devote their energies to policy functions."

What Can Be Done, in the Future, to
Increase Local Board Member Participa-
tion in Inservice Education
Activities at the Local, Regional,
and State Levels?

The views expressed by the presidents were most insightful and candid relative to the planning for future inservice activities for local board members. The majority (70 percent) view the population of local board members as an amalgam of dichotomous elements: those individuals who are experienced, either by virtue of longevity on the board or as a result of their vocational involvements in professional or managerial positions, and those members who are inexperienced--as measured by the same criteria. For experienced board members, inservice programming should be of a short, survey, and practical-problem orientation; for those who are inexperienced, it should be longer, more in-depth, and necessarily philosophical. The presidents said that too many past inservice programs had, in an effort to appeal to all board members, failed to appreciate the basic dichotomy existent within the intended population, and, as a consequence, had been marginal in their appeal to both elements.

Six presidents (60 percent) said that all future inservice programs should be limited to a maximum of one day and should be conducted on a regional or local basis--that board members, particularly farmers and homemakers with young children, cannot extricate themselves from their vocational responsibilities for an extended period of time.

Three presidents (30 percent) indicated that those inservice events requiring an extended time period should be planned so as to incorporate weekends.

Two presidents (20 percent) indicated each of the following concerns: (1) that board leadership is crucial in convincing new members of both the importance and vital need for inservice education; (2) that local boards must be willing to commit adequate funds to defray those personal expenses incurred in attending inservice functions; (3) that both the local administration and MASB must continuously "sell" the need for board member inservice participation; and (4) that a listing of resource experts should be developed and disseminated to local boards for their use in conjunction with the presentation of programs, as may be deemed appropriate to the needs of local boards.

Individual presidents reported the following personal views for consideration in the planning of future inservice events:

1. A specific policy statement, relative to inservice, should be adopted by each local school board. Each board should, then, develop its inservice goals for a specific period of time-- "preferably a fiscal year"--and "measure its achievements in relation to its goals and policy statement."

2. The delivery techniques used in presenting inservice topics should be "diversified." In the past, there have been "too many instances of reliance on the lecture method" of presentation.

3. Statewide meetings are "valuable for rookies, but not for experienced members."

4. "You must realize that boards are only as good as they want to be. Therefore, MASB should continue to maintain the high quality in programming evidenced in past events."

5. "Distance is as much a problem as is time for many board members. . . . The costs of inservice must, in the future, be carefully weighed against the anticipated benefits."

6. "The superintendent is the 'key.' If he is willing to take the time to go with his board members, if he sees inservice as vitally important, and if he demonstrates the importance of such activities in his own life, I believe board members will catch the vision also."

Summary

Local school board members within Southwestern Michigan have had a relatively short tenure of service. Although the respondents ranged in longevity from less than one month to more than twenty-eight years and three months, the average board member had served only four years and two months at the time the survey was conducted. Furthermore, the population evidenced a pronounced negative skew, in which the median longevity was three years and three months, more than 60 percent of the respondents having served less than one elected term of four years.

The vast majority of respondents agreed that continuing inservice education is vitally important to all board members who wish to perform their duties well. Although the majority disagreed with the proposal that candidates for local boards should be required to

complete an orientation program prior to running for office, they supported a suggestion which, if instituted, would require the completion of a locally determined inservice program by newly elected or appointed members during their first year of service.

From among the six categories of topics presented to them, respondents reported their greatest inservice needs as being incorporated within the three having a "people" orientation--"Teacher Personnel," "Community Relations," and "Student Affairs." Conversely, they were least desirous of attending inservice presentations associated with the "technical" aspects of school district operation, as were presented in the three categories entitled "Business and Finance," "Administration," and "General Topics."

In addition to the twenty individual topics indicated on the survey questionnaire, respondents submitted another eighty-three items they believed to be of sufficient importance to merit future inservice programs.

Nearly two-thirds of the board members had attended one or more of the local inservice programs sponsored by the county, or counties, chapter of MASB. However, of those two activities sponsored by MASB on a regional basis, only 50 percent had attended an orientation workshop for new board members and board officers and less than 25 percent had attended a drive-in conference. Additionally, fewer than 30 percent had attended either of the two inservice events annually conducted on a statewide basis.

Board presidents overwhelmingly indicated their approval of the survey instrument, with 50 percent stating that the results were

approximately what they had anticipated. The majority suggested that future inservice presentations be designed for either experienced or inexperienced board members and conducted on either a local or regional basis. Other suggestions for enhancing local board member participation in future inservice activities included: (1) the assumption of greater responsibility by board officers and central office administrators for the attendance of all members, (2) the commitment of adequate funds at the local board level to defray those costs associated with inservice participation, (3) the establishment of inservice goals by and for each local board, and (4) a diversification in the method of presenting inservice topics.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the study, the conclusions, and implications for further research. The writer's recommendations pertaining to an overall design for future board member inservice education programming conclude the study.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to contribute toward an improvement in local board of education decision making through an investigation of individual member perceived need for, and past participation in, programs of inservice education at the local, regional, and statewide levels--events presented for the primary purpose of providing board members with current information vital to their arriving at knowledgeable decisions, as well as becoming more skillful in the performance of their duties as representatives of the public in local educational governance. It was intended that the study would have a direct application to each of the following: (1) the enhancement of that emphasis given board member inservice education at the local district level; (2) the encouragement of increased participation by local board members in inservice education events conducted at the local,

regional, and statewide levels; (3) the identification of specific topics of perceived need; and (4) the provision of current information to those local, regional, and statewide professionals having the responsibility for planning future board member inservice programs.

The study derived its significance from the writer's beliefs that the expertise demonstrated by local board members in coping with the vastly different external environment currently confronting them may determine the continued existence of local, lay-control over public education; and that despite an urgent need for more knowledgeable and skillful board members, a systematic approach to inservice education (as a primary technique for enhancing individual board member capability) is virtually nonexistent.

Review of Pertinent Literature

Throughout most of our nation's history, school boards functioned in a relatively stable and congenial environment. Within the past twenty years, however, they have increasingly had to cope with accelerated demands and mandates for change, a circumstance that has challenged the capacity of board members to resolve numerous problems that frequently transcend the schools. The contemporary environment, hallmarked by ever-escalating imperatives of boardsmanship, has caused many authorities to conclude that school boards are at a crossroads--that the continuation of local, lay-control over public schools may constitute an anachronism in educational governance.

The literature relevant to inservice education for local board members was found to be both limited and sporadic in nature. While numerous books, pamphlets, and articles addressed the need for more capable board members, as well as the importance of inservice events in improving their performance, a noticeable void in research pertinent to the planning and conducting of systematic programs of inservice education existed. All authorities agreed, however, that the development of inservice experiences appropriate to the needs of board members was foundational to improving their capabilities, which, in turn, was in juxtaposition to enhancing the governance process of America's public schools.

Each of the following issues and/or topics was synthesized into the review of the literature: (1) the functions of school boards; (2) the contemporary environment in local school governance; (3) the survival of local, lay-controlled school boards; (4) the escalating imperatives of boardmanship; (5) a profile of American public school board members; (6) the socialization of new school board members; (7) the value of systematic and continuous programs of inservice education; (8) past inservice programs sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards; and (9) ten dissertations relating to inservice education for school board members.

Design and Methodology

To assess the perceived needs of local public school board members and their past participation in inservice education programs at the local, regional, and statewide levels, a three-page survey

instrument entitled "Inservice Education Questionnaire of Southwestern Michigan Public School Board Members" was designed for the study. The questionnaire consisted of thirty items and was subdivided into four parts, as follows: (1) "Your Opinion"; (2) "Your Service"; (3) "Planning for the Future"; and (4) "Your Past Participation in Local, Regional, & State-Wide Inservice Education Programs." Each of the items, with the exception of one pertaining to length of service on the local board, solicited an "agree/disagree," "yes/no" response or necessitated the selection of a response on a five-point ("1" to "5") forced-choice scale. The submission of potential future inservice topics, in addition to those included in the questionnaire, was also encouraged. A pretest of the survey instrument, involving seventy-five former local board members, was completed approximately one month prior to the conduct of the survey.

The population selected for study comprised a universe of the 322 elected and appointed members serving on the boards of education of the forty-six Southwestern Michigan local public school districts sponsoring kindergarten through twelfth grade programs at the time the study was conducted. Current board membership was the sole delimiting criterion used in the selection of participants.

The mailing of an introductory letter, in which the study population was alerted to the forthcoming survey, preceded the initial distribution of survey instruments, and accompanying letters, by one week. Three weeks after the initial mailing of survey instruments, a second questionnaire, coded the same as the first, was mailed to each nonrespondent. At the same time, a letter was sent

to each local superintendent indicating those of his board members who had not responded and requesting his personal intervention. Four weeks after the initial mailing of survey instruments, a personal telephone call was made to each of those board members who had not responded to either the first or follow-up requests for compliance.

Following the conduct of the survey and an analysis of the obtained data, an interview was held with ten of the included forty-six board of education presidents. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain their opinions regarding the survey instrument, the generalized results, and those actions that might be taken in an effort to increase local board member participation in future inservice education programs.

Findings

The findings of the study were obtained through an analysis of the obtained data reported by the 277 board members (86.02 percent) who responded to the survey questionnaire. They were also based on the interviews conducted with the ten board of education presidents.

A simplified listing of the findings is as follows:

1. Local board members within Southwestern Michigan have had a relatively brief tenure of service, the average respondent having served on the board for four years and two months. Furthermore, the population evidenced a pronounced negative skew, in which the median longevity was three years and three months. More than 60 percent of the respondents had served less than one elected term of four years.

2. More than 80 percent of the respondents agreed that continuing inservice education is vitally important to all board members who desire to perform their duties in a competent manner.

3. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents disagreed with a proposal calling for the completion of a required orientation program by candidates for local boards prior to running for office.

4. More than two-thirds of the respondents agreed that newly elected or appointed members should be required to complete a locally determined inservice program during their first year of service.

5. Respondents reported their greatest inservice "needs," from among the six categories of topics presented, within the three areas having a "people" orientation: (1) "Teacher Personnel," (2) "Community Relations," and (3) "Student Affairs." Conversely, they evidenced less interest in those categories of topics pertaining to the technical aspects of school district operation: (1) "Administration," (2) "Business and Finance," and (3) "General Topics."

6. The six most highly rated individual topics having mean scores in excess of 4.0 (between "very important" and "of crucial importance") were as follows: (1) "Improving Student Achievement," (2) "Improving Communications With the Public," (3) "Building a Permanent Base of Community Support," (4) "Selecting and Retaining Excellent Teachers," (5) "Developing a Strong Administrative Team," and (6) "Coping With Inflation."

7. Only two topics, "Minorities Awareness Training" and "Consolidating School Districts," were rated as being less than "somewhat important."

8. An additional eighty-three topics, which respondents believed sufficiently important to merit future inservice program consideration, were submitted.

9. More than 64 percent of the respondents had attended one or more local inservice education programs.

10. While 51 percent of the respondents had attended at least one regional drive-in conference, less than half had attended the orientation workshops or special topic seminar events conducted on a regional basis.

11. Less than one-third of the respondents had attended either the annual mid-winter conference or fall convention events sponsored on a statewide basis.

12. The overwhelming majority (90 percent) of the board presidents reported their satisfaction with the survey instrument.

13. Board presidents believed that future inservice presentations should be designed for either experienced or inexperienced members and should be conducted on either a local or regional basis. Further, they believed that a maximum time period of one day should be imposed on all inservice activities for local board members.

14. Additional board presidents' suggestions relative to enhancing local member participation in future inservice events were as follows: (1) board officers and central office administrators must assume greater responsibility for the attendance of individual

members; (2) each individual board should establish inservice goals, based on local needs; (3) boards must be willing to defray those costs associated with inservice attendance by their members; and (4) methods of presenting inservice topics should be diversified.

Conclusions

The following conclusions appear to be justified on the basis of the findings in the study:

1. The asserted need for more knowledgeable and skillful public school board members, as reported in Chapter I, is corroborated by local board members. There is a clear consensus regarding the crucial importance of regular participation in inservice programs, particularly by those members desirous of capably discharging their responsibilities as representatives of the public in the process of local school governance.

2. Newly elected or appointed board members should be required to complete a planned program of inservice education during their first year of service. The selection of a design for these programs, however, should be exclusively determined by local boards of education, based upon local purposes and needs, and should be specified in a written policy statement. There is opposition to the mandating of inservice participation, other than as may be determined necessary by each local board for its members, and to any requirement for the orientation or familiarization of board candidates prior to their assumption of office.

3. The brief tenure of service reported by the study participants substantiates a continuing national phenomenon. The limited longevity attained by the average board member suggests an urgent need for a variety of inservice events--activities intended primarily to assist those who have had minimal experience in school governance--and for an accelerated effort in urging greater local board member attendance at these programs.

4. The sponsorship of inservice education programs will continue as a primary technique employed by private organizations, governmental agencies, institutions, and individuals interested in improving the capabilities of local board members, and, ultimately, the competence demonstrated by local boards of education themselves. Within Michigan, the Michigan Association of School Boards and its affiliated chapters are likely to remain the prime sponsors of inservice education events for local board members.

5. The previously described decentralized system of American public school governance, in tandem with virtually unrestricted citizen access to election or appointment to local boards of education, exacerbates the need for a multidimensional and multilevel approach to the provision of inservice programs. Local board members have diverse interests and needs, which will become even more pronounced as new and complex challenges are placed before them in the future.

6. Local board members have no desire to become merely diploma-conferring, cornerstone-laying dignitaries. The overwhelming majority recognize the urgent need to become, and to remain,

knowledgeable and skillful, particularly in those aspects of school governance directly related to client productivity and community involvement.

7. Inservice topics related to the technical aspects of the operation and/or functioning of school districts are of decidedly less interest and importance to local board members than are those concerning human involvement and achievement.

8. Time and cost are the two most significant factors influencing the decision made by board members to attend or to refrain from attending inservice education events. Those presentations held in closest proximity to the "home" district of the members and requiring the least expenditure of their time are the best attended.

9. Inservice programs should be planned and advertised as being intended for either experienced or inexperienced board members. Those events presented for the benefit of experienced members should require relatively little investment in time--preferably a few hours--and should be related to one specific problem or topic. Presentations designed to assist inexperienced members may be longer (although not to exceed one day), more in-depth in nature, and include a historical perspective of the topic or issue being considered.

10. An increase in the participation of board members in inservice events will be directly dependent upon a heightened emphasis, on the part of local board officers and central office administrators, regarding the importance of attendance and by a greater willingness, on the part of local boards, to defray those expenses associated with inservice participation.

Implications for Further Research

It is ironic, considering the crucial importance of the decisions reached by local boards of education, that there exists such a scant and inconclusive research base regarding board, and board member, behavior. Very limited, scientifically determined information is available to explain relationships among the numerous variables operant within the functioning, motivation, and socialization processes impacting the conclusions reached by boards, as well as by individual board members. Local school boards, as a topic for study, have received minimal attention from educational researchers.

The topic being considered in this study is also under-researched. Little is known about either the inservice education needs of local board members or their participation in inservice education programs, and the research that has been reported is largely descriptive in nature. A mere ten studies, relating to the training needs of, and training designs for, local board members have been published within the past twenty-five years. Among these, only two (Kammer, Colorado State College, 1968, and Dietzel, University of Michigan, 1980) have attempted to correlate effective board member behavior with attendance at inservice education events.

The findings of the study have significant implications for several organizations and institutions in Michigan. Among these are the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB), the affiliated county or counties chapters of MASB, the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA), and those institutions of higher

education sponsoring graduate programs in educational administration or educational leadership. In addition, and in concert with the study's stated purposes and intended uses, the following suggestions for further research are made:

1. There is widespread agreement that local boards should be actively involved in establishing mandatory inservice programs for their newly elected or appointed members. However, the number of boards that actually have instituted such programs, if any, has yet to be determined; nor have the designs of new member inservice programs been adequately studied.

2. The causes of board member turnover should be studied in detail. This continuing phenomenon, having dire consequences for the process of local school governance, is inadequately understood, being more frequently explained through testimonials than as the result of scholarly study. An effort should be made to determine whether a positive or negative correlation exists between the vocational pursuits of board members and their longevity on local boards, and whether or not any other variables can be correlated with longevity of service.

3. While it has often been suggested that a positive correlation exists between board member participation at inservice events and their improved "effectiveness," such a hypothesis is better categorized as a commonly held perception rather than as a scientifically determined conclusion. The impact of inservice attendance on individuals' performance, as well as on the enhanced effectiveness of local boards, should be further studied.

4. Of the twenty inservice topics included in the study, eighteen were reported as being at least "somewhat important." Since the planning and conducting of, as well as attendance at, inservice programs is both expensive and time consuming, a method for making the best selections from a myriad of potential topics will have to be determined. It is doubtful that there will ever be sufficient time and money to present all of the topics of interest to local board members. Therefore, it is very important that a highly reliable needs-assessment process be utilized in the determination of those subjects of greatest interest to the greatest number of board members. The decision reached by board members regarding their attendance at inservice events will likely continue to be heavily influenced by those topics selected for presentation--as well as by the costs associated with attendance.

5. A board member inservice program "attendance profile" should be developed on a statewide basis. Within Michigan, there are no available data regarding those members who have attended inservice events, nor has a method been devised for predicting member involvement in the future. An effort should be made to determine whether or not certain individuals are predisposed to attending many inservice activities, while others are likely to attend few or none; and, if so, those factors contributing to such predispositions. While attendance will likely remain best at events conducted closest to "home," and at those requiring the least expenditure of time, further study should be made regarding who the participants and nonparticipants are and what characteristics, if any, each group has in common.

6. In the planning of past inservice programs, Michigan's 529 local K-12 school boards have generally been dealt with as though they constituted a monolithic entity. Such a circumstance is likely not the case and, therefore, additional study of the perceived needs of boards of education--considered as a whole--should be made. The success of a regionalized and/or localized inservice thrust, as has been suggested, will likely depend upon a thoughtful consideration of those numerous factors contributing to the dissimilarity of needs, rather than similarity in needs, existent among local boards of education.

7. The study should be replicated in other geographical regions in Michigan or on a statewide basis. It is important for inservice planners to know whether the perceived needs and past participation patterns, as reported by the respondents in the study, constitute a regional phenomenon or are similar to findings achieved on a broadened research base.

Recommendations for Future Board Member Inservice Programming

The following recommendations pertaining to an overall inservice education programming design and to the inclusion of specific topical areas within that design are resultant from the review of the literature, the findings, and the conclusions of the study. These recommendations may be generally applicable to the inservice education of board members, regardless of the locales in which they serve. However, they are specifically intended for implementation in Michigan, having been written in consideration of those legal requirements

governing the election and/or appointment of local board members, as well as their functioning--both individually and collectively--upon becoming board members in this state.

It is doubtful that a single "best" design or series of "best" topics can be suggested in facilitating the varied inservice needs of the more than three thousand members, serving on the nearly six hundred local boards, in Michigan. Nevertheless, there are three paramount considerations that should be examined and, ultimately, incorporated into a specific programming design for board member inservice education. These are as follows:

1. Programs of inservice education should be purposive, systematic, and continuous in nature. The overall effectiveness of an inservice effort will mainly be determined by the degree to which it meets the needs of individual board members. Program planners must, therefore, acknowledge the importance of the widely differing levels of experience, diverse backgrounds, and dissimilar expectations existent within the population of local board members. They must insure that programs appropriate to the needs of board members are presented in a taxonomic manner.

2. Successful programs of inservice education are operationalized at the local board level. The cosmopolitan nature of those forces and events currently impacting decision-making processes at the local district level necessitates a partnership among local, state, and national organizations in the provision of inservice experiences. Nonetheless, it is the local board of education that must adopt appropriate policy statements, develop written program

goals and objectives, commit requisite financial support, and specify the attendance of its members.

3. Programs of inservice education should maximize board members' time, while minimizing their expense. Those events held at either the local or regional level, and being one-day or less in duration, will likely be best attended by local board members. Board members derive their livelihoods--directly or indirectly--from other pursuits and, therefore, typically have limited opportunities to engage in inservice presentations.

Leadership in the development of inservice programming designs should be provided by the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB). An ad hoc statewide task force should be convened by MASB for the purpose of developing prototype designs for each of the following: (1) inservice policy statements, (2) goals and objectives statements, (3) recommended implementation procedures, and (4) needs-assessment procedures. The task force should be representative of state-level planners, experienced local board members, concerned central office administrators, and other experts--such as university professors and private consultants--as may be deemed necessary. Once the task force has completed its purposes, the design options and other recommended instruments should be made available to MASB constituent local boards for their review and utilization. MASB should then urge the adoption of a specific plan of member inservice education by each local board of education, said plan being expressed in a written statement of local board policy.

The design of a specific program of topical areas, selected for presentation to local board members, should be subdivided into two components, as follows: (1) the primary, or basic, plan of inservice activities; and (2) the advanced, or sustaining, plan of inservice activities. The primary plan should present a sequential listing of those topics deemed most crucial to the needs of inexperienced members and encompass their initial four years (one elected term) of service. The advanced plan should suggest inservice activities appropriate to the further education of experienced board members--those having served for more than four years. (The inclusion of a pre-service orientation program for new members, as recommended by many authorities, is not feasible in Michigan due to the limited period of time--less than thirty days--between election or appointment to the board and actual assumption of office.)

The primary plan of inservice activities should include those events arranged for the dual purpose of introducing new members to the operation of the district and familiarizing them with the numerous responsibilities of boardsmanship. (Familiarization efforts are deemed to be more intensive than are introductory or orientation activities.) The plan's sequence should include, although not necessarily be limited to, the following:

Year 1:

1. An orientation tour of local school facilities.
2. An introduction to parliamentary procedure and the conduct of local board meetings.
3. An introduction to the operation of the local board: policy and procedure statements, by-laws, position

descriptions, the "chain of command," organizational charts, legal services, auditing services, and services retained on a consultancy basis.

4. An introduction to "The School Code" of the state of Michigan.
5. An introduction to school finance, local programs of community relations, the staff and staff development, and curricular and co-curricular programs.
6. Attendance at the regional MASB orientation program for new board members.
7. Attendance at local county school boards association meetings.
8. Attendance at the MASB mid-winter conference.

Year 2:

1. Familiarization with management concepts and methods: personnel management and evaluation and program management and evaluation.
2. Introduction to news media relations.
3. Familiarization with community power structures and special interest groups.
4. Introduction to basic concepts in education.
5. An introduction to the functioning of the state legislature, the department of education, and the state courts.
6. Attendance at local county school boards association meetings.
7. Attendance at one regional MASB drive-in conference.
8. Attendance at the MASB mid-winter conference.

Year 3:

1. Familiarization with policy problems and governmental relations: local intergovernmental relations efforts, energy use and conservation, civil rights, handicapped rights, Title IX, MIOSHA, and the expanding federal involvement in local education.

2. Familiarization with the federal courts and landmark decisions.
3. Attendance at local county school boards association meetings.
4. Attendance at one regional MASB special topic seminar.
5. Attendance at MASB fall convention and mid-winter conference.

Year 4:

1. Attendance at one regional MASB special topic seminar.
2. Attendance at MASB fall convention and mid-winter conference.
3. Attendance at National School Boards Association (NSBA) convention.

The advanced plan of inservice activities should build upon those understandings achieved by board members during their initial four years of service. Additionally, it should enhance the capabilities of members in assuming leadership roles on the local board and in becoming involved in area and statewide positions of responsibility. Such events should include, although not necessarily be limited to, the following:

1. The presentation of basic inservice programs to new members.
2. An involvement in lobbying activities at the state level.
3. An assumption of a leadership role in the local county chapter of MASB.
4. The acceptance of an appointment to an MASB statewide committee.
5. Attendance at local county school boards association meetings (each year).
6. Attendance at the MASB mid-winter conference (each year).

7. Attendance at the MASB fall convention (every other year).
8. Attendance at the NSBA convention (every third year).
9. Attendance at a national-level inservice program related to a topic of personal interest (once every four years).
10. The undertaking of a program of selected readings, on a subject of personal interest, with a report of the findings to the board (every year).

The study is offered as an encouragement to those who plan inservice education programs for the benefit of local school board members. It will hopefully contribute to an increase in the knowledge and skill evidenced by individual board members and, through them, to an improvement in the process of educational governance at the local district level.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
SPECIAL TOPIC SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS**

APPENDIX A

MASB SPECIAL TOPIC SEMINARS

Year of Presentation	Title	Number of Presentations
1973	Administrator Evaluation	2
1974	Administrator Evaluation	3
1974	Public Relations	1
1975	Public Relations	2
1975	Administrator Appraisal	1
1975	Development of Goals and Objectives	3
1976	Winning Millage Elections	2
1976	Basics of School Business	1
1976	Administrator Appraisal	1
1977	How to Win Millage and Bond Elections	3
1977	Administrator Appraisal	2
1977	Parliamentary Law	1
1978	Millage and Bond Elections	2
1978	New Perspectives on Public Relations	1
1978	Administrator and Board Appraisal	2
1978	Collective Bargaining Processes	2
1979	Conducting Millage and Board Elections	2

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

INSERVICE EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE OF
SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS MEMBERS

All responses will be treated confidentially. The above number is used only to identify those who have responded.

PART I: YOUR OPINION

AS A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, WOULD YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

	AGREE	DISAGREE
1. Candidates for local boards should be REQUIRED to complete an orientation program relating to school board member responsibilities BEFORE running for office	_____	_____
2. Newly elected or appointed members should be REQUIRED TO COMPLETE an inservice program, as spelled out in local board written policy, during their FIRST YEAR of service	_____	_____
3. Continuing inservice education is vitally important to any board member who wishes to perform his/her duties well	_____	_____

PART II: YOUR SERVICE

4. How many years and months have you served on the local school board?

YEARS _____ MONTHS _____

PART III: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

CIRCLE THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE YOU ATTACH TO EACH OF THESE TOPICS FOR FUTURE BOARD INSERVICE PROGRAMS.

<u>Unimportant</u>	<u>Of Minor Importance</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Of Crucial Importance</u>
1	2	3	4	5

FOR THE BLANK SPACE UNDER EACH HEADING, ADD ANY TOPIC YOU BELIEVE TO BE OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO MERIT A FUTURE BOARD INSERVICE PROGRAM.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

5. Improving Communications with the Public 1 2 3 4 5
6. Building a Permanent Base of Community Support . 1 2 3 4 5
7. The Role and Function of Advisory Committees . . 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

ADMINISTRATION

8. Improving Administrator Morale 1 2 3 4 5
9. Setting Administrator Salaries & Fringe
Benefits Programs 1 2 3 4 5
10. Developing a Strong Administrative Team 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

11. Understanding State Aid Calculations 1 2 3 4 5
12. Going After & Getting Federal Dollars 1 2 3 4 5
13. Coping with Inflation 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

TEACHER PERSONNEL

14. Selecting & Retaining Excellent Teachers 1 2 3 4 5
15. Inexpensive Techniques for Staff Improvement 1 2 3 4 5
16. Improving Teacher - School Board Relations 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

STUDENT AFFAIRS

17. Improving Student Achievement 1 2 3 4 5
18. Increasing Student Involvement in School
Activities 1 2 3 4 5
19. Establishing a Minimal Competency Testing
Program 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

GENERAL TOPICS

20. Collective Bargaining in an Era of Limits 1 2 3 4 5
21. Minorities Awareness Training 1 2 3 4 5
22. Consolidating School Districts 1 2 3 4 5
23. Influencing the State Legislature 1 2 3 4 5
24. Self-evaluation for Boards of Education 1 2 3 4 5
- (_____)

**PART IV: YOUR PAST PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL, REGIONAL, & STATE-WIDE
INSERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

	YES	NO
Have you attended one or more of the		
25. local programs related to inservice education SPONSORED BY YOUR COUNTY (OR COUNTIES) SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION?	_____	_____
26. one-day regional drive-in conferences SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS?	_____	_____
27. regional 1-1/2 day orientation workshops for new board members and board officers SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS?	_____	_____
28. regional 1-1/2 day special topic seminars SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS?	_____	_____
29. state-wide Saturday Mid-Winter Conferences held in Lansing SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS?	_____	_____
30. 2-1/2 to 3 day state-wide fall conventions SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS?	_____	_____

APPENDIX C

**INITIAL LETTER TO LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS
REQUESTING THEIR ASSISTANCE**

APPENDIX C



PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

Dear Colleague:

I need your help! I am attempting to construct a current listing of all Board of Education members who have served those 46 local K-12 districts located within the Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Kalamazoo Valley, and St. Joseph Intermediate School Districts since 1970. In speaking with Norm Weinheimer, I have discovered that MASB had not kept such information prior to 1975; thus, I found it necessary to seek Intermediate assistance in determining the initial rosters. That source provided the names of members, although their respective addresses and telephone numbers were often omitted.

It is my intention to write a dissertation in which the perceived needs and participation of board members in local, regional, and state-wide programs of in-service education will be determined, analyzed, and commented upon. Hopefully, this effort will assist all of us in planning a future course of action in this important arena; at least it should help to fill a void in that no similar effort has previously been undertaken in southwestern Michigan.

Enclosed is the listing pertaining to your district. I would be very grateful if you would ask your secretary to

- 1) determine that all members (elected and appointed since 1970) are listed. (Please add the names, addresses, and phone numbers of anyone omitted).
- 2) eliminate the names of those persons who may have passed away or whose whereabouts, for whatever reason, is unknown.
- 3) verify each address and phone number as being current; or, pencil in the current address and phone number.

A self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thanking you for your assistance and awaiting your early response, I am,

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon".

Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

JNS:dk

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Macklin, Assistant Superintendent
Hans Sheffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Benita Paustian, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX D

SECOND LETTER TO LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS

APPENDIX D



PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

September 24, 1979

Dear Colleague:

On October 5, a questionnaire identical to the enclosed will be mailed to each of your board members; this advance copy being provided for your review and consideration.

This effort is an integral part of my doctoral program at Michigan State. Additionally, and more importantly, it is a serious attempt to determine the needs of currently serving local board members with reference to their past inservice education experiences; an effort from which I intend to suggest modifications to those who plan future local, regional, and state-wide inservice programs. As such, this survey is the first to "target" all K-12 board members from districts located within the Berrien, Lewis Cass, Kalamazoo Valley, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Intermediate School Districts with reference to their inservice education.

I would greatly appreciate your mentioning the importance of this study to your board members at your next informal meeting and encouraging their expeditious remittance of the survey instrument. I hope to have all 322 responses by October 25 and will be seeking your assistance in encouraging the participation of those who have not replied to my "pleas" shortly after that date.

Thanking you once again for your past assistance in determining the listing of local board members and for your invaluable support in bringing this project to a successful conclusion, I am,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon".

Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

JNS:dk

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Mecklin, Assistant Superintendent
Helen Shaffer, Director of Community Education
Lois Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Paustian, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX E

INITIAL LETTER TO LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

APPENDIX E

Berrien
Springs

PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

October 1, 1979

Dear School Board Member,

In a few days you will receive a short questionnaire which has been specifically designed to determine your views, past participation, and current needs relative to inservice education programs for school board members. This document is being mailed to all currently serving members of the 46 K-12 local boards of education located in Southwestern Michigan (that area included in the Berrien County, Lewis Cass, Kalamazoo Valley, St. Joseph County, and Van Buren County ISDs).

This is the first research project of its type to be conducted in Southwestern Michigan. It has the support of the executive officers of the Michigan Association of School Boards.

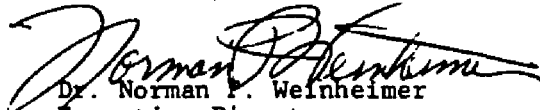
Please watch for the arrival of your questionnaire. Your response is crucial to the overall success of this project.

Sincerely yours,



Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

Endorsed by:



Dr. Norman P. Weinheimer
Executive Director
Michigan Association of School Boards

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Macklin, Assistant Superintendent
Irene Sheffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Faustian, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX F

SECOND LETTER TO LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

APPENDIX F

Berrien
Springs

PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(816) 471-2891

October 4, 1979

Dear School Board Member,

Throughout Southwestern Michigan, 322 citizens are currently serving on 46 local K-12 public school boards of education. Like yourself, these dedicated men and women are laboring to provide quality education for those students within their school districts.

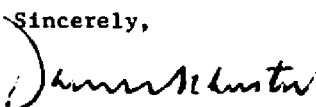
In an effort to assist local board members, the Michigan Association of School Boards and local chapters of MASB annually provide inservice education opportunities on a variety of topics; subjects selected in the belief that local board members need to be very knowledgeable about a variety of topics in order to serve effectively. As a public school superintendent, and a doctoral student at Michigan State University, I have been working closely with MASB staff members in conducting a research project designed to provide vital information to those who will plan future inservice presentations.

The enclosed questionnaire will take less than 15 minutes of your time to complete. When completed, please return it in the enclosed, stamped envelope. ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY. THE CODE NUMBER ON THE FORM IS THERE FOR FOLLOW-UP PURPOSES ONLY.

YOUR RESPONSE IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT! PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE FORM AND RETURN IT NOW.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance and prompt reply, I am,

Sincerely,



Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

Approved by:



Dr. Norman P. Weinheimer
Executive Director
Michigan Association of School Boards

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Macklin, Assistant Superintendent
Irene Sheffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Paustian, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX G

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO NONRESPONDENTS

APPENDIX G



PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

October 22, 1979

Dear School Board Member,

Two weeks ago I mailed the enclosed survey to all of the 322 board members serving the local K-12 districts throughout Southwestern Michigan. To date, I have not received your response.

YOUR OPINIONS ARE VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROJECT. Since I realize you are very busy and that the first mailing may have gone astray, I am enclosing a second questionnaire -- which is in every respect identical to the first. I urge you to complete the attached and return it in the envelope provided today.

Your response will be treated confidentially. The code number on the form is there for follow-up purposes only.

I will be calling you on or after November 2nd if your response is not received by that date.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jon N. Schuster".

Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Machlin, Assistant Superintendent
Helen Sheffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Yepsen, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Poulsen, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX H

**LETTER TO LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS REQUESTING
THEIR INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE**

APPENDIX H



PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

October 29, 1979

Dear Colleague:

I NEED YOUR HELP!!

Thus far, 239 of the 322 local board members to whom questionnaires were sent have responded. While I am gratified to have 74% of the surveys returned, a minimum of 275 (85%) is essential.

In checking my records, I note that the following members of your board have not yet responded to either the first or follow-up mailings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

I would be very grateful for your assistance in phoning, or otherwise reminding, each of the above non-respondents of the importance of their response. A single word of encouragement from you will undoubtedly have a beneficial impact. As you well know, the final 50 are always the hardest to secure.

If for some reason neither of the first two mailings was received, please call me (collect) and I will be happy to supply another survey instrument.

I will phone each board member who has not responded on or shortly after November 2 to personally solicit his/her cooperation.

Thank you once again for your assistance!

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jon N. Schuster".

Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Macklin, Assistant Superintendent
Helen Sheffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Paulsen, Supervisor of Health Services

APPENDIX I

**LETTER TO BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESIDENTS
AND INTERVIEW GUIDE**

APPENDIX I



PUBLIC SCHOOLS / POST OFFICE BOX 130 / BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN / 49103
(616) 471-2891

I am very appreciative of a few moments of your time!

Last fall, I surveyed the 322 local school board members from the 46 Southwestern Michigan Districts sponsoring K-12 programs. The results of this effort were most gratifying in that 277 members (80%) completed and returned their "Questionnaire."

The dual purpose of my study, as you may recall, was to assess the perceived needs of local board members with reference to future inservice education program topics; and, to determine board member participation in past inservice experiences at the local, regional, and state-wide levels. This information, I hope, will provide a sound basis for the planning and conducting of future inservice initiatives for board members.

I would appreciate having an opportunity to confer with you about my study; and, in particular, those three questions written on the attached "Guide Sheet." As a board president, you have valuable insights into the "inservice education of board members" issue; thoughts and observations which I need to incorporate into my study in order to make it more significant.

I will be contacting you within one week and take this opportunity to thank you, in advance, for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon N. Schuster".

Jon N. Schuster
Superintendent

JNS:dk

Jon N. Schuster, Superintendent of Schools
Stanley P. Macklin, Assistant Superintendent
Helen Shaffer, Director of Community Education
Lola Smith, Director of Media Services
Thomas Topash, Coordinator of Special Education
Bonita Paulsen, Supervisor of Health Services

NAME _____

QUESTION 1: What is your overall opinion of the Questionnaire?

QUESTION 2: What is your opinion regarding the general results
(responses from local school board members)?

QUESTION 3: What can be done, in the future, to increase local board
member participation in inservice education activities
at the local, regional, and state levels?

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