An Inquiry of Governance Training, Perceptions of Board Members' Qualifications, and Board Assessments of Day Academies in the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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AN INQUIRY OF GOVERNANCE TRAINING, PERCEPTIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS’ QUALIFICATIONS, AND BOARD ASSESSMENTS OF DAY ACADEMIES IN THE SOUTHERN UNION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Nathaniel George Higgs

August 2002
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ABSTRACT

AN INQUIRY OF GOVERNANCE TRAINING, PERCEPTIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS' QUALIFICATIONS, AND BOARD ASSESSMENTS OF DAY ACADEMIES IN THE SOUTHERN UNION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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Nathaniel George Higgs

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
School of Education

Title: INQUIRY OF GOVERNANCE TRAINING, PERCEPTIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS’ QUALIFICATIONS, AND BOARD ASSESSMENTS OF DAY ACADEMIES IN THE SOUTHERN UNION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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Date completed: August 2002

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the school boards of non-boarding secondary schools in the Southern Union regarding their governance training programs, the perceptions of the board members regarding their qualifications, and the assessments of the school boards for their effectiveness.

Methodology

This study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data. Five board members and school officials were interviewed. Quantitative data were collected by a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaires were completed by
109 board members. The population consisted of all willing board members present at a scheduled board meeting. Participants were permitted to refrain from answering questions with which they felt uncomfortable.

The participants responded to 11 objective questions regarding board activities and 13 subjective statements in which they selected responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A number of hypotheses were developed regarding the relationship between school board practices and the board members’ perceptions. These hypotheses were tested using chi-square and compared with the qualitative data.

Results

Qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that there is no systematic governance training in the Southern Union even though two conferences within the union have had periodic training seminars for board members. These two conferences used the school board manual as the basis for their training.

Even though the majority of school board members did not receive governance training, they perceived themselves as qualified for school board membership. They discussed some ideal qualifications for board members such as having an interest in the overall school program and having professional skills needed by the school. They also stated that they understood their roles and responsibilities and were able to make good decisions regardless of governance training. School board members revealed that there was no systematic assessment of board members' effectiveness in the Southern Union.

Conclusions

Governance training is not perceived as a high priority among board members.
School board assessment is not considered essential for the effectiveness of school boards in the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the many persons who helped to make my aspiration a reality. Special appreciation is given to my dissertation chair, Dr. Elsie Jackson, and the other members of the committee--Dr. Hinsdale Bernard and Dr. Eugene Brewer--whose insight, constructive criticism, and encouragement have been unlimited and helpful.

I am grateful for my wife, Atherine, whose understanding and support meant a lot to me during the challenging, multifaceted phases of this study. Furthermore, I thank the other members of my family for their faith in my abilities to achieve my objectives. I am thankful, too, to God who provided the resources and determination.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In general, no one individual builds and preserves an institution alone. It often has a body to govern its operations. According to Houle (1989), the concept of boards has been in society since the 13th century. In many cases the governing body is a board of individuals who are stakeholders of the institution. Boards are used for the governance of educational institutions in a similar way. In the United States, the first recorded evidence of a board in operation was at Harvard University in 1636 when the board discharged the first full-time president. Special committees administered the early American elementary schools, many of them conducted in churches, which were established to maintain their own religious heritage through education (Bissell, 1990). Later, these committees were empowered to select teachers and levy taxes for their schools. Often school boards became cumbersome with large memberships, at times, 70 or more members. Massachusetts was the first state to create a state board of education and to appoint Horace Mann as its secretary or superintendent. Mann patterned the operation of his district after the educational systems of Europe. Thus, the history of American school boards began at the emergence of early American education.

During the 60s, school board power diminished as it was challenged by teacher strikes, which began the era of collective bargaining with school boards. According to
Danzberger (1994), “Some observers believe that teacher unions are increasing their control of boards by influencing school board elections. This raises a basic question as to whether boards (employers of union members) are then controlled by the interests of those they employ” (p. 367). As state regulations were passed, boards found themselves with responsibilities, not only to the community, but to the statutory boundaries given by the state legislature.

The first Seventh-day Adventist school was established by a group of church members in Buck’s Bridge, New York, in 1853 (Bissell, 1990). Since that time various groups and families of the Seventh-day Adventist Church established schools, many of them in their homes. In 1872 the first official Seventh-day Adventist church school opened in Battle Creek, Michigan; the first secondary school opened in Healdsburg, California, in 1882. During the next century, the growth in number and size of schools increased rapidly and continuously. Elementary schools were managed by local church appointed boards in cooperation with the local conference. The local conference established boards for the operation of secondary schools. Today, all Seventh-day Adventist schools and most major school systems, both public and private, operate with boards.

My interest in the operation of school boards began several years ago when I started my career in the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. At that time I was told by a school board member that her job was to tell the principal what to do.

Throughout the years my interest in school boardsmanship has intensified. As the superintendent of schools in two conferences (districts) over a period of 14 years, I have
become acquainted with many school boards. The vast diversity in the operations of church school boards in my experiences has given me the desire to look closely at the qualifications of board members, and the operations and accountability of Seventh-day Adventist school boards.

**The Seventh-day Adventist Church System of Education**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates a worldwide educational system with 4,450 elementary schools, 1,014 secondary schools, and 90 colleges and universities. Its objective is to ensure that its progeny receives a balanced education in harmony with its standards and ideals. Seventh-day Adventists believe that true education is more than the persual of a certain course of study.

It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of wider service in the world to come. (White, 1952. p. 13)

The structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church begins with a local congregation or church. Several churches located in one geographical area or state form a conference. Each conference is administered by its president and other officers. The educational superintendent is usually elected by the membership of the conference to serve as the highest educational administrator for a term from 3 to 5 years depending upon the term designated by the particular conference. Several adjoining conferences in the same section of the country form a union conference. Several unions form a division.

The governing body, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists located in Silver Spring’s, Maryland, comprises all 12 global divisions. At every organizational
level of the church—from the local conference to the General Conference—there is an educational department which provides guidance for educational institutions within its jurisdiction.

The Southern Union, which is the focus of this study, is a part of the North American Division, which consists of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda. It is one of nine unions in the North American Division. The Southern Union is located in the southeastern region of the United States and encompasses the states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee. The union is divided into eight conferences which include the following: Carolina, Georgia-Cumberland, Gulf States, Florida, Kentucky-Tennessee, Southeastern, South Central, and South Atlantic (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000, p. 214).

There are 174 elementary schools, 27 junior academies, and 16 senior academies in the Southern Union. In the Seventh-day Adventist school system some academies offer boarding facilities for their student body. Others, known as day academies, do not offer boarding accommodations. In the Southern Union there are seven day academies, and each is operated by a board consisting of members from a local Seventh-day Adventist church or churches. The local school boards are formed as a special committee empowered by the church board to provide financing, housing, and guidance and support for those who administer the day-to-day operation of the academy.

There are 27 responsibilities delegated to Southern Union school board members. These responsibilities include five basic areas: curriculum implementation, personnel support, institutional finance, physical plant, and public relations. For a detailed list of
board responsibilities see Appendix A. Employment issues regarding professional personnel and curriculum development are the responsibilities of the conference boards of education K-12.

**Background of the Problem**

Seventh-day Adventist school boards represent an entity in the operations of schools that raise the question of accountability. Educational superintendents are accountable to the K-12 boards of education and the conference president. The local school board in theory is accountable to the church board or the constituency, but, in practice, very often does not relate to the church board or the constituency. School board accountability and board assessment pose many questions such as what are the criteria for membership on the school board? Do school board members understand their role as a member? If not, is training provided that would help them function better as a board member? Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and school programs are evaluated by various levels of conference administration, but what are Seventh-day Adventist school boards doing to assess their effectiveness? How does the school board measure its performance and effectiveness? This study focuses upon three areas of school board leadership in Seventh-day Adventist schools of the Southern Union: school board governance training, the perception of board members about their qualifications, and school board assessment.

**Governance Training**

Educational superintendents and principals have some level of training which
prepares them for the roles of leadership which they perform as responsible educational administrators. But what training prepares the school board members for their roles? When well-meaning church members are elected to the school board, do they automatically understand their roles as representatives for the constituency and as directors or trustees for the operation of the school? How do they learn about the educational philosophy and the organizational structure of the church and school? What programs of orientation and continuing education are in place for the growth of a board member?

A program adopted in South Central Conference for school board orientation included five areas of training: (1) biblical and church-accepted counsel regarding church and school committees, (2) widely accepted policies regarding school boards adapted from the National Association of School Boards, (3) Southern Union policies regarding school boards and their operations, (4) responsibilities of board members, the principal as board secretary, the treasurer as the financial custodian, and the pastor as a spiritual counselor, and (5) legal and ethical responsibilities of board members. The training session was concluded with a written evaluation of the board members' academic understanding of school board policies. Board members completing the training seminar were awarded a certificate from the conference office of education. However, such a certificate lacked any official certification of board membership.

Can Seventh-day Adventist school boards benefit from board orientation? Should board training be a requirement? The Southern Union publishes a manual for board members, but there has been no study regarding its usage for governance training. The
main question is, How are school board manuals used in training board members?

Qualifications of Board Members

Many Seventh-day Adventist board members are elected to their positions during church elections. The process of election is by a nominating committee that presents the nominee’s name to the church membership for approval. One may assume that the nominating committee considers the professional, vocational, and personal backgrounds of the nominee. Although members of Seventh-day Adventist school boards serve gratis and voluntarily, should greater attention be given to their selection? Should prospective board members receive background checks for their qualifications as do other educational personnel?

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (2000) gives the framework for the qualification of board members. These qualifications are broad and general criteria.

Members of the school board shall be chosen for their consecration, their belief in loyalty to the principles of Christian education, their good judgement and tact, their experience in school matters, and their financial judgement and ability. They should believe in and have a willingness to follow, denominational educational policies and recommendations. . . . Persons who do not believe in or are unsympathetic with their program should not be chosen as members of the school board. Convictions as to God-given plans, faith, courage, and understanding are essentials for success in this as in other enterprises. (p. 112)

According to the *School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools* (Southern Union Department of Education, 2000) the qualification of school board membership references the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. Other qualifications are given. These qualifications are listed below:
1. They have commitment to Adventist education.

2. They support Adventist education by enrolling their eligible children in Seventh-day Adventist schools.

3. They are faithful tithe payers.

4. They are committed to following the *School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools* and the *SU Code K-12*.

5. They are committed to following denominational educational policies.

6. They are Seventh-day Adventist Church members in good and regular standing in one of the constituent churches of the school.

Some questions to explore are the following: Do elected board members meet the qualifications of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* and the *School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools*? Are these criteria in reality followed closely in the selection of board members? Do board members perceive the need to enhance their qualifications?

**School Board Assessment**

I once asked my conference president if there was a program in effect to evaluate my performance. I believed that if so, I could have benefitted from the observations. The president responded, “Yes, there is. It is called constituency meeting.” I interpreted his response to mean that a superintendent needs not to be concerned until the end of his elected term of service. Robinson and Bickers (1990) found “most board members feel election or reelection to the school board is sufficient evaluation of their performance.
However, receiving the most votes in an election is a political evaluation” (p. 58). The study points out that an election is only one indication of how well a board member is performing. Can this belief to equate reelection with evaluation be a common conception or misconception held by Seventh-day Adventist board members?

Boyatt (2000) states in his article:

In the board’s haste to evaluate school employees or educational programs, it often neglects to evaluate its own work. A self-evaluation can be as simple as asking two questions: What are the strengths of this board? What areas of improvement should be addressed? (p. 9)

Boyatt shares the concern that boards often lack a system of evaluation. Evaluation is the offspring of accountability and assessment. What system is in place to collect data regarding the effectiveness of the board in accomplishing its objectives? No studies have been conducted regarding the systematic assessment of school boards in the Southern Union.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the functions of school boards of day academies in the Southern Union in terms of governance training, board members’ perception of their qualification, and the assessment of school boards.

**Research Questions**

With the help of school board members in the seven day academies in the Southern Union, the following research questions are addressed.

1. What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board
members in the Southern Union?

2. Is governance training of board members related to the perception of their decision-making skills?

3. Is the School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools being used for governance training for school board members?

4. What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership?

5. What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?

Significance of the Study

There are few studies regarding Seventh-day Adventist school boards. An ERIC search of the literature about school boards revealed 8,001 entries. No entries were listed under “Seventh-day Adventist school boards.” Bissell (1990) and Utt (1982), both graduates from La Sierra University, were two of the more recent studies completed within the last two decades on Seventh-day Adventist school board leadership. Bissell (1990) studied the responsibilities of Seventh-day Adventist board members and Utt (1982) studied the perceived roles of Seventh-day Adventist board members regarding their effectiveness of school boards in the Pacific Union Conference. This study intends to add to the pool of research about Seventh-day Adventist school boards. It may benefit several levels of the Seventh-day Adventist educational structure such as school board leadership in elementary schools, boarding academies, and institutions of higher education.
Definition of Terms

Academy: Sometimes called senior academy; is an educational institution teaching Grades 9 through 12 and is supported by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In boarding academies, the students are residents and live in dormitories.

Administration: The administration is the school leader or team of leaders who implements policies enacted by the school board and is the official spokesperson for the school.

Board member: A person elected to a school board who is duly authorized to vote during a school board meeting.

Conference: The administrative organization governing a body of churches, schools, and affiliated institutions in one geographical region or state.

Conference board of education K-12: The legal body responsible for professional staffing, textbook and curricular adoptions, program evaluations, and classroom supervision. In the Southern Union the conference president or his designee serves as the chairman and the superintendent serves as the secretary of the board.

Constituency: The membership of churches that support a school through finances and student enrollment.

Day academy: A school offering Grades 9 through 12 where the students commute daily. There are no dormitories.

Evaluation: A process in which the board measures its achievements with its projected objectives.

Governance training: The formal educational process and orientation of
individual members of the school board regarding their responsibilities, system policies, and acceptable practices.

**Junior academy:** A day school with Grades 9 and/or 10, usually attached to Grades 1-8.

**Inservice:** A term commonly used by employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when referring to on-the-job training.

**School board chairperson:** The leader of the school operating board very much like a school board president of a county or municipal school board. Southern Union educational policy suggests that a board chairman be a layman (not a church-employed person). See Southern Union Department of Education, 2000, p. 13.

**School operating board:** The school board consisting of members of the constituency. It functions to provide an adequate budget, a safe physical environment, and to implement curricular requirements. This was once called the school committee in light of the conference board of education K-12.

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. It was assumed that each board member who completed the questionnaire responded honestly and truthfully.

2. It was assumed that the nature of Seventh-day Adventist secondary day schools in the Southern Union reflects the essence of school board governance of other Seventh-day Adventist schools.
3. It was assumed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church wishes to enhance the effectiveness of its school board members.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is a descriptive analysis of the criteria for the selection of board members and how they are trained and evaluated for governance. Only school board members from the day academies in the Southern Union were sampled.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes a brief history of Seventh-day Adventist school boards and an overview of their organization within the church structure. It includes the perceived problem relating to school board governance training, qualification of board members, and effective school board assessment.

In chapter 2 a selection of literature about the qualifications of board members is reviewed. This review includes what other school boards and districts are doing regarding governance training for their school board members and what mechanisms are used for their evaluation and assessment. A review of the literature about the board members' qualification and the selection process is also given.

In chapter 3 a description of the population and sample is given and their rationale for usage. It includes a description of how the data were collected. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the research design, human subjects review, and instrumentation.

Chapter 4 describes the process for collecting the data and how they were
analyzed, as well as presents the results of the study.

Chapter 5 presents a summary, the conclusions, and recommendations for practice including recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes a selected review of literature on school boards with emphases on governance training, perceptions of qualifications, and the assessment of school board effectiveness.

Introduction

Day schools in the United States have a long history reaching back to the Latin grammar schools, the first of which was started in 1635. An old Massachusetts law in 1647, known as the "old deluder act," began with the statement, "It being one chief object of that old deluder Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the scriptures..." The law required towns of 50 families to "teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read," and towns with 100 families were required to maintain a grammar school with a "master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university" (Wahlquist & Ryan, 1958, p. 342).

One can easily see the influence of the church upon the early roots of American education. As the Latin grammar schools developed throughout the New England States, other private schools were established along the eastern coast. The Franklin Academy, founded by Benjamin Franklin, was established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1751. By the middle of the 18th century many private and sectarian boarding and day schools,
known as academies, were in operation. A court decision in the Kalamazoo Case of 1874 gave the right to tax for the establishment of a high school. However, in 1634, Pennsylvania was the first state to adopt free education (Wahlquist & Ryan, 1958). Thus, began the emergence of public education from the church-operated educational system.

Colleges were founded next. The first colleges established in this country were patterned after the universities of Europe. Harvard, founded in 1636, was in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It was a duplication of the Magdalene College of Cambridge University and was established because of a "dread to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust" (Houle, 1989, p. 3). Harvard University was the first known American school to operate using a school board (Houle, 1989). However, not all countries favor a system of governing school boards. In Australia, which had a system similar to the United States, school boards were eliminated several years ago and were replaced by direct state control. Chester Finn, a former Reagan official in the educational research, suggests that school boards should be abolished (Wong, 1995). According to Coeyman (2000), some states may begin a similar experimentation. The United States system of school boards "is the ultimate in democracy" and "the envy of many countries" says Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Board Association. "Almost every week delegates arrive from abroad to study the US system" (Coeyman, 2000, p. 19).

According to Todras (1993), school governance has come under close public scrutiny, and there is significant movement for educational reform. She lists two major reports. Both suggest changing school boards into educational boards, encouraging better
relationships with the local government and the community. For example, proposed legislation in New York City if effectuated would eliminate community boards and replace them with governing councils for each school. The council would include four parents (chosen by parents), four teachers (chosen by the Federation of Teachers), and one school service employee (chosen by the union), and a representative from the borough president. The council would be chaired by the school principals (Borges, 1996). This illustrates the moving tide for change in the operational system of our nation's schools.

Today, most schools in our nation, private and public, operate under a system in which there is a controlling board. We can learn much from the pool of information about public school boards.

For example, according to Alberts et al. (1989), the Illinois State Board of Education is empowered by the State General Assembly to set educational policies and guidelines for elementary, secondary, and vocational schools in Illinois. The State Board of Education provides educational leadership for the local district, and it delegates to the local school boards the authority to govern the school districts. The local school board is the body through which the will of the community is translated into the educational programs of the school district.

In Seventh-day Adventist schools the local conference is the counterpart of the state board of education, which delegates the authority to local school boards to operate day academies and other educational institutions within the guidelines and policies of that conference. This sense of adaptability can translate the principles of good boardsmanship
into workable policies within the Seventh-day Adventist school system.

Bissell (1990) surveyed 86 Seventh-day Adventist academies in the North American Division. She discovered that few school board members received board orientation, but 97% desired orientation. She concluded that the board members indicated a lack of a unique school mission and a need for orientation in the following areas: finance, board responsibilities, governance, mission, curriculum, and personnel. She recommends that the local conference office of education provide new board members with orientation and that the local school provide materials for board members’ professional growth. Furthermore, she concluded that Loma Linda University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning, should develop seminars for board members.

Funk and Funk (1992) in their study of school board orientation likens a school board team without governance training to a professional baseball team on the diamond without spring training.

**Governance Training**

The need for school board governance training has been documented in the literature. Kentucky became the first state to legislate 15 clock hours of annual inservice training for board members (Ficklen, 1985). Georgia and Tennessee are two other southeastern states along with Oklahoma that have passed similar laws. Many legislators are beginning to recognize the need for school board governance training.

According to the Illinois School Board Association, most board members learned how to become better board members on their own and “by the seat of their pants”
(National School Board Association, 1982, p. 13). “Baptism by Fire: That’s how many school board members learn the ins and outs of board service,” says Ficklen (1985, p. 35). He states that many board members learn through trial and error. Sometimes they learned by informal workshops, but many read magazines, journals, and books. With many members, the learning process took place through informal conversations with the board president, other board members, the superintendent, and district staff.

Funk and Funk (1992) list three broad principles as to why governance training is needed:

1. Superintendents and board members agree that the single most important service a board can offer its members is orientation: without board orientation there exists a group, not a board.

2. Board member training is everybody’s business especially that of veteran members of the board.

3. School boards have become increasingly diverse, the state of which offers strengths and weaknesses. The nationwide turnover of board members is 60 %, with a board member’s average tenure of 3 years. Without orientation, board members spend from 6 to 12 months to reach effectiveness: consequently, too much time is lost.

Role definition has been a source of tension found between superintendents and board chairpersons say Feuerstein and Opfer (1998). Twenty-seven percent of superintendents cited role definition for the cause of tension between the two, while only 17% of the chairpersons felt similarly. Feuerstein and Opfer also found a difference in perceptions between superintendents and chairpersons concerning personnel issues,
communication, and accountability. No superintendent felt accountability was a matter of
tension, however, 6% of chairpersons did. Genck and Klingenberg (1983) agree that the
hardest part of identifying good board practice is understanding what the job is, from
what the job is not. Board members should be educated to understand the role of the
superintendent and the role of the board.

Sendor (1992) illustrates the need for board members to understand their role in a
case cited in Missouri – Cochran v. Board of Education of Mexico District No. 59. The
case involved a teacher, Steven Cochran, who was fired for misconduct in his supervision
of a federal program to buy, use, and resell federal surplus property. Cochran protested
his dismissal and took his case through the process of appeal to an appellate court. The
decision of the court defined the lines of authority and the roles that can be played by
board members, particularly board attorneys. “Unless the courts in your state have said
otherwise, board attorneys generally can play the role of investigator, prosecutor, and
technical or legal advisor— as long as they do not also play the role of judge” (Sendor,
1992, p. 18). One can conclude that members of a school board are the legal governors of
the district or school and should be educated in their expected roles.

Although the average member on a school board is not an attorney, board
members need to have some knowledge of state and federal laws governing education.
Sometimes schools find themselves sandwiched between federal laws and conflicting
local laws. Sendor (1993) cites a case in which Richard Garnett and other students at the
Lindbergh High School in Renton, Washington, asked permission to form a religious club
which would meet on campus. The school board denied Garnett’s request. Garnett lost
his case in the federal court and the court of appeals, but finally received a favorable opinion in the United States Supreme Court, which ruled that the school district could not evade the Equal Access Act by declaring that all nonreligious clubs were curriculum related and saying that it had not created a limited open forum. The Equal Access Act is a federal law governing recipients of federal funds granted to public schools, and it requires the school to allow equal access of student group meetings which do not have any connection to the curriculum. The case was remanded to the lower court. The lower court ultimately ruled that the Equal Access Act preempts state laws and even state constitutional laws.

Other studies have been focused upon identifying board responsibilities. Iliff (1984) identifies five categories of responsibilities for school boards of Alaska. They are policymaking, monitoring finances, personnel, curriculum planning, and record keeping.

On July 17, 2001, the Lake Union Conference Department of Education conducted a breakout session on the topic of school board relationships for principals. I visited the session for observation. The main group of educators was divided into four plenary groups to discuss four different topics relating to Seventh-day Adventist school boards. The question assigned to Group Four was, “What procedures would you suggest to make for a positive relationship between the administrator and the board?” The group rendered 18 suggestions. The first on the list was “training session to delineate responsibilities.” That is to say, job descriptions, or who carries out what. The group believed that many instances of conflict and misunderstanding were a result of board members’ unfamiliarity of their roles and responsibilities as a board. The group also
suggested that the selection of non-ex-officio members be based upon skills and interests that will contribute positively to the school needs. This recommendation echoes the concern about qualifications of school board membership in the Seventh-day Adventist school system.

Morehouse (2001) states, “Unprepared board members can be paralyzed by any number of factors: state and federal laws that do not make sense, an endless array of acronyms and abbreviations, the presence of public at board meetings and inquires from the press” (p. 70). Morehouse suggests a need for a period of orientation for new board members.

Caruso (2001) says that it will take about a year before one is “up to speed on such things as budget and policy” (p. 26). Morehouse (2001) says, “School board training can dramatically reduce the time necessary to bring a newcomer up to speed” (p. 70).

Yackera (1998) determined that voters in Pennsylvania believe that public education should be governed by individuals who are adequately trained in their areas of responsibility. Those surveyed believed that public school board members were not trained adequately and operated with a low level of competency. Nonetheless, those who participated in the survey were convinced that mandatory orientation and continuing education will improve the quality of public education and board performance in Pennsylvania.

Seigel (2000) indicated that the proper balance for effective board orientation is a structure that is based on strong management principles but that coexists comfortably with the freedom to be creative and even visionary.
How often then should a board be subject to orientation? School board training among the Navajo Native Americans is conducted eight times per year at five reservations for approximately 300 adult Navajos. Major topics include curriculum development, parent-school and community school relationships, and staff selection (Stout & Pratt, 1972). Morehouse (2001) suggests that not only new members need board training, but experienced members need to be updated on the ever-changing laws and regulations.

Several ideas relative to the training process of school board members have been suggested. Canciamilla (2000) suggests that professional training agencies develop training to define the roles and procedures to assist new board members and to set up a system for accountability in program evaluation and student achievement. Funk and Funk (1992) found a three-step process of board training to be effective. They began to provide mini-workshops for the community before the school board elections began. After the filing deadline had passed, they conducted sessions for candidates to acquaint them with issues such as budgeting, finance, curriculum, and labor laws. Following the election, they began a full-scale orientation giving more detailed information about board operations.

Kleinsasser (1995) suggests that ongoing training should be provided for board members and offers the following strategies: include training sessions in scheduled board meetings, plan brown-bag luncheons, send board members to state and national meetings, and schedule retreats for board members during which training is provided.

One such method of board training adopted by some boards, according to Caruso
(2001), is to place a new member into a decision-making group. The school board puts these individuals into a room and asks them to come to a consensus on a given matter. They must understand and appreciate diversity of opinion and come to a conclusion. Board members desire to be a part of the decision-making process. Caruso says, "Probably the greatest complaint by superintendents is that the board micromanages the administration" (p. 27).

Nicolai (1981) suggests that workshops be given as a method of school board orientation. As a member of a community college board, Nicolai was scheduled by the college president to spend time with each of the deans and administrators to understand their functions. This, along with his attendance at cabinet meetings, state board meetings, and studying his policy manual, was his primary source of board orientation.

Foster (1975) states that board members elected to the board are often elected on specific community issues. Once they become members of the board, the board must do a more effective orientation of these newly elected board members to help them fulfill the commitments they have made to the constituents. One such method of doing so in the Minneapolis school system is to spend 1 or 2 days with newly elected school board members reviewing the budget and personnel policies, etc.

In the State of Washington a survey was administered by Louis Wildman (1987) to 750 board members to assess their most successful experiences as board members to determine how they thought that the superintendent could make school board members more successful. The 249 board members who responded listed board cooperation, solving problems, passing school levies, instigating new curricula, increasing community...
inputs, and improving school financial methods as their most successful experiences. The Wildman study also found that the superintendents can make board members more successful by working openly with the board, conducting an orientation session with board members, and encouraging them to attend conferences. These measures could also be viewed as a means of training board members to handle effectively their responsibilities.

The board's involvement with teachers could be another tool that could build the knowledge base of the board. Carl Glickman, a professor at the University of Georgia, according to Arthur, Littleton, and Boyd (1992), devised a process known as "shared governance" in which an executive council/liaison committee allowed teachers to participate in decisions and bring about change. The program was implemented in Colorado City, Texas. To introduce the idea, a 1-day training retreat was held for all district employees which offered professional training credits. During the morning, several 45-minute presentations were made. That afternoon, teachers met with their respective principals to initiate a unique governance structure. The liaison groups met monthly to listen to concerns and ideas from the staff. These suggestions were passed along to the executive board which decided upon possible solutions. According to the authors, "Informed involved teachers can make significant contributions to school improvements. No one person needs to bear the entire burden for education's success or failure" (p. 38).

Furthermore, Smith (1991) suggested yet another informational tool for board members. He indicated that at least once per year the board should meet in a school
building rather than in the conference room. During Smith's tenure as superintendent, he used this opportunity to showcase his schools. He provided a tour of the building and spent some board time to acquaint the board members with personnel and school programs. Smith's school visitation program was an attempt to provide board members with a firsthand knowledge of the operation of the school system for which they were governors.

A study conducted by Baker (1997) sought to identify areas of successful training in the State of Washington and the areas in which more training was needed. The Baker study, conducted 10 years after the Wildman (1987) study, to the contrary, found that board members want to be trained independently of the superintendent and want to set their own agenda for the district. They preferred process to content training in a formal manner.

Other perceptions about training for school board members have also been documented. A study was conducted by Mattox (1996) to determine if there was any significance between the perceptions of superintendents and school board presidents of public schools in Alabama regarding the training of new school board members. The areas of study were (1) the frequency of attendance by a board member, (2) the superintendent's responsibility for providing training opportunities, (3) the effectiveness of the training sessions, (4) areas of concern by new board members, and (5) areas of training seen as most important by the superintendent.

The Mattox (1996) study concluded that there were no significant differences in any of the three null hypotheses that were developed for the study. Three areas of
concern indicated by superintendents and board presidents that most new board members are concerned about are hiring new personnel, budget expenditures, and public accountability. The three most important elements of training were policy development, board meeting procedures, and learning the roles and responsibilities of becoming a board member. Yet according to a survey taken by the National School Board Association (Robinson & Bickers, 1990), many newly elected school board members anticipated managing (in priority of their expectations) curricular decisions, school expenditures, hiring teachers, and school taxes. However, these board members found themselves dealing with collective bargaining, school expenditures, and new school buildings.

Yvonne Duran (1996) conducted a study utilizing a survey questionnaire to determine the views of superintendents and board members regarding three distinct areas of performance: policy making, leadership techniques, and school operations. Her sample included 21 superintendents and 57 board members randomly selected from a stratified population in Regions I and II in southern Texas school systems. The following conclusions were formulated:

1. Superintendents and board members have different views of performance in policymaking, leadership techniques, and school operations.

2. The size of the school district does not affect the views that either the superintendent or the board members hold.

Based upon her findings she concluded that superintendents in the two districts preferred board members to be held accountable for board training.

Luecker (1992), in a study of 15 rural Northern Illinois school boards, found from
her data that there were six major roles of the school board members. They are (1) overseer of the district's finances, programs, and personnel which was the major responsibility, (2) policy, establishing guidelines, (3) sounding board, a reflection of ideas from the superintendent and from citizens from the community, (4) communications, (5) decision making, and (6) change agent. The study concluded that training should make greater use of the board member's prior expertise and prior educational background. Luecker's conclusions were similar to a study conducted by the National School Board Association, which I discuss later in this chapter under the section "Qualifications."

Abeyta (1998) studied the role of school board members in the state of New Mexico. His study was to determine how these board members perceived themselves. The primary roles were divided into three categories: legislative, executive, and judicial. He reported that 51% said "legislative," 28% "judicial," and 16% said "executive." It was found that 88% of the board members had received training from the state association for school boards. The association advocated that the primary role of board members was to be legislative. This study may suggest the effectiveness of board governance training. The decision making of the board members was based upon three patterns: trustee style, delegate style, and politico style—48% made decisions based upon their own judgment and professional opinions, 21% made decisions based upon what the community wanted, and 67% were likely to make decisions upon what they considered best in the light of the community's wishes. This study seems to suggest that the school board members surveyed perceived themselves as policy makers rather than executive
Canciamilla (2000) found in her study of three districts' high-performing governance teams given in a case study that the intragroup behaviors and strategies were (1) commitment to a common goal or purpose, (2) seeking training to acquire needed skills, (3) commitment to collaboration, (4) use of workshops, task force, and committees to involve others, (5) good listening skills, (6) and respect for others.

A study conducted by Maria Hoffmaster (1999) sought to determine the materials that were used to prepare school board members for the governance processes. The study was limited to the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, and Maryland. It was discovered that the structure of the school boards in all five states was similar. Board members were expected to serve one term, which is approximately 4 years. Neither formal training nor certification was a prerequisite for membership. About one half of the board members attended training sessions on the governance processes. Training workshops focused on the superintendent and the board member's responsibility and the development teamwork to promote organizational vision. The most common methods included handouts with information regarding effective boardsmanship, role-playing potential situations that may arise, and journal articles that addressed current educational issues.

Canciamilla (2000) conducted a study to identify the intragroup behaviors and strategies used by high-performing school boards. She concluded that board members need training to understand their roles and options for action to assure student achievement and effective program evaluations. She discovered similarities between
high-performing school board members' behavior and the literature on leadership, teams, and governance training. Governance training behaviors similar to the literature were (1) commitment to goal or purpose, (2) demonstration of awareness and collaborative skills, and (3) demonstration of competence in communication, self-reflection, and mutual respect.

A study by Utt (1982) of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists secondary schools reported that there was no program of school orientation for school board members and that there was no program for continuing education. The study also concluded that the administrators, teachers, and parents perceived the board as not willing to devote the time to improve its effectiveness.

Nikolai (1999) sought to determine whether school board members perceived their role differently after having received board training. His 12-year study consisted of sampling 1,803 board members and 211 school systems across the United States. There were 430 board members in the pretest and 421 in the posttest experiment group. Conclusions noted that perceptions of current practices became more congruent with the ideal practices after the board training in governance processes.

Everett (1984) observed from a random sample of newly elected board members and superintendents in Illinois that there was a difference in the perception of training between the two groups. Superintendents believed that more training for board members was occurring than that of which board members were aware. This led the researchers to believe that this variance may be the result of the expectations of training and its definition by the two groups.
According to a 1978 survey, conducted by the National School Board Association (Simon, 1985), the average school board member takes about a year to reach a satisfactory level of performance. However, the study concluded that there are several types of activities that can shorten the apprenticeship, such as:

1. Serve in a government position
2. Attendance at five board meetings
3. Employment by public school system
4. Candidacy in a non board position
5. Service on the school board committee
6. Previously unsuccessful school board candidacy.

The findings suggest that the best way to prepare for school board service is to attend meetings and volunteer to serve on district committees.

Qualifications

How does a school board member differ from the average citizen? According to the National School Board Association (1982) the typical board member is not necessarily the "average citizen"; he tends to be upper or middle class, a professional or business male who is married with children in the school system. At the National School Board Association convention in 1978 a survey given revealed that most respondents said that they had been involved in activities and experiences that potentially contributed to their ability to serve as an effective board member. According to the survey 49% of the board members had been an active member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and
44% had served on a committee of the organization. In the survey 37% said that they had attended at least five board meetings during the previous year before they ran for a seat on the board. From the study it was concluded that more board members gained an interest to become board members by active membership in the PTA. (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998)

"Every politician wants education to be the number one issue," says Anne Bryant, the executive director of the National School Board Association, according to Coeyman (2000, p. 19). Many begin with the school board. It is a job that gave Jimmy Carter his start in politics.

According to the 1981 study conducted by the National School Board Association (Simon, 1985), Eastern board members are more likely to come from corporate backgrounds while Southern board members are likely to come from a PTA background. Urban districts are more likely to have persons previously employed by a public school system, while rural and small-town school board members generally have served as PTA officers. Older board members older than 40 were more likely to have served in government positions while members younger than 40 were likely to have attended five board meetings. Board members serving in appointed, rather than elected, positions are more likely to have had experience on corporate boards, while those who had PTA experience were likely to be appointed on elected boards.

Houle (1989) suggests that it is generally accepted that a new board is to be concerned with "a respected position in the community, intelligence, courage, capacity, for personal growth, ability to influence public opinion among significant factors of the
community, willingness to serve, and readiness to work with others” (p. 28). He continues by stating that often when this list of traits is brought forward, it leads to discussion and embarrassment, and it is better to leave the list implicit rather than explicit.

According to the Robinson and Bickers (1990) report, Thomas Shannon, Executive Director of the National School Boards Association, has identified 13 skills necessary for individual board members. They are (1) to obtain information from within the school district, (2) to build a coalition among the supporters of the school, (3) to establish reasonable and practicable goals, (4) to evaluate the superintendent and school operations, (5) to differentiate between the role of the superintendent and the board member, (6) to evaluate the board itself, (7) to judge personnel issues, (8) to understand parliamentary procedure, (9) to look at oneself in the total school board context, (10) to work with special interest groups in a manner that is fair to the group and the public, (11) to understand that the rules of private business are not always applicable in educational matters, (12) to assume personal responsibility to conduct a productive meeting, and (13) to exercise self-control.

Elections and appointments are the favored means of selecting board members. According to Coeyman (2000) the majority of the nation’s 95,000 board members are elected rather than appointed and almost none are paid for their service. Yet most spend from 3 to 4 hours a week with board duties while for others it is the equivalent of a full-time job. Much of the literature about school board qualifications is centered around the selection process of board members. Since an overwhelming number of board
members are elected to the board, many of the qualifications of board members are
germane to the candidate’s ability to win an election.

Foster (1975) described his appointment to the Chicago School Board:

I was appointed in 1963, and I guess one of the reasons I was appointed was
because there was a considerable controversy about minority representation
on the Board. I was one of the few who had been suggested who could afford
the time during the day to attend meetings. One of the reasons [for my
appointment] was that I am black and a male. At that time there was only one
black person on the 11-member Board, a female who was strongly identified
with the administration of the city, and also with the then Superintendent of
Schools, Ben Willis. (p. 15)

Having suggested that his qualifications for serving on the board were his ethnic identity,
Foster (1975) explained the reasons why.

I was seated in the midst of a very energetic controversy, major issues not
only being integration but also the utilization of unused classrooms and
vacant seats which were available in white schools surrounding the black
ghetto. There was a strong feeling that the school system was containing the
black community. (p. 16)

According to Foster, at that time, Chicago School Board members were
appointed. But qualifications for appointments were awarded on the basis of ethnic and
positional identity. For example, it was emphasized that two seats on the board were
labor seats, and other seats were considered in proportion to the ethnic groups of
Chicago. Still there were seats that represented the business community and others were
filled simply because the mayor wanted that person on the board.

According to Thomas Shannon (1988), more than 97% of the nation’s 97,000
public school board members are elected, while the remainder are appointed by other
elected officials. “Many board members’ interest is either ideological, political or both”
(Price, 2001, p. 47). They serve as governors of the public schools in local communities
and employ the superintendent with his or her professional staff, set district goals, set budgets, evaluate programs, provide school facilities, and determine educational and managerial policy.

Schlechty and Cole (1993) suggest a new concept in school board elections. They propose radically changing state legislation of how school boards are elected. The purpose is to eliminate the election of individuals who are spokespersons only for special interest groups. The authors suggest that the new law should determine how citizens would select a slate of candidates for the school board which would be voted as a whole during the election. This would replace an individual member's candidacy. This concept is referred to as a charter school board. Such a law would require that the composition of the charter board reflect the ethnic representation of the community. Each slate's charter or constitution would be clearly defined such as the purpose for the schools, the importance of school-community relations, its obligation to employees, factors it will contribute to student learning, and ways in which the board will judge its own progress.

An advantage mentioned by Schlechty and Cole (1993) is that boards elected by slates would have to reach an accord on difficult issues before they were elected, they would reflect the voice of the community, and boards would be more concerned about the success of the superintendent because that success would be reflected upon the board. Local school boards derive their authority from the state. In many instances the state gives little oversight; consequently it must bear the responsibility when a local school board falters. Danzberger (1994) recommends the following: "Repeal all current laws and regulations that specify the duties, functions, selection, and role of school boards;
rename the school board the 'local education policy board’” (p. 14).

There are 91 school districts in South Carolina and the elections from school boards vary from district to district. Some elections are partisan and others are nonpartisan, while some are appointed by legislative delegations. According to the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce the lack of uniformity has caused a decrease in voter participation involving school board elections. South Carolina is one of the few states whose chief educational officer is elected through a statewide election (Coeyman, 2000).

Feuerstein and Opfer (1998) concluded from their study of school boards in Virginia with elected, appointed, and mixed members that the boards with mixed and elected members tend to perceive governance in a less positive way. School board members in Virginia were appointed, but in 1992 a new law permitted communities to elect their school board members. The role of the administration and the board is perceived less clearly, which results in controversial issues and groups. The electoral process stimulates public scrutiny. In the response to a survey it was discovered that a significant amount of participants from communities with elected boards (32%) believed that appointed boards were superior to elected boards.

Laws in some states require the remaining members of the board to appoint someone when a vacancy is created by death or when some member moves from the district. When this occurs, the remaining members must establish criteria for filling the vacancy. Vito Martinez (1978), president of the Valley View CU District 365-U Board of Education, states that each board should establish for itself the qualifications that it considers most important. During an interview with the candidate, the board would ask
the candidate to identify the priorities of the district. This question would allow the board to determine if the candidate had a knowledge of the direction and major concerns of the district. Second, the candidate would be asked about the role of the superintendent and the role of the board. His answer would reveal his knowledge of board operational structure. If the candidate appeared to be interested in only one school, it was interpreted as a sign of narrow thinking. The Valley View Board wanted persons who would represent the entire district and to avoid those with "axes to grind."

Caruso (2001) illustrates this factor in his statement, "You probably were asked to run because someone saw your leadership potential. In all likelihood, this is your first time opportunity to serve in an elected position" (p. 26). Wildman (1987) believes that school board members are success-oriented by the reason that they have been successful with obtaining a seat on the school board. While this may hold true in the public sector, it may not be a valid assumption that church school board members are success-oriented by virtue of their board seat, considering the process for obtaining a seat on the church school board.

Lutz and Gresson (1980) propose that boards can be classified into two groups: elite and area. Elite boards rely heavily upon the superintendent while area boards rely upon fragmented community support representing specific issues. According to Greene (1992) the 1986 report from the Institute for Educational Leadership reveals that some board members see themselves as trustees of public interest and they rely upon the superintendent to operate the district. Other board members perceive themselves as representatives for specific groups, and they emphasize their accountability to their
constituents and often interfere with management.

Questions about the heterogeneity/diversity of boards have been posed. During the mid-1960s at the height of the civil rights movement, school governance began a focal point of redesign. More effort was placed on institutional responsiveness and racial representation on boards and procedures and rules that would include community participation. Equity became a concern since federal funding required such (Wong, 1995).

Houle (1989) proposed that over the past 25 years the concept of diversity on the board had to be made forcibly, chiefly because an unquestionable acceptance of the status quo objected to admitting new categories of people. In the 21st century it is generally accepted that boards should have diversity—diversity in both gender and ethnicity.

Bissell (1990) found in her study of Seventh-day Adventist academies that there was no difference between male and female perceptions of board responsibilities. This finding is different from the perceptions of public school board members. Aleshire (1980) reported that male and female board members have different perceptions and expectations regarding board-superintendent communications. Those observations agree with Alvey and Underwood (1985) who concluded that the female board members “see more imbalance in the division of power than male board members do” (p. 21). Luckett, Underwood, and Fortune (1987) found that there was only a small increase in female membership on school boards and this amount began to decrease following the mid-1980s.

Data from nationwide statistics are indicative that school board membership is
skewed toward males. In 1927 women held only 10.2% of all school board positions. In 1972 the percentage had increased to 12%, and in 1985 it had reached 37.1% followed by a decline (Luckett et al., 1987).

While nationwide statistics indicate a dominance of males on the school boards, these data may vary with individual districts. For example, in 1996 the New York City Community School Board consisted of 54.5% women with the record of their having won 39% of the seats citywide for the previous 20 years (Richie, 1996).

Splawn (1972) used a stratified random sample of Texas school board members to determine what extent board members' perceptions of their roles agree with the various roles as portrayed by the literature. His findings indicated that there is a significant dependency between the educational level of board members and the way they perceive their role of the board and those of the superintendent and high-school principal. Bissell (1990) found in a similar study with Seventh-day Adventist boards that the level of education of the board had no impact on how board members perceived their responsibility.

Bissell (1990) found that Seventh-day Adventist board members perceived themselves as regarding board responsibilities with a higher degree of importance than how they perceived the entire board regarding those same responsibilities. The method of election to the board in the Seventh-day Adventist Church differs vastly from the election to a public school board. It is interesting to note that in some districts school board membership has lost its attractiveness. In Iowa, for instance, 59% of candidates ran unopposed in 1998 according to the Iowa Association of School Boards and up to 51% in
1996. The more hotly contested races for board seats were found in urban areas (Coeyman, 2000).

Assessments

The need for evaluation or assessment had been documented in the literature. According to Robinson and Bickers (1990), 51.1% of the superintendents surveyed said that their boards never evaluated themselves, and 21.0% of them said that their boards evaluated themselves on “no set schedule.” Only about one fourth (36.7%) evaluated themselves regularly, most of them at least once per year. Of those who are evaluated only 6.6% are evaluated by an external evaluator.

According to Danzberger (1994) a survey conducted by the Institute for Educational Leadership found governing problems, documented in self-assessment data, from approximately 300 schools that participated nationwide. The board listed itself as least effective in areas that include leadership, planning, goal setting, policy oversight, board operations and board development.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) cite that “a major reason why school boards traditionally have not been evaluated is that they are not employed in the same manner as teachers or administrators. In most cases they are elected officials responsible to the tax paying public, not to any higher authority in the district” (p. 57). The authors assert that school boards should receive an evaluation for the same reason that teachers are evaluated— to improve performance.

How are the criteria for evaluations determined? Based upon the Robinson and
Bickers (1990) survey, 59.1% of the school boards surveyed were assessed using criteria which were jointly agreed upon by the educational superintendent and board members. About 24.3% set their own evaluation criteria. Large urban school districts were more likely to set their own criteria than small rural districts.

Nemir (1991), in a report published jointly with the Texas Association of School Boards, recommends that a clear statement of purpose be prepared for the self-appraisal. Glass (2000) suggests that since self-evaluation efforts produce little change, school boards could benefit from evaluation by outside assessors. Research by Robinson and Biggers (1990) shows that only a small percentage (6.6%) of boards use an outside evaluator. Such a process could describe the board's involvement in eight important actions identified by the National School Boards Association: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, learning environment, collaborative partnership, and continuous improvement.

The National School Board Association, an organization for professional growth of school board members, has developed a meeting evaluation checklist with 12 points for the evaluation of a board meeting in a corporate setting. The board may feel the need for an objective analysis. The approach is to involve citizens or employees to rate the board at the end of each meeting on the following 14 items: planning, pre-meeting dissemination, the setting, homework, public involvement, proper role, recommendations, advice, pace, clarification, control, post-meeting dissemination, and policies. While this exercise evaluates the members collectively, it fails to analyze the development of individual members. (Successful School Board Meetings, p. 55)
This association has given no rights or wrongs, but has offered the following guidelines:

1. School boards need to develop criteria for which they will evaluate themselves. The evaluation should be based upon goals that the board sets for itself, and not goals set for the system.

2. The evaluation process should include board establishment of objectives and strategies for improving board performance.

3. The board should compile a composite list of the board's strengths and weaknesses.

4. Individual members are not to be evaluated, but only the board as a corporate group.

Other guidelines indicate that school board assessment may be performed by looking at the board as a whole or by looking at the performance of individual members. According to Robinson and Bickers (1990) many authors recommend that whole board performance is the most appropriate. The 1989 survey conducted by the Educational Research Service showed that in 59% of the districts where boards were evaluated, the evaluation was determined by the superintendent and the board jointly, and that the appropriate approach to follow is to establish a statement of purpose for school evaluations.

Bippus (1985) states that there are times when an individual member of the board needs to receive feedback about his individual performance. Since the purpose of such an evaluation is for the professional growth of the individual member, it should include a self-appraisal and perceptions by others and should be descriptive rather than judgmental.
Boone (1991), in his *School Board Self-Evaluation: Charting a Path to the Future*, suggests that the function of a school board evaluation is to improve board performance. Evaluation, he states, is a control mechanism that allows the school board to make judgments based on predetermined and understood objectives. He identifies eight reasons for school board evaluation based upon the work of Kowalski (1981). They are (1) to identify and clarify the purpose of the board, (2) identify the strengths and weaknesses, (3) to assess success and failures, (4) to inform the public, (5) to promote the concept of accountability, (6) to avoid the abuse of power, (7) to enhance the understanding of the purpose of evaluation, and (8) to provide a framework for goal setting.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) noted that 64.1% of the school boards surveyed had conducted their self-evaluation in a closed session and 31.4% in an open meeting. The study revealed that large school districts are more likely to conduct self-evaluations in closed sessions than are smaller school districts.

Some of the benefits of this self-evaluation as documented by Robinson and Bickers (1990) include:

1. Enhanced credibility—the board’s concern about its own credibility demonstrates its willingness to undergo the same accountability tests it demands on others.

2. Improved performance—Self-evaluation provides a vehicle to identify weaknesses and strengths.

3. Job description creation—The organization and goal setting required in self-
evaluations provide job descriptions for new board members and help them with their orientation activities for the board.

4. Improved goal setting—By specifying the areas of needed improvement, board members have a sound starting point for new goals for the subsequent year.

5. Keeping better informed—Annual board evaluation keeps the public informed of its progress and promotes harmony among its members.

Kowalski (1993) agrees that effective school board evaluations should be done annually. Board evaluations and assessments increase and improve communications, clarify roles and expectations, prevent problems from growing into larger ones, provide a vehicle for identifying weaknesses, and demonstrate to the community that the top management is in touch with the operations of the school district (Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

In a survey by the National School Board Association (1982, p. 13) it was found that the top five items that board members felt contributed to their success were (1) conversation with the superintendent, (2) personal and professional experiences, (3) experiences as a parent of school children, (4) attending national conventions for school board members, and (5) attending workshops sponsored by state board associations. Also in this survey researchers asked board members their two favorite avenues for which they preferred to learn about boardsmanship. The members overwhelmingly preferred to visit a school and second to listen to the “experts.” This is in accord with Smith (1991) who chose to conduct school board meetings annually in schools within his district.
Summary

School boards are the epitome of democracy in action. In recent years school boards have undergone critical public scrutiny. Some researchers have called for the replacements of boards with direct state governorship or by committees with limited powers. Over the past two decades school boards have become diversified by gender and ethnicity.

Most board members in the United States are elected to a school board; however, a small group of board members obtained their seats by political appointment. Research reveals that many members were active observers of the school board meetings or members of the parent-teacher association before attempting to obtain a seat on the board. School board members, when elected or appointed to the school board, need governance training. Studies conducted reveal that the citizens of school districts believe that required levels of training are necessary to be an effective school board member. Two common methods of governance training are veteran board members mentoring new board members and "flying by the seat of your pants." However, a significant number of public school boards provide governance training through mini-workshops, their state association of school boards, and their state universities. Studies conducted concerning Seventh-day Adventist governance training concluded that there is no systematic governance training program established. Some states such as Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Tennessee mandate a specified number of hours of governance training to maintain public school board membership, but this is not the case with Seventh-day
Adventist school boards in these states.

Only a small percentage of school boards conduct an evaluation or assessment of themselves. School board assessments identify the objectives and purposes of the board and provide an avenue for accountability. School board assessments also provide systematic feedback for school board members and the community.

School board members in short need to be skilled in dealing with people and facts. They need to understand the process of assimilating information to be used for the direction of the school system. They must be able to identify, articulate, and solve problems by utilizing the resources that are available.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A significant part of this research is to describe and define the activities of Seventh-day Adventist school boards in their perceptions of governance training, their qualifications, and practices of board assessment. As a researcher I want to gather facts and perceptions of board members regarding the three mentioned areas of school boardsmanship. I chose to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer the following research questions.

1. What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board members in the Southern Union?

2. Is governance training of board members related to the perception of their decision-making skills?

3. Is the School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools being used for governance training for school board members?

4. What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities?

5. What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?

Design

This section will detail the two approaches used in this study: qualitative and
quantitative.

Qualitative

Merriam (1998) gives five characteristics of all qualitative research: (1) researchers are interested in understanding the meaning that people have constructed, (2) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, (3) the research involves field work, (4) the research involves primarily inductive research strategies, and (5) the product of qualitative research is extremely descriptive. Wiersma (1991) agreed with Merriam that qualitative research is done for the purpose of understanding social phenomena and to understand relationships, effects and causes. Alexander Massey (1996) refers to qualitative research as “systematic empirical inquiry into meaning.”

There must be a plan whereby specific research can be conducted. Kerlinger (1986) identified two basic purposes of research design: to provide answers to the scientific inquiry and to control variances. Providing answers may appear to be simple, but research must be valid and usable. It should assist the reader in understanding and to ensure usable results. Kerlinger suggests that all research is conducted to explain variances—the fact that individuals are not the same and do not produce the same measurements. In qualitative research the researcher attempts to explain the phenomena that are studied and gives a description of the logical interpretation of what has been observed (Wiersma, 1991).

Eisner (1998) states that the second most important source of data, following observations, is the use of interviews. Unstructured interviews allow the respondent to
describe his inner feelings and perceptions through open-ended questions about a phenomenon. They have no predetermined questions and are used essentially for exploration (Merriam, 1998).

On the other hand, a structured interview is one in which the investigator adheres rigidly to predetermined questions. Such an interview is based on the assumption that the respondent shares the same vocabulary and that the questions are equally meaningful to the respondent (Denzin, 1970). Semi-structured interviews are halfway between the ends of the continuum. In this study I used semi-structured interviews which allowed me the opportunity to determine from the board member's perspective his/her inner thoughts about this study.

Many qualitative researchers do their research in natural settings, and they avoid artificial and manipulated scenarios. It requires adjustments on the part of the researcher. Smith and Glass (1987) call this “working design.” McMillan and Schumacher (1989) call it “emergent design.” A working design is a preliminary design to begin the research. Decisions are made about what will be studied, when samples are collected and variables considered. Qualitative researchers use the inductive model, which, during the data collection process, there are no preconceived theories or hypotheses. In my study I have described the information obtained from the population sampled and have compared certain subgroups such as those who have received governance training with those who have not received governance training.
Quantitative

This methodology requires postulating a hypothesis and testing that hypothesis through data collection and analysis. Quantitative research is a method commonly used in “hard sciences.” This methodology has been adapted by social science researchers because certain data are generally reported in quantitative terms such as test scores, frequency counts, attendance records, etc. (Ellis & Fouts, 1995). Wiersma (1991) contrasts quantitative research with qualitative research as follows: “Qualitative research is done for the purpose of understanding the social phenomena. . . . Quantitative research is done to determine relationships, effects and causes” (p. 11). Wiersma believed that both qualitative and quantitative research have great relevance for the improvement of education. I have chosen to triangulate my study by supporting the qualitative with the quantitative aspect.

For the quantitative aspect of this study, a school board questionnaire was developed which contained five sections. See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire. Section One of the questionnaire requested demographic information: ethnic background, age category, level of education, classification of occupation, marital status, personal income category, and residential environs. Section Two was divided into two parts, the first of which asked objective questions with two optional answers—yes or no. The second part asked questions for which the respondent had five optional responses dependent upon his/her perception about time commitment of the board members. Those responses were strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree. Section Three, time allotment, requested information about the respondent’s
perception of how much time the board spent on various activities and discussions.

Section Four was to determine the priorities of board activities as perceived by the respondent. Nine hypotheses were generated to investigate the relationship between the school board members' practices and the board members' perceptions about school board functioning. The research hypotheses are following.

Hypothesis #1: There is a significant relationship between the decision-making approach used by school board members and whether or not they had received governance training.

Hypothesis #2: There is a significant relationship between board members' perception of their understanding their roles and their having received the school board manual.

Hypothesis #3: There is a significant relationship between the perception of school board members' understanding of their roles and their having read the board manual.

Hypothesis #4: There is a significant relationship between board members' perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they had read the board manual.

Hypothesis #5: There is a significant relationship between board members having received school board manuals and whether or not school board members have read the manuals.

Hypothesis #6: There is a significant relationship between board members' attendance at national, state, or denominational conferences and seminars and their perception of their thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
Hypothesis #7: There is a significant relationship between board members' perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they belonged to a professional organization for board members.

Hypothesis #8: There is a significant relationship between board members' perception of their understanding of their roles and whether or not they subscribed to a professional journal for board members.

Hypothesis #9: There is a significant relationship between board members' perceptions of their need for annual reviews and whether or not their board had been assessed for performance.

Selection of Subjects

The purpose of this research guided the selection of subjects. There are two basic types of sampling—probability and nonprobability sampling. According to Patten (2000) unbiased random sampling allows each member of the population an equal chance of being included in the sample, and it allows the investigator to generalize the results from the sample to the population from which it was drawn. According to Merriam (1998) non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative studies since generalization is not a statistical goal of the researcher. Chein (1981) calls this method purposive, and Patton (1990) calls it purposeful. This type of sampling is based upon the premise that the investigator wants to discover and understand a phenomenon, and therefore must select the sample from which he can learn the most.

Non-probability sampling was chosen for the qualitative part of the study. The
participants of this study were members of school boards of day academies in the Southern Union. I used five board members—two chairpersons, one pastor, one superintendent, and the union associate director of education. I selected day-academy because (1) it allowed me to investigate all day-academy boards from diverse geographical portions of the Southern Union, and (2) it allowed me to compare similar school boards and situational structures when compiling the data. For the quantitative part of the study, a questionnaire was used to collect data from all board members present at a board meeting during the administration of the questionnaire.

Procedures

The data for this study were collected during December 2001 and January 2002. The data collection techniques included the following tools/techniques: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

Permission for conducting this study was obtained from the director of education of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (See Appendix B, #1, for a copy of the letter sent to the director.) A copy of a letter of endorsement from the director was mailed to each conference superintendent of education along with my letter informing each superintendent of my research and my personal contact with the day-academy principals. (See Appendix B, #2 for the director's response.) There are only seven day academies in the Southern Union. A designated proctor visited each of the seven day academies to administer the questionnaire during a time when the school board was normally meeting to conduct business. A brief explanation of the purpose and the
value of the study was given to the board members in session. Each board member who was present was given a printed questionnaire to complete, which was collected upon completion. No board member was obligated to complete the questionnaire. Each board member sealed his/her questionnaire in the envelope provided and returned it to the proctor. The proctor forwarded the sealed envelopes to me.

Proctors were selected from school board chairpersons and principals (board secretaries) of the board to which they were members. They were instructed to complete their questionnaire at a time other than when they were administering the questionnaire to their fellow board members.

Questionnaires were coded by color to identify each day academy. When the questionnaires were received, they were separated into color categories, bound in a loose-leaf notebook, and each questionnaire assigned an identification number from 1-109. Each field of data entered on the questionnaire was identified by the questionnaire section number and assigned a code for each optional response. The responses from each questionnaire were analyzed using the statistical computer program, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A frequency test provided an actual number of responses for each possible choice used. The frequency test gave the percentage for each possible response. Since participants were permitted to omit questions with which they felt uncomfortable in answering, a code was assigned for “no response” for computational purposes. The computations also allowed for cumulative percentages. The cumulative percentages disallowed for “no responses” in the final calculation.
Instrumentation

Wiersma (1991) states that surveys fall into two designs: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Longitudinal designs involve the collection of data over a period of time with a specific point in time. This type of study usually has data collected at least in two or more periods of time. Longitudinal studies are often used for trend studies. A cross-sectional design involves the collection of data at a given point in time using a random sample from a given population. I chose to develop a questionnaire with a cross-sectional approach. Questions were posed as though the participant was being interviewed using a structured type interview. I believed that this approach could best describe what occurred relative to school board governance, member’s perception of their qualifications, and board performance assessments. The content of the survey instrument related to the research questions of this study. The survey selected is a questionnaire that seeks to obtain the perceptions of board members regarding their practices. Instructions were given orally to each participant. One hundred and nine questionnaires were completed and returned by board members; this comprises a 62% return. Board members were advised that they could omit any question which they felt uncomfortable to answer. The questionnaires were collected immediately following their completion. In order to maintain each board member’s confidentiality, each board was assigned a color-code for identification.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first section yielded demographic data. Each participant, who completed the questionnaire, was asked questions regarding his/her ethnic background, age group, education, profession, income,
and marital status. The second section asked 11 objective questions with the options to respond yes or no, and 13 statements with the options of five responses: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questions with yes or no answers were posed to determine the board members' practices and board experiences. The second group of statements, which gave the respondents five optional responses, was to determine the perception of the respondent regarding his/her role on the board. The third section was to determine board members' perceptions of how they spent their time during board meetings. Section Four was to determine prioritization of the importance of school board functions.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the questions regarding three aspects of school board operations of day academies in the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Those questions are as follows: (1) What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board members in the Southern Union? (2) Is governance training of school board members related to the perception of their decision-making skills? (3) Is the School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools being used for governance training of board members for their responsibilities? (4) What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership? (5) What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?

Data were collected through five semi-structured interviews with school board members and 109 returned questionnaires from board members. This study contains both qualitative and quantitative elements to broaden and support the picture.

Data Analysis

There were two sets of data used in this study. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews that were conducted with board members. Quantitative data were
obtained from questionnaires answered by board members. All interviews were
audiotaped with permission of the interviewee. Transcriptions of the interviews were
made. (See Appendix E for the transcriptions of interviews.) Each interview was
analyzed for similar and contrasting statements relating to the three areas of this study:
governance training, perceptions of board member qualifications, and school board
assessment practices. Themes, concerns, and expectations were categorized from the
responses of school board members about their practices and perception of school
boardsmanship.

The transcriptions from the interviews were bound in a binder. The data were
organized topically according to the research questions. The questionnaires were used
for the quantitative analysis and were also bound in a binder.

Demographic Data of Population Sampled

The population used in this study was the board members of the seven day
academies in the Southern Union. All board members were Seventh-day Adventists.
Their years of experience ranged from the first day of service (on the date the survey was
given) to 30 years as a board member. The largest ethnic group of board members
sampled was Americans of African descent, followed closely by Americans of European
descent. Hispanics, a Native American, and others not identified comprised a smaller
group as shown in Table 1.

Of the 103 who marked their age, 68.9% of them were between the ages of 40-59,
which is considered middle age. (See Table 4 for details of board members.) According
to the demographic data, there are no board members younger than 30.

Table 1

**Analysis of Board Membership by Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest percentage of board members surveyed held college and university degrees and considered themselves professional. Only 9.7% had no college education. See Table 2 for further details.

Table 2

**Analysis of Board Membership by Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-school diploma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree, certificate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate degree</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of board members (43.9%) reported an annual salary of $40,000 to $50,999. The next highest category reported was the $25,000-$39,900 annual salary, consequently 72% of board members sampled reported annual salaries between $25,000
and $50,999. See Table 3 for additional details.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual salary</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$24,999 and under</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000- $39,999</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$50,999</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$74,999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 and above</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other demographic data reported was that while some board members were separated, divorced, and widowed, 79% were married. Males accounted for 63.3% of the sample, whereas females almost 2 to 1. Males accounted for 63.3% of the sample, whereas 36.7 were females. In addition, 78.9% of board members had attended a Seventh-day Adventist school at one time during their education. Of those who had children of school age, 89.9% of them enrolled their children in an Adventist school.

**Board Member Profile**

The typical school board member of a day academy in the Southern Union in this study was a married male of African-American descent between the ages of 40-60. He was a professional who earned between $40,000 and $60,000 annually. He had attended a Seventh-day Adventist school at some point in his formal education and had sent his children to church school.
Table 4

Analysis of Board Membership by Age Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Data

The qualitative method that I used was to interview five board members: two school board chairpersons, a pastor, a superintendent, and an associate director in the Southern Union Department of Education, whose responsibility was secondary education. The data received from the interviews were organized in terms of the following topics: governance training, the board member’s perception of his/her qualifications, and school board assessment.

Personal biases are inherent in qualitative studies by their very subjective nature. MacDonald and Walker (1977) observed that many studies in education are financed by the same people who have the power to control the study. In all levels of the system what people say they are doing, or think they are doing, or appear to be doing may be a point of considerable discrepancies.

Diener and Crandall (1978) concluded that in qualitative studies that biases are inherent. They suggested that the research be as accurate and methodical as possible, and
those biases that cannot be controlled should be discussed in writing.

I acknowledge that I have worked in the Seventh-day Adventist educational system for more than three decades before initiating this research. I am very familiar with the operation of school boards, and my experiential background may preconclude my findings. I have shared my qualitative findings with another researcher to ascertain any personal biases. Special effort has been made to avoid allowing my personal preconceptions of school boards to denigrate the collected data. In discussing the data gathered from the interviews, the names of academies, conferences, and educational personnel were assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Then I discussed the findings with a fellow researcher as a means of cross checking the themes and concerns which related to the study.

Governance Training

Alice was the school board chairperson of Apple Valley Academy. Before serving as the chairperson, she had served on the board. A sudden change in leadership thrust her into the position of school board chairperson. She explained that the previous chairperson had called her to inform her that he was getting married and would no longer be available to serve as the board leader. Her briefing, she relates, as follows. "So I met him at his home . . . and he handed me a box of stuff and said, 'Good luck!'" Fortunately, in the case of Alice, one of the board members was a very prominent, successful businessman. He influenced the board to adopt business strategies that proved effective.

Renee was board chairperson of Wisdom Hill Academy. She had served as vice-
chair for several years. She, too, was thrust into the chairmanship by an unexpected mid-year resignation of the chairman. She described her training to board leadership as a result from sitting on the board for many years and having attended all board meetings and subcommittee meetings. Renee stated that her experience gave her the confidence to perform effectively. Renee continued by stating that the older members on the board trained the newer members of the board through active participation. This method is called on-the-job training.

How then were rank-and-file school board members trained? According to Renee, Conference A had an orientation program that was presented to new board members “every year or so” at the beginning of the school year. The program was a Power Point presentation.

Elizabeth is a superintendent of Conference D. She explained that there is a system in her conference for board member governance training known as the “board member seminar.” Every board member was given a board manual and was instructed about the policies of the manual as it related to roles and responsibilities. During alternate years Conference D conducted officers’ meetings, training sessions for church officers, and the department of education conducted school board seminars during that time. The department used a visual presentation in which it summarized the policies of the manual.

Leonard was a pastor and vice-chair for Sweetwater Academy. He had served on school boards for 15 years. He described his governance training as “none whatsoever.” His only recollection of any training was provided by a former superintendent of the
conference (the writer of this study), who had provided governance training for the elementary school where Pastor Leonard was serving. Leonard believed that the failure to understand the differences between the roles of the principal, the board, the superintendent, and the conference office of education created confusion. Leonard said the material was great and overwhelming, but the board had not had another training session since that time. He believed that governance training would help to eliminate many misunderstandings.

Stephen, a high-ranking school supervisory official in the Seventh-day Adventist system, stated that one of the weaknesses in the system which governs Seventh-day Adventist schools is that most board members receive only on-the-job training. Stephen said that board members come and go, and there was no program of school board orientation. In some cases newly elected board members grasped their responsibilities easily, which resulted in a smoothly operating board. In other cases where on-the-job orientation took longer, the board found itself in an unfortunate situation. Consequently, the school board did not operate as cohesively. Stephen suggested that all boards needed governance training.

Research Question 1 states: “What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board members in the Southern Union?” To answer the question, it was found that the actual experiences related by Alice, Renee, Elizabeth, Leonard, and Stephen illustrated that there was no systematic program of governance training in the Southern Union. Leonard recalled only one board training session conducted during his 15 years of service on a school board.
Research Question 3 asked, "Is the *School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools* being used for governance training for school board members?"

According to the interview data only Conference A and Conference D provided their board members with limited training using the school board manuals. Since the Southern Union Conference had no established, standardized program of school board training, Conferences A and D used the school board manual for these training sessions.

**Qualifications**

The Southern Union School Board Manual lists six qualifications for school board membership. When summarized, a member should be a Seventh-day Adventist member in regular standing. Stephen, an educational leader in the church for more than 20 years, described the seating of some board members “by default.” Since serving as a board member is gratis and time consuming, many members believed that serving on the board was a waste of time. They declined the nomination to serve on a board. Hence, the selection of a board member centered around finding someone who was willing to serve. This sentiment was resonant in the statement of Elizabeth, who wanted people to bring wisdom to the board as well as willingness. Leonard, a pastor who had served on nominating committees for the selection of board members, agreed that very little attention had been given to the qualifications of board members.

Renee would like to see persons seated on the board who would bring specific skills needed by the board, such as finance, personnel administration, and school-plant management. “We get what we get,” said Alice regarding how the church selected
members for her constituency school. Leonard said that some board members believed that being a board member meant only coming to the meeting and sitting throughout it. Christian View Academy had provisions in its bylaws which allowed non-board members with special skills to serve on board committees. These members served in an advisory position with the board. Elizabeth, a superintendent, said that many board members perceived themselves as having all the needed information and often considered themselves as an administrative officer who could come in to evaluate the school on the spot without notice. This conception of school board membership reflected the need for governance training.

According to Renee, putting too many parents on the board diminished the objectivity of the board. Parents tended to become less objective when decisions were made that affected their children. Elizabeth agreed. She said, "We don't want to overload the board with parents because it is hard to be objective when we are discussing your children." Elizabeth and Renee stated that parents on the board tended to be less objective when making decisions that affected their own children. See Table 5 for classified statements of school board members.

What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership? The interview data revealed that board members perceived that a board overly loaded with parents was unwise because parents tended to become less objective in making decisions about the school when their children were involved. Board members also revealed that more consideration should be given to special skills when nominating candidates for school board service such as expertise in
the following areas: accounting and finance, personnel administration, and building and construction. Some interviewees stated that church members often believed that serving on the school board was a waste of time. Therefore, nominating committees often selected individuals who were willing to serve on the board. Hence, some board members were on the board “by default.” But the essential qualification, as stated by one board member, should be “a commitment and genuine concern for Christian education.”

Assessment

School board assessment is an activity that did not occur systematically among day academies in the Southern Union. Stephen, the school administrator, stated that the school board should be accountable to the constituency through its assessments. He said that an instrument that provided input from the administration, teachers, parents, and church members would be very helpful. He thought that the process should be done at least every other year. He saw the purpose of a school assessment as a mechanism for improvement, not as a threat to the board. Stephen suggested that each board member go through an orientation. At the conclusion the board member would have to pass an assessment. The member could not serve until he/she had attained a satisfactory assessment. Elizabeth disagreed with Stephen. She said that she would not make such a test mandatory since the responsibility to elect board members remained a responsibility of the church.

Renee stated that the assessment of the board should be done corporately, not individually. She said that if members knew that their performance would be scrutinized
annually, they would “shy away” from taking a position on the board, but if the board were assessed corporately, the attention would be focused upon position, not the person. Alice, like Renee, related that many board members would rather not serve on the board if individual assessment of board performance were implemented.

Leonard said that board assessment would be a great tool to allow the board to monitor its progress. He related the story of a board on which he had served that began the school year with high aspirations for achievement, but had not accomplished one tenth of its goals by the close of the school year. Leonard stated that a periodic review, annually and semiannually, would be beneficial for boards. Just as a person sets goals to achieve in life, Leonard said, so must the board set its goals and develop a mission statement that is reviewed and assessed to determine its accomplishments.

What system was there to assess the effectiveness of school boards (Research Question 5)? According to the interviews, no system was found in place. Some board members stated that an assessment of the board as a body would be acceptable, but that individual assessments would create an atmosphere of reluctance to serve on the board. According to Boyatt (2000), such a board assessment could be as simple as asking two questions: (1) What are the strengths of this board, and (2) What areas of improvement should be addressed?

Research Question #1 asked: What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board members in the Southern Union?

According to interviewees, there is no systematic Southern Union governance training in use. Two local conferences have devised school board training programs
using the school board manual, they are done only occasionally. One method for
governance training is on-the-job training in which new members learned from the
veteran members. Both school board chairpersons who were interviewed stated that their
orientation for board leadership was a result of their previously having served on the
board. Both assumed the responsibility of school board leadership following the
resignation of their predecessors. Both became active leaders without formal governance
training.

Research Question # 2 is answered under the title Quantitative Data. Research
Question # 3 is answered under the title Quantitative Data.

Research Question #4 asked: What are the perceptions of board members about
the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership?

According to interviews some board members perceive themselves as equipped
with all the answers. Some perceived themselves as qualified to visit the school to
evaluate the staff without notice. A school board chairperson stated that some board
members come to board meetings only to occupy a seat. Stephen, another interviewee,
said that some board members are elected to the board “by default,” and therefore have no
idea about what membership on the board requires.

Renee stated that qualifications such as being enthusiastic and caring about the
existence of the school are important for board members. Renee also stated that a
qualified board member is one who is sensitized to student concerns. Parents serving on
the board often become narrowly focused upon “what affects my child.” The perceptions
of board members about their roles and responsibilities varied.
The constitution of Christian View Academy allowed the board to invite qualified non-board members to serve on board committees when special expertise, not available on the board, was needed.

Pastor Leonard stated that some members of the school board accept their responsibilities half-heartedly. He said that the first criterion for board membership should be to have "a sincere interest in Christian education." The second qualification should be to "have a burden and real commitment and concern for Christian education."

Research Question #5 asked: What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?

There was no system in place to assess board members of their effectiveness. One board member interviewed said that such an evaluation would be helpful.

Table 5 summarizes the statements made by interviewees in the three areas—governance training, perception of board members' qualifications, and school board assessment practices. These statements are topically arranged for visual comparisons.

Quantitative Data

For the quantitative aspect of this study, data were collected by way of a questionnaire which was given to all board members present at school board meetings during December 2001 and January 2002. One hundred nine questionnaires were returned. Data from these questionnaires were analyzed by using the chi square.

Statistical analyses are commonly associated with research in which surveys and
## Table 5

**Topical Statements and Quotations From School Board Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Training</th>
<th>Perception of Qualifications</th>
<th>Board Assessment Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stephen Asst. Dir.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is one of the weaker links of our academies.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I'm not saying they never, but usually they don't have a good orientation.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On interviewing prospective board members: &quot;That would be a paradigm shift, but a good one.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Sometimes it's because they want to be on the school board, but sometimes they are there by default.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I think the board itself should review the evaluation of itself as a whole as well as its individual members.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elizabeth Supt.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We put in place a board seminar whereby we actually train our board members by going through the manual.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We have officers meetings and the education department takes the time to orientate new officers and board members.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We don't want to be overloaded with parents because it's hard to be objective when we are discussing your children.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We recommend that people bring their wisdom as well as the willingness.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We need some way to assess people.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You need an instrument&quot; [for assessment].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Maybe some people will discover, 'I don't really need to be a board member.'&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Renee Chair</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We need to have a little bit better program than we do.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The older members train the younger ones.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[About mandatory training] &quot;I think they should.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is a need for someone who is really good in finances and personnel to serve on the board.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board members should be people with a real true love and enthusiasm for church school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members would be reluctant to serve if they knew they would be evaluated for their performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The board could be holistically assessed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 – Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Training</th>
<th>Perception of Qualifications</th>
<th>Board Assessment Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Chair</td>
<td>“Conference A comes and does an inservice. They have a Power Point presentation.”</td>
<td>“We get what we get.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Board members understand the difference between operations and policy [making].”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Pastor</td>
<td>“They just come in and assume a position.”</td>
<td>“It is difficult to find people who are willing to sit on the board. In some people’s mind it’s a waste of time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There is no attention given to governance training. . . . Wrong decisions and confusion and misunderstanding result.”</td>
<td>“The essential qualification should be individuals who have a burden, commitment, and genuine concern for Christian education.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

questionnaires are used to collect the data. When the data take numerical forms, it is usually associated with some level of quantitative expression. Rows and columns of numbers are not adequate. They must be summarized. This process, according to Wiersma (1991), is called “descriptive statistics.” I attempt below to describe analytically the data received from the questionnaires to triangulate my conclusions about school boards of day academics in the Southern Union.

Part 1 of the questionnaire requested demographic information which I discussed in the beginning of chapter 3. Part 2 of the questionnaire was divided into two
sections. The first section asked 11 objective questions which the respondents answered either “yes” or “no.” These questions were designed to examine the practices of board members. In the second section of Part 2 the respondents answered 13 subjective questions from which their responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These statements were designed to examine the perceptions of board members regarding their opinions of board activities. Part 4 considered time commitments, and Part 5 sought to determine priorities for board functions. I gathered the frequency of responses, percentage of responses, and chi square to obtain useful data for quantitative analysis. Nine hypotheses were generated to investigate the relationships between board practices (objective responses) and board perceptions (subjective responses). Tables 6 and 7 display the respondents’ responses and perceptions.

Wiersma (1991) defines a hypothesis as a “conjecture or proposition about the solution of a problem, the relationship of two or more variables or the nature of some phenomenon” (p. 35). Merriam (1998) says that hypotheses are “the suggested links between categories and properties” (p. 190). In this section I have tested some of the relationships between the activities of board members and their perceptions about themselves in regard to critical related issues. The perceptions are given and the hypotheses are presented in the null form, and they were all tested using chi-square statistics at the .050 level of significance. Before each hypothesis is stated, the activity (question) and perception are given. (Note: Research Question #1 is answered under the section titled Qualitative Data.)
Table 6

*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Concerning Board Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Since serving on the school board, have you ever received training and</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been formally informed of your responsibilities?</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Have you during your education ever attended a Seventh-day Adventist</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school?</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever been</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>given the <em>Southern Union Conference School Board Manual</em>?</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever taken the</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time to read the <em>Southern Union Conference School Board Manual</em> through?</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever attended</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a national, state, or denominational conference or seminar for school</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board leadership?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Do you hold membership in any professional organization for the</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advancement of board members?</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Do you subscribe to a professional journal for the benefit of school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board members?</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Do you have children of school age?</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  If the answer to #8 is yes, do they attend the church school? If no,</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skip this question.</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Has your school board ever been assessed for its performance since you</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were a member?</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Were you ever formally interviewed before being seated on the school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board?</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 7

Responses Concerning Board Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of board members</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The school board member is an administrative officer of the school.</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 School board members need governance training in order to understand their roles and expectations.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 School boards should have an annual review or be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The qualifications of school board members should be more defined.</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 There should be a process in place for the certification of school board members.</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Once elected to the board, there is a need for continuing education for board members to remain on the &quot;cutting edge&quot; of educational issues and concerns.</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I have a thorough understanding of my role as a board member.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 When I do not understand an issue, financial statement, or document, I ask questions.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 7 – Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I am an effective member of my school board.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The philosophy of Adventist education and public education is the same.</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>In making decisions on the school board I consider the working policies of the SDA church.</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I believe governance training would equip me better to serve as a school board member.</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I believe the board should be evaluated when the school has its program of evaluation for accreditation.</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question #2 asked: Is governance training of school board members related to their perception of decision making skills?

In order to answer this research question, I tested null Hypothesis #1 which stated: "There is no relationship between the perception of the decision-making approach used by school board members and whether or not they have received board training."

This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #1 (Table 6) to Perception #11 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was retained ($X^2 = 4.57, p = .101$). There is no relationship between the perception of the decision-making approach used by school board members and whether or not they have received board training. Fifty respondents (48.5%) answered "yes" to having received board training, and 53 respondents (51.5%) answered "no." However, 86 respondents (90%) agreed that they made decisions based on church policies whether they had or had not read the manual. The intent of these data is to determine to what extent does governance training affect the way decisions are made by the board in response to Research Question 2? Board members stated that their decision-making was based upon overall church policy, but not school governance policies. These perceptions may or may not be a reality.

Research Question #3 asked: Is the School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools being used for governance training for school board members?

In order to answer this research question, I tested null hypotheses: #2, #3, #4, and #5. Each will be examined separately.

Hypothesis 2 stated, "There is no relationship between board members'
perception of understanding their roles and their having received the school board manual." This hypothesis was tested examining the relationship between survey Question #3 (Table 6) and Perception #7 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was rejected ($X^2 = 11.57$, $p = .021$). There was a significant relationship between board members’ perception of their understanding of their roles and their having received the school board manual. Sixty-one respondents (57.0%) received the school board manual and 46 (43.0%) never received the manual. Thirty of those (65.2%) who did not receive the manual perceived themselves as understanding their role as board members. Twenty-seven percent did not understand their role or were unsure of their role as a board members.

Second, to answer this research question, I tested null Hypothesis #3 which stated, “There is no relationship between the perception of school board members’ understanding of their role and their having read the board manual.” This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #4 (Table 6) and Perception #7 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was rejected ($X^2 = 13.05$, $p = .011$). There was a significant relationship between the perception of school board members’ understanding of their roles and their having read the board manual. Forty (37.4%) respondents had read the school board manual. Sixty-seven (62.6%) had not read the manual. Nearly seventy-three percent (72.9%) responded that they perceived themselves as having an understanding of their role as a board member. These data suggest that board members perceived that they understood their roles whether or not they had read the board manual.
Whether or not board members received a manual did not affect how they perceived themselves as understanding their roles.

I also tested null Hypothesis 4: “There is no relationship between board members’ perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they have read the board manual.” This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #4 (Table 6) and Perception #9 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was retained ($\chi^2 = 4.57, p = .101$). There was no relationship between board members’ perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they have read the board manual. There were 66 respondents (62.9%) who had never read the manual through. Fifty-two respondents (73.8%) agreed that they were effective board members without having read the manual. Eleven respondents (16.2%) were unsure whether they were effective board members. Board members in day academies of the Southern Union perceived themselves as effective (85%). A small group was unsure. No respondent stated that he/she was ineffective. Board members indicated that they understood their roles (73.4%) and 24% were uncertain whether board training would help them to improve, while 13% disagreed and strongly disagreed that governance training would help their effectiveness. Board members appeared to have a sense of confidence in their innate ability to understand their roles and responsibilities and to serve as effective members with or without training.

I tested null Hypothesis #5 stated: “There is no relationship between board members having received school board manuals and whether or not school board members have read the manuals.” This hypothesis was tested by examining the
relationship between survey Questions #3 and #4 (Table 6).

The null hypothesis was rejected ($X^2 = 36.06, p = .00$). There was a significant relationship between those who received the board manual and those who read the manual.

One hundred five respondents answered these related questions. Sixty respondents (57.1%) received the board manual. Twenty three (21.9%) who received the manual did not read the manual. Forty-three respondents (41.0%) never received or read the manual.

Manuals are given to board members for the information within. In determining the usage of the manual, it is useful to know if board members read the manuals. There is a clear distinction between receiving a manual and reading it. The hypothesis was developed using two questions (not a perception) regarding the practice of board members. It was to determine the usage of board manuals by board members to answer Research Question #4: What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership?

One may consider that attendance to professional meetings, subscription to professional journals, and membership in professional organizations may help board members to understand their roles and responsibilities. In order to answer Research Question #4, I tested null Hypothesis #6 which stated, “There is no relationship between board members’ attendance at national, state, or denominational conferences and seminars and their perception of their understanding of their roles and responsibilities.” This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #5

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(Table 6) and Perception #7 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was retained \( \chi^2 = 5.15, p = .271 \). There was no relationship between board members’ attendance at national, state, or denominational conferences and seminars and their perception of their thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Nine respondents (8.3%) had attended national, state, or denominational conferences or seminars for school board leadership. One respondent was unsure whether such meetings were helpful, and nine agreed that the meetings were helpful. Ninety-eight respondents (97.2%) had never attended a professional meeting for school board members. Twenty-eight respondents (28.6%) who had never attended a professional meeting for board members were uncertain or disagreed that they understood their role as a board member.

I tested null Hypothesis #7 which stated, “There is no relationship between board members’ perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they belong to a professional organization for board members.” This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Questions #6 (Table 6) and Perception #9.

The null hypothesis was retained \( \chi^2 = .938, p = .625 \). There was no relationship between board members’ perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they belong to a professional organization for board members. Three respondents (2.8%) belonged to a professional organization. Two respondents of this group believed that they were effective school board members and one was uncertain. One-hundred four respondents (95.4%) were not members of a professional organization. Sixteen (15.9%) of these were uncertain whether they were effective board members. Eighty-eight (84.1%)
perceived themselves as effective board members without professional membership in an organization.

I tested null Hypothesis #8 which stated, "There is no relationship between board members' perception of their thorough understanding of their roles and whether or not they subscribe to a professional journal for board members." This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #7 (Table 6) and Perception #7 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was retained ($X^2 = .808, p = .937$). There was no relationship between board members' perception of their understanding of their roles and whether or not they subscribe to a professional journal for board members. Ninety-eight members (89.9%) did not subscribe to professional journals for board members. Seventy-two respondents (73.4%) who did not subscribe to professional journals believed that they had a thorough understanding of their role as a board member. Fourteen were uncertain (13.8%) whether they understand their role as a board member.

Whether or not board members belong to a professional organization for school boards has no relationship to whether or not they perceive themselves as effective board members. There is no relationship between board members' perceptions of their understanding their roles as board members and whether they subscribe to professional school board journals.

Research Question #5 asked: What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?
In order to answer the research question, I tested null Hypothesis #9 which states, "There is no relationship between board members' perception of their need for annual reviews and whether or not their board has been assessed for performance." This hypothesis was tested by examining the relationship between survey Question #5 (Table 6) and Perception #3 (Table 7).

The null hypothesis was retained ($\chi^2 = 4.99, p = .288$). There is no relationship between board members' perception of their need for annual reviews and whether or not their board had been assessed for performance. One hundred six respondents answered both Question 5 and Perception 10. Twenty-five respondents (23.6%) said their boards had been assessed, and 81 (76.4%) responded no. Seventy-seven (72.7%) agreed that the board members should be assessed for their effectiveness, 14 (13.1%) disagreed and 15 (14.2%) were unsure.

In answering Research Question 5, it was noted that the qualitative part of this study revealed that no school board had implemented an assessment tool and systematically used it, however, it was noted in the quantitative part of this study that 25 respondents (23.6%) said that their board had been assessed since their service on the board. Although this discrepancy can initiate a study of itself, there are two theories that may offer some understanding of this phenomenon:

1. A board member who served on a school board other than a day academy in the Southern Union that was assessed could have answered yes to the question.

2. Day academies are evaluated in a cycle from 5 to 7 years by the North American Division. The instrument used by the division has a section in which questions
are asked about the school board's activities. Respondents who have undergone a school evaluation may have considered this exercise as a board assessment. The section on administration and school boards of the North American Division school evaluation instrument may have been perceived as a board assessment by some respondents.

Table 8

**School Board Manual Usage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received board manual and read it</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received manual but did not read it</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never received manual, did not read it</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never received manual, but has read it</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

**Training Activities Among Board Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received formal governance training</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received board manual</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read board manual</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended seminars, workshop, etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscribes to professional journals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds membership in professional organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Participants were asked to prioritize 10 school board activities which were listed in priority of importance to them. A score of 1 would represent the most important activity and 10 would represent the least important. Eighty-seven participants responded to the section. Their perceptions ranged widely from 1 to 10 in a single field (function). Board members rated operational finances of the school with highest priority. School leadership and management were rated second, and student academic achievement ranked third. School board training was the least important function of the board. Table 10 shows the prioritized means scored by the respondents. Board members perceived that they spent more time discussing finance. See Table 11.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Board Members Prioritized Functions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational finances</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership and management</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student academic achievement</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining/increasing enrollment</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental lack of interest</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel problems</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State mandates</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School board training</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table showing rankings of board activities by priority as perceived by board members. 1= highest priority; 10= lowest priority.
Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School board activities</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum %</th>
<th>Maximum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other agenda items</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel problems</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student discipline</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The percentage of time spent in discussing school board matters.

Summary

The study triangulates qualitative and quantitative data from which to draw conclusions. The population of the study was board members of day academies in the Southern Union. Most board members ranged in age from 40-49, and males outnumbered females about one to two. A significant number of board members in the Southern Union held college and university degrees and had professional occupations. About half of them had received school board manuals; however, a significant number of respondents had not read the manual. Nonetheless, board members perceived themselves as effective members of the board whether or not they had read the manuals.

The Southern Union published the school board manual, but it had not implemented a program to acquaint board members with the manual or to provide governance training for school board members. Two conferences within the union had
devised governance training programs that were based upon the school board manual. Seventy-two per cent of those responding stated that governance training would equip them to become better board members. On-the-job training was the alternative for formal governance training. Board chairpersons, a pastor, a superintendent, and an associate director were interviewed to obtain qualitative data. Board chairpersons would like to see members with special skills elected to the board. All interviewees agreed that there needed to be a program for school board training. Governance training would help board members to understand their goals. No board was found to have established a program for board assessment.

There was a significant agreement among board members that they had a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities whether or not they had read the manual or received governance training. Governance training was the lowest priority when compared with nine other board issues. Church membership was a primary qualification for board membership. Yet, a significant number of board members believed that board member qualifications should be more defined.

Nearly 24% of respondents said that their board had been assessed for its effectiveness; however, there was no other supportive evidence that school board assessments were used in the day academies in the Southern Union. Superintendents and board chairpersons agreed that board assessment would be beneficial, but none had been put into place. The majority of board members surveyed believed that school board evaluation should become a part of the process of school evaluations in conjunction with school accreditation.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Background of Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates schools around the world as part of its program of evangelism. The organizational structure of the church provides a multilevel design of leadership. There are the General Conference (the governing body for the global church), the divisions (the governing bodies for the international church), unions (the governing body for a wide areas of churches) and the conference (the governing body for a smaller group of churches within states and provinces). The conference is the managerial organization superior to the local church congregations. The conference manages schools and churches. The conference delegates authority to school boards for operating schools. Seventh-day Adventist schools historically have been operated by committees known as school boards. These boards are the governing bodies for the operation of the schools.

The problem investigated is the accountability of school boards. The study focused upon three areas of school board leadership: governance training, the perceptions of board members regarding the qualifications of membership, and school board assessments. The seven day-academies in the Southern Union were selected as the
population in this study. My study addressed the following research questions: (1) What programs have been used to provide governance training for school board members in the Southern Union? (2) Is governance training of board members related to the perception of their decision-making skills? (3) Is the *School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools* being used for governance training for school board members? (4) What are the perceptions of board members about the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of board membership? (5) What system is there to assess the effectiveness of school boards?

**Overview of Literature**

There is a plethora of literature available about public school boards from which one can extrapolate useful data for the operation of Seventh-day Adventist school boards. Three studies by Bissell (1990), Rice (1986), and Utt (1982) were conducted with Seventh-day Adventist school boards. Bissell discovered that most board members wanted a board orientation, but only few of them received it. Rice found that schools boards in the Iowa-Missouri Conference had no board manuals nor board governance training. Utt found that the perception of parents and church members about Adventist boards was that boards were not willing to devote the time to improve their effectiveness.

According to the Illinois School Board Association most board members learned to become board members on their own “by the seat of their pants.” However, many state associations of school boards provide governance training workshops for board members. Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee require mandatory training to maintain a seat on a
public school board. Governance training helps to define roles and responsibilities, the lack of which has been a source of tension between superintendents and board members. It was discovered that there is a commensurate dependency between board members' educational levels and their perception of their roles on the school board. Board members are not attorneys, but they need to understand the laws from which they will formulate district policies. Governance training helps to abbreviate the process of on-the-job training which can take as long as twelve months before the member is "up to speed on such things as budget and policy."

The literature suggested several methods of governance training. Caruso (2001) suggested placing new board members in a room together and ask them to come to a consensus on a given matter. Nicolai (1981) suggested the empirical method: spending time in observing administrators at work to understand their functions. Smith (1991) suggested that at least once per year the board should showcase a school by conducting a board meeting at the school.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) identified thirteen skills necessary for board members. They are (1) to obtain information from within the school district, (2) to build a coalition among the supporters of the school, (3) to establish reasonable and practicable goals, (4) to evaluate the superintendent and school operations, (5) to differentiate between the role of the superintendent and the board member, (6) to evaluate the board itself, (7) to judge personnel issues, (8) to understand parliamentary procedure, (9) to look at oneself in the total school board context, (10) to work with special interest groups in a manner that is fair to the group and the public, (11) to understand that the rules of private
business are not always applicable in educational matters, (12) to assume personal responsibility to conduct a productive meeting, and (13) to exercise self-control.

According to the literature many board members were active members of a parent-teacher organization before gaining a seat on the board. The vast majority of the nation's board members are elected to their positions; however, there are board positions that are filled by appointments. Since the overwhelming majority of board members are elected to office, many of the qualifications are germane to their ability to win an election. Often appointed seats to a school board are given proportionately to ethnic minorities, business merchants, and to provide gender diversity.

An effort which failed to achieve widespread acceptance was to eliminate school boards and to replace them with committees representative of the community. Another proposal was to elect the school board as a political slate of candidates that operates as a team. Data from nationwide statistics are indicative that school board membership is skewed toward males. During the early part of the 20th century, females held only about 10% of board positions. By the latter part of the 20th century the number had increased to 37%. A slow decline followed.

Board members perceive that there is a need for school board assessment. Questionnaires have revealed that 51% of boards never evaluated themselves or conducted assessments of their effectiveness. According to the literature the main reason that school boards are not traditionally evaluated is that they are not employed in the same way as teachers and administrators. Robinson and Bickers (1990), reported 64% of schools surveyed conducted self-evaluations in closed sessions. Other studies suggest
that outside evaluators are more effective than self-evaluations. The National School Board Association has developed a checklist for the evaluation of school board meetings.

Methodology

The nature of this study called for both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Non-probability sampling was used for the selection of five semi-structured interviews taken from board members of seven day academies in the Southern Union. Questionnaires were given to all participating board members of day academies who were present at board meeting during the administration of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to obtain the answers to the research questions in chapter 1.

Findings of the Study

There was no standardized or procedural program of governance training in the Southern Union. Two conferences in the Southern Union had devised school board seminars to assist members in understanding their roles and responsibilities. The two conferences used the school board manual as the basis for their training.

According to an interview, the failure to understand the differences between the roles of the principal, the board, the superintendent, and the conference office of education created confusion. This statement was consistent with Feuerstein and Opfer (1998) and Genck and Klingenberg (1983) who found the role definition of boards a source of tension. Another interviewee said that many board members came to the board with a great enthusiasm but lacking “wisdom.” The majority of board members stated that governance training would help them to understand their roles. However, at the same
time, board members perceived themselves as having an understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The Southern Union published the School Board Manual which was made available for local school board usage, nonetheless, it did not have an established program of governance training. About 57% of the board members received the manual, but only 37% read the manual. The data were indicative that all members who received manuals did not read the manuals. The two conferences that had school board training sessions used the manual as a basis of their training.

Most respondents stated that board members needed governance training in order to understand their roles and responsibilities; however, a decisive number of board members, who had never had governance training, perceived themselves as effective members with an understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Many board members were uncertain whether there should be a process of board member certification. However, more board members disfavored the idea than those who favored the establishment of a certification program. Notwithstanding, a significant amount stated that there was a need for continuing education for board members to keep them on the “cutting edge.”

Nine hypotheses in the null were examined comparing the school board members’ practices with board members’ perceptions. Three were rejected and six were retained. Chi-square was utilized to examine the practices of board members and their perceptions about themselves and board functions. The following determinations were made.

1. There was no relationship between the perception of the decision-making
approach used by school board members and whether or not they have received board training.

2. There was a significant relationship between board members' perception of the understanding of their roles and their having received the school board manual.

3. There was a significant relationship between the perception of school board members' understanding of their roles and their having read the board manual.

4. There was no relationship between board members' perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they had read the board manual.

5. There was a significant relationship between those who received the board manual and those who read the manual.

6. There was no relationship between board members' attendance in national, state, or denominational conferences and training seminars and their perception of the understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

7. There was no relationship between board member's perception of their effectiveness and whether or not they belonged to a professional organization for board members.

8. There was no relationship between board members' perception of their understanding of their roles and whether or not they subscribe to a professional journal for board members.

9. There was no relationship between board members' perception of their need for annual reviews and whether or not their board had been assessed for performance.
Discussion

On-the-job training was a popular method of board orientation in many day-academies in the Southern Union. That is learning as you serve on the board. On-the-job orientation is one method of governance training that may take twelve months to achieve efficiency according to Caruso (2001). A study conducted by Morehouse (2001) found that formal sessions of orientation reduced the time necessary for board members to become acquainted with board affairs and operations. A systematic program of governance training for new members and continuing education for experienced members could greatly enhance the effectiveness of school boards in the Southern Union.

This study conducted in the Southern Union was similar to the Utt (1982) study conducted in the Pacific Union in that no systematic program was found for governance training of board members. Board members said that they understood their roles; yet, a significant amount perceived themselves as school administrators. Houle (1989) suggests that board members are empowered only when in business session; the executive is the administrator. Anderson (1983) states that a board member is part of the policy making body; the administration implements policy. The School Board Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Southern Union, 2000) states: “The school board has authority only when meeting in official session; individual members may not speak for the board.” Board members are not administrators. They are a part of a policy making team.

According to the questionnaire results, 49% of those surveyed perceived themselves as school administrators. These data agree with the qualitative data in which
Elizabeth, the superintendent of Conference D, stated that some board members believed that they were administrative officers who could come to evaluate the staff on the spot without notice. These data are presented to illustrate that in the absence of governance training and when the manual is not read, the perceived role of a board member and the prescribed role of the board member can differ.

According to the questionnaire results, 75% of the participants agreed that governance training would help them to understand their roles and expectations. Seventy-three percent perceived that they already had an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. School board members were asked to prioritize a list of school board activities. Governance training was indicated the least important in the list of ten school board functions. The lack of priority may suggest why many board members have never read their manuals. In the study by Utt (1982), parents perceived boards as unwilling to take the time to provide activities that would improve their effectiveness. This phenomenon may also explain why schools have not conducted assessments for their effectiveness. Robinson and Bickers (1990) suggest that the whole board performance is the most appropriate way to assess a school board; however, Bippus (1985) asserts that there are times when individual members of the board need to receive feedback about their individual performances.

According to the questionnaire results, a small percentage (10.1%) of board members surveyed do not enroll their children in Seventh-day Adventist schools. This practice is a violation of the school board Policy #110, D-2 which states as a qualification for board membership: "They support Adventist education by enrolling their eligible
children in Seventh-day Adventist schools." A governance training program for board members could create an awareness of this requirement for board members who choose to enroll their children in schools outside the Adventist school system.

The data received from the interviews found no system of school board assessment in day-academies of the Southern Union. However, it was noted from the questionnaire that 25 respondents (23.6%) said that their boards had been assessed since their service on the board. Although this discrepancy can initiate a study of itself, there are two theories that may offer some understanding of this phenomenon.

1. A board member who served on a school board other than a day-academy in the Southern Union that was assessed could have answered yes to the question.

2. Day academies are evaluated in a cycle of 5 to 7 years by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. One of the sections of the evaluative instrument asks questions about the activities of the school board. Respondents who had completed the process of school evaluation may have considered this exercise as a board assessment.

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions are based on the findings of this study.

Southern Union had no systematic program of governance training for board members. Two conferences had devised school board inservice programs for their school boards. They used the board manuals as the basis of their training. Another method of governance training was to allow experienced members to help newer members become
acquainted with school board policies.

School board members perceived that their decision-making was based upon the policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; however, this perception was not based upon whether or not they read the school board manual that provides them with the operational policies. More than half the board members were provided school board manuals, but approximately two-thirds of the board members surveyed had not read the manuals. Most board members perceived themselves as being effective board members, and this perception was not based upon their having read the manual, having attended professional meetings, or having subscribed to a professional journal for board members. Board members perceived that they understood their roles and responsibilities for membership.

During this research, no systems of school board assessments were found to be adopted by the boards of day-academies in the Southern Union.

**Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that the Southern Union, in collaboration with Southern University of Seventh-day Adventists, establish a systemized program of school board governance and continuing education for school board members.

Unlike other books implemented into a school curriculum, there was no established system to acquaint the users of the manual with its policies and expectations other than independent reading and on-the-job observations. It is recommended that the Southern Union develop a program of orientation for the school board manual to be used
systematically by all local conferences.

Southern University of Seventh-day Adventists, an institution of higher learning, is operated by the Southern Union. It is recommended that the university, in collaboration with the Southern Union Department of Education, design mini-courses and continuing education courses to train board members. Classes via Internet, correspondence courses, and concentrated seminars of 1 to 2 days are suggested ways to accomplish the goal. Such educational session can be planned in strategic locations within the union and on the university campus.

2. It is recommended that the local school board encourage its board members to subscribe to professional journals and to enroll in professional organizations and professional growth programs.

School boards should provide a budget to encourage their members to subscribe to professional journals for their individual growth. One way this might be accomplished is to provide professional journals through the school library or by a financial incentive to those who subscribe on their own.

Many professional growth programs are available through state school board associations. Members can be encouraged to engage in professional growth activities such as school board seminars, a professional-growth reading series, or participating in professional organizations for board members.

3. It is recommended that church nominating committees give consideration to the needs of the school board and the talents and resources of nominees when selecting candidates for the school board.
Nominating committees of local churches should look beyond the willingness of persons to serve on the school board when selecting nominees. Professional skills and personal resources of talent should be considered and compared with the specific needs of the school board. According to the literature, Martinez (1978) interviewed candidates to fill vacancies on the school board. The process of interviewing candidates for school boards was not a practice used in the Southern Union day-academies. Only 5 board members of those surveyed (4%) were interviewed before being considered for the board. Interviewing can be an effective way of selecting candidates for positions on school boards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

4. It is recommended to establish a system of accountability for board member attendance and to implement an annual assessment for school boards. Some board members attended meetings infrequently. Their occupation of the board seat yielded little productivity and prevented other persons from serving in the position. Board members were elected to the board by the local churches. The board did not have the authority to replace its members for excessive absenteeism. This recommendation suggests the implementation of a mechanism of accountability for board members holding positions inactively.

It is further recommended that at least once per year school boards undergo an assessment of their objectives. Local conferences should provide assistance in the process with a statement of purpose and procedure. Emphasis should be placed upon improvement of group effectiveness, not individuality. However, individual growth plans should not be overlooked. There are several assessment checklists available for
individual board members through such organizations as the State Association of School Boards and the National Association of School Boards. It is recommended that school board members participate in a plan of personal growth and assessment.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

It is recommended that a similar study be conducted with boarding academies throughout the North American Division.

The operation of boarding academies differs from the operation of day academies. Boarding academy boards are concerned with student lodging, an expanded food service program, around the clock supervision, and other areas that are unique to day academies. Such a project can compared the its findings with day academies.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

Functions of the School Board

Taken from the Southern Union Conference School Board Manual

The functions of the school board are:

A. To ensure the implementation of policies and plans of the conference office of education.

B. To develop policies in areas of local concern such as:
   1. Use of school property
   2. Bus schedules and routes
   3. Purchasing procedures
   4. Tuition and/or other methods of support
   5. Admission requirements (in accordance with the state and conference guidelines)
   6. Equipment and maintenance of school plant
   7. Textbook purchases (pupil and school owned)
   8. Master planning

C. To counsel the principal (or head teacher) in the administration of the school program including:
   1. Implementation of school board policies
   2. Teacher load
   3. Daily schedule
   4. Development and enforcement of a code for student conduct

D. To consider the recommendations of the school administration in situations involving serious disciplinary cases and to serve as the ultimate authority in the dismissal of students. The consideration of dismissal recommendations or appeals of administrative decisions must be in closed or executive session.

E. To support the Home and School Association. (See item 605.)

F. To ensure the official minutes of each meeting of the school board and subcommittees to be kept, and to file one copy with conference office of education. The academies are to file one copy with General, union, and local conference offices of education.
G. To consider appeals and answer questions regarding the operation of the school.

H. To participate in the process of school evaluations as scheduled by the conference office of education or regional accrediting agencies.

I. To cooperate with the conference office of education in planning for in-service education and teachers' conventions, and school evaluations.

J. To consider, in counsel with the superintendent of schools, a proposed plan of school organization, including a constitution and by-laws, the administrative organization, and the Southern Union curriculum for the school.

K. To implement the recommended conference-wide school calendar. Any modifications of contemplated change must receive prior approval from the conference office of education.

L. To develop and adopt a code of dress and social behavior.

M. To authorize the preparation of a school bulletin which shall include such items as:
   1. Philosophy of school
   2. Financial information
   3. School regulations
   4. School calendar
   5. Course offerings
   6. Dress code and/or social behavior code

N. To assume responsibility for the planning and funding of an annual operating budget which shall include:
   1. Capital expenditures
   2. Operating expenses
   3. Curriculum materials
   4. Play equipment
   5. Media center material and equipment
   6. School supplies
   7. Insurance
   8. Indebtedness
   9. Other items at the option of the school board

O. To assume responsibility for collecting and forwarding to the conference office of education the conference assessment for the support of the school.

P. To assume responsibility for planning and funding a budget.
Q. To cooperate with the union and local conference offices of education in matters of curriculum development and innovations.

R. To conduct meetings in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedures as specified in the school constitution.

S. To support the teaching staff.

It is the responsibility of the school board to support and uphold the teaching staff in the organization and administration of the school. The board shall make clear to all patrons of the school that no one has the right to come to the school for the purpose of verbally attacking or haranguing the teacher, either before the students or otherwise. The board in counsel with the superintendent, shall stand to hear legitimate complaints of patrons against the school if calm personal discussion of the problems between the teacher and the patron fail to clear up the matter in question.

T. To plan the opening of school.

U. To dismiss or suspend pupils.

While the ultimate authority in disciplinary matters rests solely in the hands of the school board, it should delegate to the principal the authority to suspend a student for a period not to exceed three days. However, in an emergency situation, the teacher may resort to temporary exclusion of the pupil from the classroom and refer him to the principal or teacher or board chairman for prompt appropriate discipline. In cases of very serious or continued misconduct, the board may decide to suspend the pupil from school for a longer period of time. The period of suspension is determined by the board and under some circumstances may be up to two weeks. The pupil may be readmitted to school only after satisfactory reform and reconciliations with the teacher or teachers involved. All school work lost due to suspension must be made up promptly. If a satisfactory basis for readmission cannot be effected, the pupil should be either withdrawn by his parents or, as a last resort, be dismissed by action of the school board.

V. To visit the school in session.

It is desirable for the members of the school board to visit the school occasionally to encourage the teacher and to become personally acquainted with the school, the work, and the needs. This is not a time for the evaluation of the teacher or the teaching process. The relationship between the school board and the teacher should be friendly and on a basis of mutual confidence and respect. It is recommended that prior arrangements be made with the principal or teacher when the visit is planned.
W. To plan the addition of new building.

When a new school building or extensive additions or alterations are being planned, the chairman of the school board should early seek the counsel of the conference superintendent of schools who will acquaint the board with the approved specifications for such building and rooms, as well as the conference policies affecting such projects.

X. To act on pupil application.

All applications are to be made through the principal's office and acted upon by the school board or admissions committee authorized by the school board. Following registration day, the school board or admissions committee should meet to consider all applications for admission to the school. No pupil's registration is final until it is approved by the school board or admissions committee.

Y. To provide for a census.

The school operating committee should arrange for a census of all children of preschool age in the area served by the school and initiate plans to secure the attendance of the largest possible number of those eligible for school attendance.

Z. To provide a policy of admission to the school.

It is the official policy of the Southern Union Conference Office of Education that all school be opened to Seventh-day Adventist children and youth without relation to race or color, and that integration should take place at all levels. The non-discrimination policy is to be printed in the school bulletin.

Recognizing that all mankind are children of God, the Seventh-day Adventist schools admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded to be made available to students at the school. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarships and loan programs and other school-administered programs.

AA. To Adopt Conference board of education guidelines for the admission of non-Seventh-day Adventist pupils. (See item 142.)

AB Teacher Employment

Teacher employment is not the responsibility of the school operating board. The
employment, assignment, transfer, retirement, termination, or dismissal of credential personnel shall be by the authority of the conference board of education (K-12)). (See item 200)
APPENDIX B
LETTERS

(Letter to Union Director)

November 8, 2001

Name
Southern Union Conference
Department of Education
P. O. Box 849
Decatur, GA 30031

Dear Name:

I am conducting a research project involving several Southern Union schools. As you are aware, I have a profound interest in school board leadership. Presently, I am researching, in cooperation with Andrews University and in partial fulfillment of a Ph. D. degree, three areas of inquiry of school board leadership in day academies of the Southern Union. They are governance training, the perceptions of school board members' qualifications, and school board assessment and evaluation of its performance. My study is focused only upon day academies. Participating board members will return their responses anonymously. Although my study encompasses only day academies, I believe the study of these three designated areas will be helpful for the school board leadership of elementary and secondary boarding schools. I should like your endorsement to begin this project and your approval before my contacting each conference superintendent regarding the collection of data for the research.

I will need to spend about twenty minutes at a regularly called board meeting at each school to administer a short questionnaire. When my study is completed, I will be happy to share with you my findings. I will appreciate a letter of endorsement from you as I begin this project. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

Enclosure
(Letter to Superintendents)

November 8, 2001

Inside address

Dear Name:

I am conducting a research project involving several Southern Union schools. Over the past several years I have had a profound interest in Seventh-day Adventist school board leadership. Presently, I am researching, in cooperation with Andrews University and in partial fulfillment of a Ph. D. degree, three areas of inquiry of school board leadership in day academies of the Southern Union. They are governance training, the perceptions of school board members' qualifications, and school board assessment and evaluation of its performance. My study is focused only upon day academies. Seabrook Academy of the Conference B has been selected as a collaborating school. Participating board members will return their anonymous responses in a sealed envelope. Although my study encompasses only day academies, I believe the study of these three designated areas will be helpful for the school board leadership of elementary and secondary boarding schools throughout the Southern Union. I should like your endorsement to begin this project and your approval before my contacting the principal and the board chairperson regarding the collection of data for the research.

I will need to spend about twenty minutes at a regularly called board meeting to administer a short questionnaire. When my study is completed, I will be happy to share with you my findings. Enclosed is a letter of endorsement from name of director, Southern Union Director of Education. I will appreciate a letter of endorsement from you as I begin this project. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Director of Public Affairs
and Religious Liberty

Enclosure
(Letter to Principals or Board Chairs)

November 8, 2001

Inside Address

Dear Name:

I am conducting a research project involving several Southern Union schools. Over the past several years, I have had a profound interest in school board leadership. Presently, I am researching, in cooperation with Andrews University and in partial fulfillment of a Ph. D. degree, three areas of inquiry of school board leadership in day academies of the Southern Union. They are governance training, the perceptions of school board members' qualifications, and school board assessment and evaluation of its performance. My study is focused only upon day academies. As a principal or school board chairperson, I am soliciting your cooperation to participate in this research project. I will need about twenty minutes of time during a board meeting to explain the research project, conduct the brief questionnaire, and collect the responses. Participating board members will return their anonymous responses in a sealed envelope.

Although my study encompasses only day academies, I believe the study of these three designated areas will be helpful for the school board leadership beyond the realms of day academies. I have enclosed a sample questionnaire for your review. The final questionnaire may be altered, depending upon the admonition of the University. Included, too, is a consent card. Please sign, list the dates of your next four scheduled board meetings, and return it in the self-addressed, postage paid envelope as soon as possible. I will be getting in touch with you via telephone to select a mutual date to conduct the questionnaire and to answer questions that you may have.

When my study is completed, I will be happy to share with you my findings. I appreciate your collaboration in this project. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours.

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Director of Public Affairs
and Religious Liberty

Enclosures 4
(Letter in Response to Receipt of Questionnaires)

January 23, 2002

Inside Address

Dear Name:

I am very grateful for your cooperation in administering the questionnaires to your school board. I received the returned questionnaires not long ago. Once the project is completed, I will be delighted to share a composite of my conclusions with you.

Thank you for your assistance. May the remainder of your school year be rewarding.

Sincerely yours,

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
(Letter from the Union Director)

November 21, 2001

Elder Nathaniel G. Higgs  
Public Affairs and Religious Liberty  
Southern Union Conference  
Inter-office

Dear Nate:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of my support for the research you are doing as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree. I believe this research in the area of school board leadership and the subsequent study will be of value as we endeavor to increase the professionalism of school boards.

I have authorized the conference educational superintendents to give you access to selected schools and their operating boards. I look forward to your sharing the findings of this study with us.

I am pleased to give the endorsements of the Southern Union Office of Education for this project.

Sincerely,

Name  
Director
APPENDIX C
(Semi-structured Interviewing Guide)

Guide for Interviewing
(Using a tape recorder)

I am in the process of collecting data for a study that I am conducting through the Leadership Program of Andrew University. My topic is Keys to Improved School Board Leadership In Day Academies in the Southern Union.

I want to talk with you about your knowledge and views of the operation of your school board. For this purpose I am asking your permission to record this interview for accuracy in data transcription. Be assured that the personal information that you give will be held in confidence; however, the statistical information will only be used as it relates to this study and your identity and that of the institution will remain in confidentiality.

1. How long have you served in your capacity?
2. When you first accepted your position, how were you formally appraised of its responsibilities?
3. What do you see as one of the greatest needs for equipping school board members(s)?
4. Describe why you believe or do not believe that governance training will improve the effectiveness of school board leadership?
5. Do you believe that the school board membership should have a higher level of qualifications to serve on the board? If so, why? Should they be interviewed before appointment?
6. To whom do you believe the school board should be held accountable and what methods of reporting should be used?
7. Do you believe that there should be a system in place for school board evaluations?
8. If so, how do you believe that should be done?
9. If you see the value of board evaluation, should it be individual or as a corporate body? What is the basis for your opinion?
10. How frequently should the board be evaluated and to whom should the report be given?
11. What do you perceive to be the most stressful topics to encounter at a board meeting?
12. Do you believe that the board members’ understanding of the process of (whatever is stressful, personnel, finances, etc.) would reduce stress?
13. Describe a program that you believe could be implemented to train board members to become effective?
APPENDIX D
Administration of the Questionnaire

Instructions for the Proctor:

Thank you for consenting to assist in this research project. This package contains a set of questionnaires to be administered to the school board members during its scheduled meeting. Allow each school board member present to participate in the study. Board members who are absent need not be considered at a later date.

First, read the questionnaire instructions to the board members. Allow an opportunity for questions regarding the research project. Questions that you are unable to answer should be directed to the researcher. Information about how to contact the researcher is at the bottom of the Questionnaire Instructions, which are included in each questionnaire envelope. When the questionnaires are completed, each board member will seal the questionnaire in the envelope provided. Please collect these sealed envelopes, and enclose them in the self addressed, postage paid, brown 10X13 envelope. Mail them immediately via United States Postage Service.

If you are a voting member of the school board and wish to be included in this questionnaire, do not complete your questionnaire at the same time that you administer them to the school board. At another time, complete your questionnaire, seal it in the envelope provided, and include it with the others to be returned.

It is important to follow these instructions closely and to return all completed questionnaires as soon as possible after they have been returned to you. All completed questionnaires should be returned to the address below. You do not need to return the unused questionnaires. Please destroy them. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
Southern Union Conference
P. O. Box 849
Decatur, GA 30031
404 299-1832
natehiggs@prodigy.net
An Inquiry of Governance Training, Board Members’ Perception of Qualifications
and Board Assessment of Day Academies in the Southern Union

Questionnaire Instructions

Nathaniel G. Higgs is a graduate student at Andrews University, and he is currently conducting a research project involving school boards of day academies in the Southern Union. There are three areas of school board leadership upon which he is focused: (1) What types of governance training is provided for board members? (2) How do board members perceive themselves regarding their qualifications to contribute to the school board? (3) What types of assessments are provided for school boards to determine if they are achieving their objectives. He believes the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding how Seventh-day Adventist school boards operate in the Southern Union. Once the study is completed, this information will be published in a dissertation and/or published in articles.

Your participation is voluntary. You are not required to complete this questionnaire. You may withdraw at any time without penalty, however, your participation will be helpful in collecting the data for this project. There is no payment of any kind provided for participation in this project. This questionnaire attempts to gather information with minimum risks, stress, discomfort, and invasion of privacy by allowing you the option to omit any question about which you feel uncomfortable.

When you have finished your questionnaire, place it into the envelope provided. Seal it, and return it to the proctor. Your returned questionnaire constitutes your affirmation of consent for your participation in this project.

It will take about fifteen minutes of your time to answer the brief questionnaire about you and your membership on the board. All information collected will be confidential and anonymous. You do not need to sign your questionnaire. Only your school will be identified on the questionnaire.

Part I gathers demographic information and will be used for statistical purposes only. Part II provides eleven objective questions for which you will answer yes or no. Circle Y if you believe the answer to be yes, and circle N if you believe the answer to be no. Next are thirteen questions with multiple choice answers ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Circle the appropriate response that best describes your feelings. Part III seeks your perception of time allotments. There are three questions. Answer how you believe your school board spends its time. Part IV allows you to prioritize ten school board activities in the order of their importance as you perceive them beginning with 1 as the most important and 10 as the least important. Remember, there are no right and wrong answers. Just indicate your deep, inner feelings when responding to the questions. Thank you for your participation.

Do you have any questions at this time. Nathaniel Higgs, the researcher, can be reached 404 299-1832 or at the address provided below, or you may call Dr. Elsie Jackson of Andrews University at 616 471-3200.

Nathaniel G. Higgs
Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
Southern Union Conference
P. O. Box 849
Decatur, GA 30031

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Confidential School Board Questionnaire

The intent of this survey is to obtain your perceptions about Adventist school boardmanship. Please answer the questions. You do not need to supply your name.

Part I For Statistical Purposes

[ ] Check here if ex-officio board member (conference employee or home and school leader)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>high school diploma</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>associate degree, certificate</td>
<td>technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro-American</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>tradesman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Master’s degree, EdS</td>
<td>retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>doctorate (PhD, MD, EdD, etc.)</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>70+</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual personal income

Circle one.
- $24,999 and under
- $25,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$50,999
- $60,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$99,999
- $100,000 and above

Sex

Marital status married/divorced/separated/widowed/celibate

I live in (check one)
- a small town
- the suburbs
- an urban area
- a rural area

Part II Objective Data Please answer the following questions yes or no. Circle one.

1. Since serving on a SDA school board, have you ever received training and been formally informed of your responsibilities?
2. Have you during your education ever attended a Seventh-day Adventist school?
3. Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever been given the Southern Union Conference School Board Manual?
4. Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever taken the time to read the Southern Union Conference School Board Manual through?
5. Since having been elected to the school board, have you ever attended a national, state, or denominational conference or seminar for school board leadership?
6. Do you hold membership in any professional organization for the advancement of board members?
7. Do you subscribe to a professional journal for the benefit of school board members?
8. Do you have children of school age?
9. If the answer to #8 is yes, do they attend the church school? If no, skip this question.
10. Has your school board ever been assessed for its performance since you were a member?
11. Were you ever formally interviewed before being seated on the school board?

A=strongly agree, B=agree, C=unsure, D=disagree, E=strongly disagree Circle one response.

1. The school board member is an administrative officer of the school.
2. School board members need governance training in order to understand their roles and expectations.
3. School boards should have an annual review or be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.
4. The qualifications of school board members should be more defined.

Please turn over to complete page 2.
A = strongly agree, B = agree, C = unsure, D = disagree, E = strongly disagree

5. There should be a process in place for the certification of school board members.

6. Once elected to the board, there is a need for continuing education for board members to remain on the "cutting edge" of educational issues and concerns.

7. I have a thorough understanding of my role as a board member.

8. When I do not understand an issue, financial statement, or document, I ask questions.

9. I am an effective member of my school board.

10. The philosophy of Adventist education and public education is the same.

11. In making decisions on the school board I consider the working policies of the SDA church.

12. I believe governance training would equip me better to serve as a school board member.

13. I believe the board should be evaluated when the school has its program of evaluation for accreditation.

Part III

Time Allotment

1. If the school board were to be described as the state government, its responsibilities would fall into three divisions: executive (enforcement), legislative (policy making), and judicial (critical decision making). How much time do you think your board spends during a typical board meeting in each of these categories. Your amounts should total 100%.

   A. Executive ________%  B. Legislative ________%  C. Judicial ________%  = 100%

2. During a typical board meeting time is spent discussing curriculum, discipline, finances, personnel, physical plant, and a host of other things. How much time do you think your board spends during a typical board meeting in each of these categories. Your amounts should total 100%.

   A. curriculum ___%  B. discipline ___%  C. finances ___%  D. personnel ___%  

   E. physical plant ______%  F. Other matters ________%  = ________%  = 100%

3. The typical school board meetings that I attend lasts about

A ___ 1 hour  B ___ 1-2 hours  C ___ 3-4 hours  D ___ more than 4 hours

Part IV

Prioritize the following concerns in order of their importance to you as they relate to the school board. Use numbers beginning with 1 (one) as the highest priority.

_____ declining/increasing enrollment
_____ discipline
_____ facilities
_____ training for board members
_____ operational finances
_____ parental lack of interest
_____ personnel problems
_____ school leadership/management
_____ state mandates
_____ student academic achievement

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Interview with Stephen
Associate Director of Education at the union conference
July 3, 2001 10:30 a.m.

Interview Transcription

Higgs: Good morning, this is Nathaniel Higgs. And I am in the process of collecting data for a study that I am conducting through the Leadership Program of Andrew University. And my topic is Keys to Improved School Board Leadership In Day Academies in the Southern Union. And I want to talk with you about your knowledge and views of the operation of school boards in the Southern Union. For this purpose I am asking your permission to record this interview for accuracy in data transcription. Is that okay? Do you agree?

Stephen: That’s fine.

Higgs: And your name is?

Stephen: My name is Stephen.

Higgs: Now be assured that any personal information that you give me will be held in confidence, however, I would like to use information for statistical purposes that would be related to my study, and if you wish. I can establish a different nomenclature to assure anonymity of any specific school that you may give data about. Now you have already given your name, Stephen. What is your title?

Stephen: I am the associate director of education of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Decatur, Georgia.

Higgs: How long have you served in that capacity?

Stephen: I have served a little over three years-- about three and a half years now.

Higgs: As I stated earlier, I am trying to gather information about how school boards operate in the Southern Union, specifically in three areas: their
qualifications, their school board governance training, and also any type of
governance training that may exist. What do you see as the, one of the
greatest needs for equipping school board members?

Stephen: Well, it would help if they knew specifically and understood very clearly what
their duties and lines of responsibilities were, and it would also, in my opinion, help
greatly if they realized that the responsibility for the financial operation
and well being of the school rests on the school board. And I think a lot of
times they, they don’t look at it that way.

Higgs: Do you see governance training, and when I use the term governance training,
I mean orientating new school board members to their responsibilities once
they become on the, once they become a school board member. Do you see
that as any way of achieving your goal?

Stephen: I think it is one of the weaker links right now with our academies, our day
academies, is that people come on and off the board and is kind of like an on-
the-job training and very often they are not processed through an orientation
which talks about responsibilities and duties, the various working committees
that a school board has, and how they should function and report back to the
board on a regular basis. They don’t usually. I’m not saying they never, but
usually they don’t have a good orientation to how everything functions and
is supposed to work. And in some instances our school operates fine. And
they pick it up because that is the way it is functioning. In other instances the
school boards unfortunately are not even operating as they should. And so the
entire board, even though older members are there, probably need this
governance and this training very distinctly.

Higgs: Do you believe that the school boards should have a higher level of
qualification? School board members.

Stephen: Higher than what?

Higgs: Okay, the church manual states that the person should be a member of the
church and in good and regular standing. The school board manual says that
the, the, there are about three or four different specifications that a school
board member should have. But I am suggesting. Well maybe I should ask
this next question. Do you believe that school board members should be
perhaps even interviewed before being elected to the school board to see what
their background is as to whether they understand the philosophy of Seventh-
day Adventists?
Stephen: Well that would be a paradigm shift, but it would be a good one. Because what happens is many times a church selects a person to be on the school board. Sometimes it's because they want to be on the school board, but sometimes they are just on there by default.

Higgs: That's the point I was really getting to with my first question. We elect a person to the school board. And I have been on committees where--that is nominating committees--where we were nominating somebody to the school board and this person has children that goes to the school. It may be a good reason. Or this person loves young people. That may be another good reason. And all of these are admirable characteristics, but does this person really have an understanding about the philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist education? Does this person really have a contribution to make once he gets on the board? And that is the question that I am asking. Do you think we need to raise the level of qualifications?

Stephen: I think it would help a lot if it were raised, and a increased, I should say.

Higgs: Tell me, to whom do you believe the school boards should be held accountable? Is it the constituency? Is it the church board? Who are they accountable to? Is it the parents?

Stephen: They should be accountable to the constituency and the parents in terms of running a good school and meeting, you know, all the criteria and having the facilities and so forth that are necessary to operate a school. In most instances the school is subsidized by the local church which then becomes the constituency or by several churches will have a constituency. And they are the ones, you know, that put in the funds, and at the same time that they put in the funds I also think that it's the board as they are trying to be accountable that should a very strong influence in terms of recommending to the constituency when more funds are needed or what's needed to operate the school properly. So I think they should be responsible primarily to the constituency and then a very close second of that to the parents.

Higgs: To whom should they report?

Stephen: They report to the constituency. They report to the constituency, and they keep the parents abreast and usually you have board members who also are parents or at least a representative percentage and then at the constituency meetings that they have they report to both parents and the church members. But I think the primary responsibility especially as it relates to the fiduciary, comes back, you know, to where the money is coming from which is both
church and tuition from parents.

Higgs: I am changing gears a little bit now. Do you believe that there should be a system put in place for school board evaluations?

Stephen: Ah, yeah. It would be nice. Now, I don't know of any system.

Higgs: Well how do you think it could be done?

Stephen: Well, I think...

Higgs: Or should be done?

Stephen: I think that it could be done with, with a instrument that allows input from, from a the administration of the school, from parents and probably from, you know, random church members, but I, I really feel in a very strong way that the administration of the school as well as teachers would need to be involved that process to help determine whether the school is being run well and whether the needs are being met because there is no one like the people who are there that can tell you whether things are going well and whether they have the materials, the supplies, the support, a, the encouragement and so forth that is needed to have a good program.

Higgs: Do you see this type of evaluation as individual evaluation for each individual board member or as a corporate evaluation for the board as a whole?

Stephen: I think as the board as a whole to begin with, but I think it has an individual faction. And I think the individual faction then would have to spill over a little bit into board members themselves, too.

Higgs: How frequently do you believe this should be done, and to whom should this report be given?

Stephen: What... I'll tell you what I wish. I wish that it would be done... a... at least every other year. I am thinking about how we try to evaluate teachers, which we try to evaluate teachers with the eye toward improving them, not with an eye toward dismissing them.

Higgs: [Chuckle] That's correct.

Stephen: And so if you evaluated school board members every year or every other year at least with an eye toward improving them rather than dismissing them, then
the more often you do it, the better off you would be. I think that the evaluation as, you know, as far as, reporting who the evaluation goes to, I think the board itself should review the evaluation of itself as a whole as well as its individual members on a confidential basis. Then, I think the general overall evaluation of the board as a whole should go to the constituency.

Higgs: What program do you believe could be implemented to train board members to become more effective in fulfilling and meeting the goals of the board?

Stephen: Well, there should be some type of structured orientation that a board member has to go through. I would go so far as to say that it ought to have an evaluation piece. That after they go through the orientation, they take a little assessment thing to see whether they, they understand what they have been through because sometimes, you know, repetition... they are not probably going to have a chance to go through that every month. And it may sound foreign or like a paradigm shift, but it seems like they shouldn't serve until they can pass that assessment.

[Higgs and Stephen chuckle.]

Higgs: Well, you have been helpful to me Dr. Stephen. I appreciate your candid responses. And I thank you so much for your time.

Stephen: I appreciate it. I hope that in the process of your reporting and your work that maybe you'll be able to assist some of our schools in being a little bit more formative as it relate to selection and functioning of their board members.

Higgs: Thank you. I hope so, too.

End of transcription.
Interview with Renee
School Board Chair for Christian View Academy
February 8, 2002 (9:10 a.m.)

Interview Transcription
Higgs: Good Morning. You are...

Renee: Renee.

Higgs: Renee with CVA?

Renee: That is right.

Higgs: And you are school board chairperson. Is that correct?

Renee: That's correct.

Higgs: And how long uh have you served in that capacity?

Renee: This is my third year.

Higgs: Let's put this tape a little closer to make sure... Will you come a little closer to make sure the tape is up. I have to have it transcribed. When you accepted the position, how were you formally appraised of your responsibilities as a school board chairperson?

Renee: Well, I had been serving as the vice chair for a number of years, maybe like seven or eight years, and in training for this position if you want to call it that. I had attended all of the school board meetings plus all of the committee-- subcommittee meetings. In our school uh we have everybody, the vice chair is a member of all committees, and you go in and you learn from the very bottom up how the school is run and uh before you become chair. And I as a, really we had in mid year, we had the chair resign, and I had to take over so it was a good thing that I had a good foundation in what was going on in the running of the school.

Higgs: What are your views of, of school board governance training, and how members can be trained to become effective on the school board?

Renee: Well, I feel like that uh we need to have a little bit better program than we do on
training board members, but at CVA it's the older members train the younger ones. They come in and each person is assigned a duty, a part of the board. We try not to let anyone just be an open board member where they come in and sit once a month in a general board meeting. Each one serves on a subcommittee of some type that is directly responsible for some point of running the school. And in that way the person is trained, and they see the problems involved in what goes on prior to as normal board meeting. And getting the subcommittees working together and ah and all of the problems that go on in a normal school year that is handled in subcommittees before going to the general board. And, ah, the older members try to train the younger in that aspect. But there is no real formal uh training program in effect which I think there really should be.

Higgs: Some states have a mandatory training such as the State of Kentucky. Georgia has a little bit of that that's just coming in. Michigan has a certified ah board member program, and that's what my study is all about. Should the denomination come out with something or should the General Conference or the North American Division provide training for school board members in workshops? Ah do.

Renee: I really think they should.

Higgs: Do you believe that the school board member should have a higher level of qualifications?

Renee: Uh...

Higgs: If you look at the school board manual, it...you have to be a member of the church. That's the basic qualification, and you should have a love for church school, but there are no specific qualifications. Do you believe that perhaps we ought to specify some additional qualifications or not?

Renee: Well, uh, not necessarily because some times the love of church school covers a multitude of everything because I have seen people that are highly qualified that just didn't care whether the school survived or not. You know, that were accountants, and you know doctors, lawyers and that sort of thing that really did not attend on a regular basis and they didn't participate in the way that I felt they should not with a real true love and enthusiasm for church school. And I feel like that should be a priority. You have to want, you have to really believe in it enough to send you own children to the school. Excuse me just a moment.

[break in time about three minutes]
Renee: But we were talking about the qualifications. Now at CVA we have something in our by-laws that allows us to go into the churches and get people that are really not school board members to serve on certain committees like finance that have a special uh degree in finance to help us with that sort of thing or personnel in things like that.

We usually have a person who is not really a school board member but is an advised member of that committee and has not come to the regular board meetings but serves as a, in an advisory position on those committees where we need expert help. And uh, we do use that. But I feel like if we had something in place the church uh, if we could tell the churches we need uh someone who is really good in finances, someone who is really good in personnel, then they could appoint them to the school board and that would help us out and keep us from having to go out and uh look for our own expert people.

Higgs: Do you see any value in having an annual school board assessment?

Renee: Oh, I think so. Yes. I think we need to uh look at the people who really uh come to the meetings, show an enthusiasm, go the extra mile, you know, like in raising money for the school or uh even just in their attendance alone. And each one, as I said, has a job to do, other than just coming to the board meeting. And some people go the extra mile, ten miles for the school while the others just sit there and do nothing and rarely ever show up. And to me that's detrimental to the school board.

Higgs: Do you see the assessment or evaluation as you may wish to refer to it? But assessment is not quite as detailed as an evaluation. Do you see that as being an individual assessment for each board member or as a corporate body together?

Renee: I think as a cooperate body would be better, uh because one thing, it would make members shy away from being board members if they knew they would be individually evaluated at the end of the year. But if we did it as a corporate body, then we could see where our weaknesses were and, and look at it from the position rather than the person.

Higgs: I know your time is valuable so I'm cutting this really short, but there were some other things that you may wish to share with me in my study that we talked about. When I first came, you said you thought I was going to ask you some questions, things about where we should go? You want to share those?

Renee: Well, I had a few notes and don’t ... I had then in my other office. I don’t have them now because I had prepared a little bit of things to tell you about, but uh I do feel like we need some manuals more than what is available for board members to use so that they know when they come in when they accept that position what is expected of
them. And uh we have, you know, a general one that's uh very general. But I feel like that people tend to come in and just be a warm body. And also the uh nomination, nominating committees in the churches are not putting enough thought into who they appoint to the school board because uh just being a parent does not really qualify you for being a board member.

Higgs: I agree.

Renee: And uh, I feel like that we need qualified people to be apart of our boards and not... and a lot of times if you have a good quality person that is not really tied to a student, you don't have the emotions involved. You have more of uh logic. And that you can really see what the problem is and do something about it without say, “Oh, is this going to hurt my child,” or “Is this going to benefit me or my family?” Where as if the parent regardless of how they try, they always tend to think about their own child. I know when it comes up, like for instance school trips, the parents that have children in that class are most vocal whether they are logical or not. They are the most vocal. So we need to have uh some type of a course structure that is not really tied to having a student there. It seems to me like the churches the nominating committees tend to put only the people who have a student in the school on the board. And that really hurts us because we lack uh financial help. We lack uh the personnel help. We lack help in uh buildings, grounds and places where we really... and our position. Now we're trying to decide whether to relocate the school, and we really need people that are logical and not just emotional and want the school where they live because they have a child and have the convenience for them. They have to think down the road. This school is going to be there for fifty years, uh and you're not going to have children here for fifty years. You have got to think about the whole program. And I just would like to see us structure some type of guidelines for the churches so when they have appoint people to the school board then they have along range vision for Christian education and not just my child is there, there for four years, and that is it.

Higgs: Well, I thank you so much for sharing with me. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Renee: It was a pleasure to meet you

Higgs: We had a hard time getting together

Renee: We did have... but with patients on Friday, and we are short handed on Fridays as you can see. So I'm the only nurse here and that is why I try not to schedule until afternoons.

Higgs: Well thank you so much for the time.
Interview with Alice
School Board Chair of Apple Valley Academy
February 2, 6:25 pm

Interview Transcription

Higgs: You are the school board chairperson...

Alice: Yes, I am.

Higgs: ...for the Anytown, Anyville, what is it?

Alice: It is the XXX School System.

Higgs: And how long have you served in that capacity?

Alice: I have been a school board chair for three years.

Higgs: And tell me when you first accepted the position, how were you formally appraised of your responsibilities as a chairperson?

Alice: (Laughs) Well, the man that was chair, called me, and he had had a job change and was getting married, and he felt like he just couldn't do it. It was just too much so he called and asked if I could finish up the year. And the way our school board works, ah, every year the chair is always voted in every year and so it was just to finish up that year for him. So I met him at his home. Bruce [husband] and I went over there, and he handed me a box of stuff and said, "Good luck." (both laugh).

Higgs: That was your training!

Alice: But I'll tell you what. I'd served on the board for quite a little while, for quite a few years, and during that time, previous to this, the chair who I replaced, we had an administrator from Triple Starr that took over the board and he and Mike Starr and several other people from Triple Starr McKee reorganized the way we did things. And they were very effective, I thought and very efficient, and ah we had agendas that had time frames.
They just did it in a very efficient way, and so I learned a lot from that plus, ah, plus just working on committees at UTC [University of Tennessee in Chattanooga] and at Southern so I felt like it really helped a lot for me to have that experience with that previous chair. So it was ... that was really good training.

Higgs: What do you see as one of your greatest needs for equipping board members, particularly new board members with the school board in terms of their governance training.

Alice: Okay. I think, first of all a Conference A comes and does an inservice. They have a Power Point presentation. And they do that every year so if we have new board members, ah, they do that every years. I think that that helps a lot. Typically on our board we, ah, have people with a lot of education. So they have been part of committees. They understand the difference between operation and policy. But I think that they understand the function of the board. Ah, one inservice training and so the other question is all we really have.

Higgs: I have observed that you have probably about, ah, three or four Ph. Ds on your school board. Do you believe that the school board membership should have a higher level of qualifications in terms of member qualifications? Now, I know in your particular school board you are in a college area. So you probably have those qualifications so that question may not be that meaningful to you as perhaps some of the other school boards that...

Alice: Right.

Higgs: Do you believe there should be a system in place for school board evaluations?

Alice: Ah...[pause, and sigh]

Higgs: Or assessments?

Alice: Assessments, yes assessments, I think it’s always very heathy. Ah, you know we are a a voluntary position. It requires a reasonable amount of time. We have five board meetings a year. Everybody has to belong to a subcommittee so we assume that he goes to a subcommittee before every board meeting so you are looking at about ten meetings every year plus extra meetings, ah, subcommittee meetings, so you know it could, it could go anywhere from ten to fifteen meetings. So it’s a lot of time to require of
people that are doing this voluntary position. I think assessment...I think the people on the board like to be, so you know, I think that they take their job seriously. I think anything that will help them do a better job is always good.

Higgs: Do you believe that that assessment should be a corporate assessment or an individual assessment?

Alice: Okay, when you speak about a corporate assessment...

Higgs: It would be the whole board as a body as opposed to individual reports.

Alice: On individual, the effectiveness of individual board members? I think it should be a corporate program.

Higgs: Describe to me any program that you believe to be implemented to train board members to become more effective.

Alice: I think a program that would help board members is to first of all, ah, is instruct them in the process that boards go through and the steps in those processes. Ah, we had kind of a difficult board meeting this very last board meeting, and it was because I didn’t clearly lay out for them where we were in the process. I try to always follow a process, and it got kind of muddy and usually our board meetings go very smoothly. And I think it was because we needed to go back and review the process. And I think also it is important for board members to remember what their role is. Now we give all the board members their little red book. And we certainly, ah, stay out of operational kinds of things. And I think that it’s important for board members to understand that and what their roles are.

Higgs: Do you interview your board members before appointments to the board or is this handled by the churches or...

Alice: They’re appointed by the churches. We get what we get. [Laughs]

Higgs: Okay. Anything else you can share with me as it relates, ah, maintaining an effective school board?

Alice: Communication, communication, communication. [Laughs] and then communication. [More laughs]

Higgs: I certainly appreciate your responses, they have been very helpful to me.
Thank you very much

Alice: You mean that’s it?

Higgs: That’s it.

Alice: Okay.

*End of transcription*

**Interview with Leonard**
*Pastor and Vice Chair for Sweetwater Academy*
*February 21, 2002, 1:45 PM*

*Interview Transcription*

Higgs: Good afternoon. How you doing, Elder Leonard?

Leonard: Fine, thank you, sir.

Higgs: We certainly appreciate your willingness to spend a few moments to help me gather some data for my dissertation with Andrews University. I understand that you are the vice chair for Sweetwater Academy?

Leonard: That is correct.

Higgs: And how long have you served as vice chair?

Leonard: This is my first year as vice chair but I have been connected with school boards for approximately fifteen years of my ministry, ah, served in various capacities, but I’ve only been vice chair one year.

Higgs: You mentioned the ministry, then you are a minister of the gospel?

Leonard: Yes, that is correct.

Higgs: And you pastor in the Athens..?

Leonard: ...and Harvest District.
Higgs: Very good.

Higgs: When you first accepted the position of vice chair, and maybe even going back further than that, the position of a school board member, was there any formal appraisal of your responsibilities?

Leonard: None. None whatsoever.

Higgs: Well, what do you see now as being one of the greatest needs for equipping school board members in terms of governance training in terms of their responsibilities on the job as a school board member?

Leonard: I see a dire need for having school board members trained. They just come in and assume a position, but in my experience (and I’ve been in ministry 21 years now), in my experience, ah, Elder Higgs, ah there’s a lot of problems and misunderstandings that come about because of this lack of training. I don’t know why we don’t have that as a part of the requirements when one comes into a board situation, but, and I don’t know where it begins. I don’t know if it begins with the superintendent, or the principal, or the pastor. I don’t know where it begins, but somewhere along the line, it has fallen through the cracks in terms of making sure that school board members are trained as they come into the seat.

Higgs: I would agree. In fact, that’s one of my inquiries as to what are we doing to train our school board members. One of the questions I asked on the survey was, “Is there any difference between the S. D. A. philosophy and public education philosophy?” And there were individuals that indicated they saw no difference.

Leonard: Don’t even know...

(Both Laugh)

Higgs: These were school board members. Not from your school, particularly, but throughout the Southern Union.

Leonard: I understand, understand, understand.

Higgs: Do you believe that the school board membership should have a higher level of qualifications to serve on the school board?

Leonard: Before we get into qualifications, can we just back up just a moment?
Higgs: Certainly!

Leonard: I really want to deal with this governance training, ah, your question, once again, was your question... did I receive or did any of the school board members receive training is that-

Higgs: Did you receive any type of training? And since you’ve been on the board, or boards, have you had any type of governance training ah seminar?

Leonard: Let me answer that in two parts. I have not received, well let me back up. Overall, there’s no training. I have sat on at least three different school boards in three different cities, and on all of those boards, as a rule, and I think I can speak probably for the majority of the school boards that are across this division, there is no attention given to governance training. Now I want, I want to say this and in, and in, the only, we received one at Alcy in Memphis, and that was done by you. I don’t know if you remember...

Higgs: Yes, I remember.

Leonard: ...but I called you once you, you and I had talked some time, and we talked about the need for doing that. And so I called you, and asked if you would come and do that for us. Ah, and you said that you would, and the Lord blessed me to kind of facilitate organizing the school board members to do that; but that was first and only time, and I have been in this thing for at least fifteen years sitting on school boards, that that was ever done. And I think, I think, it’s a shame, because a lot of wrong decisions and misunderstandings and confusion result as, because that ah there is not a clear understanding of what our responsibility ought to be. So there’s a definite need for that.

Higgs: What are some of the issues you think should be explained during school board training session?

Leonard: Well, one is, I think there needs to be an understanding between the role of the school board vs. the role of the school administration. I mean there is, there is a lot of lap over where one steps over the boundaries of the other, and because of that, there it is bumping off heads, there’s misunderstanding, there is confusion. I think also, ah, we need to understand as school board members, what our responsibilities are. Our responsibilities, Elder Higgs, is more than just coming to a meeting once a month for two hours. There are other things that we do in between
meetings to help support the school, and we don’t do, that is not happening. We only see our responsibility as just attending meetings and, and that is a shame as well.

Higgs: You know that you are really giving some of the issues that have read in the literature as I have studied, even in public education, one of the great issues is, the difference between the superintendent’s responsibility on the board, and of the board member’s responsibility. However, most of the literature will indicate that the board is a policymaking body, and the superintendent or the principal, as it would be in the case of Seventh-day Adventist schools, would be the agent for implementing the policy. And that those lines should be clear...

Leonard: Right.

Higgs: ...to eliminate that type of confusion.

Leonard: Right, right.

Higgs: Are there any other issues that you...

Leonard: No, No I just wanted to make sure that that question was answered, amm, about training, and my, my, my summary response is that, overall I do not see any governance training taking place at all in the school board situation here.

Higgs: It is like the perception of the school board member, that I made reference to a little earlier. that said, “We are the ones that tell Mr. B what to do. We are the boa...we are the persons that run the school.”

Leonard: Right.

Leonard: And also along with that training, needs to come the understanding of the conference role and positions, see that, that, that’s not clear either.

Higgs: That’s right.

Leonard: So you’ve got three entities there. You’ve got the school board, you’ve got the school administration, but you also got the conference administration, in our situation. Now that is not always the case in like the public sector,
but we got three entities, and if that is not understood and clearly defined this really causes a great chaotic situation.

Higgs: Now do you believe that school board membership should have a higher level of qualifications to serve on the board?

Leonard: It’s interesting that you should ask that question, ah, and, and I, I, first of all it is difficult to try to find people who will be willing to sit on the school board. By and large our school board meetings have been, in some people’s minds a waste of time. They don’t want to go and waste, and waste their time. And then there are other people who are not as committed as they ought to be, and they half-way attend. Ah, and as so when we get ready to select school board members, not a lot of time and care and attention is given to who should be on that school board, so therefore, the general tendency is that you just put whosoever will, or who should be, ah, whose, who, who has the most money or who has the most influence. I think though, ahh, Elder Higgs, that a different criteria should be utilized. One of the criterias that I use, first of all, those individuals who have a sincere interest in Christian education. I also use as a criteria, ah, ah, parents who may really have a interest in their children’s interest and an interest of, of the school as well. And you may not always have parents in your congregation who had children at school or who have the time. Therefore, I think that the, the essential qualification should be those individuals that have a burden and a real commitment and concern for Christian education, and that is not always the case when the church board meets or the nominating committee meets, they were randomly select whosoever will and so I don’t think a whole lot of time and attention has been devoted toward the, the qualifications that are necessary for school board membership.

Higgs: In other words as you put it, or as someone else put it, many of the members get on the board by default. (Both Laugh)

Leonard: By Default. (Laughs) and that’s a shame. And, and and what does that say for, or what does that do for the progress of our school and for our children, if in fact you do not have people were interested. For an example, right now, in the situation that I’m in, we have people who, who who hardly intend. Sometimes it’s hard to get a quorum ah. ah.

Higgs: How many members do you have on the board? Is it 32?
Leonard: Something like that, something like that.

Higgs: I sent out 30, 30 surveys...

Leonard: Just this, just this past month. I, I personally had to write a letter to all the school board members, reminding them of their commitment to Christian education, to our children. I should not have had to do that if people are really concerned about the future of our children's lives. And so, if you do not get the right kind of persons on your school board, then you have whosoever will. Therefore, there is a lack of commitment ah, and then there is a lack of progress for our children's salvation.

Higgs: What do you think of the idea of interviewing a person before appointing, or electing him to the board?

Leonard: That would not be a bad idea. I never thought about that, but I think that would be an excellent idea. Of course you would have to deal with the logistics of time and that kind of thing, but it starts with the leadership of the church, and if the pastor has that kind of commitment I think he could fit that into his schedule, and I think that would be an excellent idea.

Higgs: To whom do you think the school board should be held accountable to? Parents, church, conference, ah, community?

Leonard: That's a good question. That's a very good question. Ah, the first answer that comes off the top of my head is that, I think that the school board has to be accountable to the church because it is the church who elects the members on school board. Amm, that's just off the top of my head. I think that the first line of accountability has to be the church but the problem is, Elder...

Higgs: Constituencies where nobody is held responsible...

Leonard: Nobody

Higgs: Nobody, says it's the other church's doing...

Leonard: That's right, that's right. And then the other thing too, if you have just a single church operated school, the problem is, is that sometimes the church itself is not that concerned about what's going on. Ahm, the only concern
is that everything is going alright and stuff like that, but in terms of evaluation relative to the progress of the school board or its performance. That has not been addressed. That has not been addressed.

Higgs: Well, I’m going to move to the next question, series of questions, and that we may come back to qualifications because it could be tied in.

Leonard: OK.

Higgs: Do you believe that there should be a system in place for school board assessments? And now I’m going to tie it in. And if so, should there be an assessment for individuals or assessments of the board as a corporate body working? And when I say assessment, I am talking about evaluation, but the difference between and an evaluation and an assessment is— with an evaluation you’ve got a set of criteria that you use to measure; with an assessment, you don’t have those criteria. You just look at it and see are we really what we really want to be, that type of thing.

Leonard: And so your question is do you think we need an assessment?

Higgs: Yes.

Leonard: Oh most definitely. Ah...

Higgs: And how would you do it?

Leonard: First of all let me answer the question about the assessment. I think that there is a need for an assessment. Ah, we come to the end of a year having not accomplished the kinds of things. I have sat on school boards, Elder Higgs, where the beginning of the school year we really started off with great plans and high ambitions, and high hopes of what we planned to accomplish, and when the end of school year comes, we have not even accomplished a tenth of what we said we were going to do. And, and we continue business as usual. I think that if we were held, first of all, held accountable; secondly if there was a process in place that at the end of the school year we would look at what we as a school board had accomplished, I think that we would be better motivated to do more in terms of the line. And as a matter of fact, it wouldn’t hurt to even do at midyear assessment to, to see, to see where we...how far we have, have gone, how close we have met the objectives. It’s almost like a periodic review. Ah, I would like, I would like a bi-annual or bi-school year
assessment. Ah, any, any successful corporation or any successful business looks at itself. And unfortunately this is one of the ah, pitfalls in our school system here in the Adventist church. We have no assessment ah, in terms of school board. Ah, we are very weak in assessments in other areas of the school system. Ah, and I think that because of the school board responsibilities lightly looked upon, then there’s very little that that is done. But ah, assessment is definitely needed. Ah, now how we would go about that is a good question. I would think...I would think that it should start with the chairman and perhaps the chairperson should sit down with his executive committee ah, and and look at goals and objectives, set the parameters and even, and even help develop some things. Or we could even call in outside consultants who are experts with evaluation and assessment tools, who could provide us the kind of resources that we need. But I would, I would think that we’d start with the chairman who would call his executive committee together, who would call in a outside resource persons, who would also begin to develop goals and objectives, ah and then begin to plot that out. I would also like to say the old adage that “He who fails to plan, plans to fail.” is very true. We are now, we are now in the stage, at least at the academy that I serve on, we have now developed a strategic plan and praise God for that. I think that any school who does not develop some sort of, of planning, ah mechanism, in terms of where they’re going to go, what they want to do...it’s just spinning wheels and just rolling in a rut. Ah, and so when you begin to develop a plan or strategic plan, then you begin to accept your goals and objectives, you could see where you’re going, and you could work towards that. And we see what we need to do as a board, how are we meeting this, ahh, through a bi-school year assessment that helps us to motivate us. And I really think that, ah Brother Higgs, if we don’t do that, we’re not going anywhere. So, yes, an assessment is needed, and secondly, I think that begins with the school board chairman and his staff with outside resources, and it should be done on a bi-school year basis.

Higgs: Describe to me any program that you believe could be implemented to train school board members to become effective.

Leonard: Any program?

Higgs: Or any idea, concept, that you may have in the back of your mind that could be used to make a board more effective, of any of the things we discussed.
Leonard: I've got a variety of things in mind, ah, and it may not be germane to, to your study. Ah, number 1, ah, the workshop that you did relative to showing us our responsibilities and our roles ah, I think are needed. And to be very honest with you, you had so much information, and such, and we only had, and I mean, we spent half a day, ah that ah, so that that, I'm thinking that that needs to be done over a series of time periods to really get in all the information that we need ah about all roles and responsibilities. But in addition to that, I think that there is a need for what I call team building, ah, especially when you deal with a union school situation where the politics run deep and just calling him like I see it man...(Both laugh)...I just call it like I see it. I think, I think, I think that part of our training ought to be about team building and how we're on the same team, and how we're working for the same goal. And also apart of that ah, ah, ah board training, ought to be laying out our ah goals and objectives, laying out our own ah, ah plans for a board. And I, I, I can't think of the word that I want to use right now. Ah, but laying out own plan ah our own goals, how we come together, and Elder you're gonna have to help me. I'm kind of tired right now, I can't think .....(both voices muffled)

Higgs: This is the last....

Leonard: That's alright, I was tired before we started, but I can't think of the word that I want to use..

Higgs: Describe it for me, maybe I can help you.

Leonard: Covey uses it. Ah...

Higgs: Covey?

Leonard: Covey uses it when ah, you read his book "The Seven Habits".

Higgs: That is correct.

Leonard: What is that thing called when you, you, you...

Higgs: Paradigm?

Leonard: No, no you work out your own goal situation, what you want to accomplish in life. I can't think of that right now. And I have read it, and its right on the to the tip of my tongue. Ah, it's almost similar to a strategic
plan, but it’s not called a strategic plan. But any way, the board needs to come together on a, on a consistent basis to first of all, to put together their own plan: what they want to do as a board, and addition to the strategic plan and, and, and then, and then work toward that. I also see the need of fellowship. And I’ve seen this since I have been on the board for ah, a variety of years now, where we just come together, and we just meet, and we go back home, there is issues, and we come in conflict. But I believe, Elder Higgs, that if we, we spend some time in fellowship on a periodic basis, let’s say maybe once a quarter, we just have a get together, we just have a social, where we get to know each other, we get to rub shoulders and that kind of thing. And, and so the, the, the board meetings that we have won’t be so intense, because now we know each other, we’ve come together, we socialize, we plan together, this becomes our thing and then we have a sense of unity, and we have a sense of mission, and we have a sense of...Mission Statement, that was what I was looking for. That, that’s the word I was looking for. I’m sorry. I’m all over the place now. But, I think the board should develop its own mission statement. And when you have board members contributing to one central project then they begin to own it, and, and so I think that we need to do more than just need to just meet on a monthly basis. I think there needs to be some internal mechanisms that pull us together on a periodic basis. First of all, team building, ah, mission statement development, socialization for the purpose of unification, and also giving us instruction in terms of what our roles and responsibilities are and with the conference, the school administration, the whole nine yards. But I see it as a conglomerate thing, I don’t see it just helping us to define our roles as policymakers and what the role of the conference office should be, and what the role of the administration should be. But I see it as a cohesive unit that, that puts everything together in terms of our unity. That’s the big thing. The devil comes in, Elder Higgs, and divides us, divides us. And one of the reasons he divides us, is because of the politics, because of the lack of unity, the, the, the power struggles, and all that kind of stuff man. And I think that if we put Christ in the center, and we focus on that, and we come together in Christian love and unity. And that only happens through all the activities that I have just described, then we become a cohesive unit. That’s what we want. We want a cohesive unit. We are fighting the same enemy, we have the same objectives, and we are doing, we’re going on the same direction, and I think of the biggest challenge in addition to not understanding our role, the biggest challenge of school board ah, ah members is working together in unity and harmony. And when we get to that point, there’s nothing that can
stop what we need to do for our children.

Higgs: All I can say is amen, amen.

Leonard: OK.

Higgs: You covered some very excellent bases. I appreciate the information you're sharing with me, and it will be used and I'll be glad to get you a copy of the information once we get it together.

Leonard: It has been my privilege, and I count it an honor to even make this contribution. Thank you for inviting me.

End Transcription.

Interview with Elizabeth
Superintendent of Conference D
March 20, 2002 12:15 p.m.

Interview Transcription

Higgs: Good morning, Dr. Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Good morning. Is it still morning?

Higgs: Well, it is afternoon.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Higgs: I really appreciate the opportunity of your sharing with me information regarding school boards and, and your perception of them. You are the superintendent of, of, ah, education for Conference E...

Elizabeth: Conference D.

Higgs: ...Conference D? When you first accepted your position how were you formally appraised of its responsibilities in terms of your coming on the school board?
Okay, first of all, ah, I was given what you would call a job description, and in the description it, it stated my relationship to each entity having to do with the office of education.

Now, that was as a superintendent?

That's right.

Maybe I should rephrase the question because normally I am asking this for board members. But maybe I should ask the question. What types of programs do you have or do you know of that has been given in the past relating to governance training for school board members?

Okay. Ah, I am not sure that I can answer that question regarding school board members, but as far as Conference D is concerned, we have put into place, ah, what we call a board seminar whereby we actually train our board members by going through the manual and going through the materials that are available to us regarding the responsibilities and the roles and the other things that bother the school board members and chairs.

Can you tell me a little bit about the program. How long does it take for a school board...is it required? Ah, is it, ah, certification at the end? Is there a certificate...

Okay.

...certificate at the end?

That may be something that we should consider doing, but the way school board members are elected, probably we won't be responsible for saying that you have to go through this training in order to be a school board. It's a church's responsibility to make these recommendations. And then, you know, ah, people are voted, elected for the position. So when I get them, they are already in place. I don't have much choice of whose coming or you have to do this in order to be a school board member of any of those things. Mostly in our churches you have to find who is willing to serve.

Does every school board member that you know of receive a copy of the
Elizabeth: Correct. And not only that. Every two years we have what we call officers' meetings and, and the education department take that time to, ah, orientate the new officers which will include the board members.

Higgs: And you use that manual?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Higgs: Very good.

Elizabeth: ...in fact, I use a Power Point presentation as well. They get the manual, but I go through the whole thing in some kind of abbreviated form and give them an opportunity to ask questions and to give feedback as to where they see their roles are to be.

Higgs: I want to ask you a couple of questions about school board member qualifications. In the church manual and also in the school board manual it gives some basic qualifications for school board members. However, if you were to just boil it all down, in essence, it says a person should be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in good and regular standing. For instance, the school board manual says the person should pay tithe, ah, the person should be supportive of the school, but be, beyond that, do you see the need for any of the higher qualifications as far as school board membership is concerned such as bringing in special skills to be used in assisting the schools?

Elizabeth: Okay, in our... Yes, I think that people should be really, ah, serving needs of the school if they are going to serve on a school board. And in our...we had what we call conference-wide school bar...school board seminar, and in addition to what the manual said, we also recommended that people bring, ah, their wisdom as well as their willingness to serve. And if you don't have any wisdom in a certain area, then, you know, what are you bringing? Cash or no. There are other things that you have to rather than I'm available.

Higgs: Or being a parent.

Elizabeth: Yes. Yes. We don't want to be overloaded with parents because it is hard
to be objective when we are discussing your children. So we want parents because of their investment, but we also want people who can be more optimistic. I mean not optimistic, but, ah, what's the term I want to use. Ah, objective for the whole school.

Higgs: Do you believe that there should be in place any type of system for school board evaluations or assessments?

Elizabeth: I do.

Higgs: And I would probably go, put more emphasis on assessments than evaluations. Maybe evaluations can be something that could be held for school boards at the time the school is being evaluated for accreditation, but primarily like at the end of each year an assessments. And if you do, how would you suggest these be done?

Elizabeth: Well, you need an instrument. We have to create something like that. Ah, already we need to, without even an instrument, we need to determine that if you're there, you're not giving support, you're not, ah, serving the needs, not even able to meet, then you don't need to be there. And we have too many boards where people are missing too many consecutive meetings, and there ought to be something in place. If you miss X number of meetings, then, you know, you're no longer a board member. So yes, we need some way to assess people. Where are we? Where do we need to go? How are we going to get there? And, and maybe some people will discover, then, I don't really need to be a board member.

Higgs: Are you thinking in terms of an individual assessment or a corporate body assessment as a board as a group...or both?

Elizabeth: Both.

Higgs: So in other words, at least once a year, you are saying...Well, you didn't say that. But periodically...

Elizabeth: Yes.

Higgs: ...there should....

Elizabeth: Once a year is pretty good.
Higgs: Okay

Elizabeth: So if you keep those same people four years, probably, ah, and once every two years.

Higgs: Do you... what are the perceptions of board members about their qualifications and roles and responsibilities that you have perceived? Do you feel board members feel as though they are qualified even though they may or may not have any governance training?

Elizabeth: People are very, very, very sure of that. Yes. Ah, in fact they, the board that I have worked with have an idea of, of grandeur that maybe they don't even possess. Some are good, but so many have that feeling that I have arrived with all the information. I can't wait to give it to you. So, yes.

Higgs: [Laughs]

Elizabeth: For example, I am calling, ah, S O S meeting for the teachers in Georgia.

Higgs: What does S O S stand for?

Elizabeth: Ah, serious, get here, we've gotta talk.

Higgs: You mean serious get here?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Higgs: Okay. [laughs]

Elizabeth: It means all of you get here.

Higgs: Save our souls?

Elizabeth: Yes, save our souls.

Higgs: Save our schools.

Elizabeth: Ah, I have, ah, called that meeting and asked the teachers and principals to arrange for a minimal day. I've given them adequate time so that they can notify the parents that this is going to be a minimal day. And ah, get that
out to them and be at the meeting. Ah, one of the principals said the board chair, ah, was very concerned that I would be doing this, and ah, didn't think that I should, because it doesn't, it disrupts the parents' schedule. And so I said to that person, ah give him my cell number because apparently he needs to tell me what his feelings are. And I need to let him know I don't need his permission to call the Conference D staff together. But see that role, crossing his role. He has no, no responsibility for when I need to do something for the teachers. He serves on a different board. So sometimes they are very ambitious.

Higgs: Based upon the information that I have received from others, you are telling me pretty much the same thing.

Elizabeth: I think it is pretty much the same thing that is happening.

Higgs: Looking at the surveys, a large percentage of them said that they were administrative officers of the school. As a board member, they were administrative officers of the school.

Elizabeth: And I can come in and I can evaluate...

Higgs: Yes.

Elizabeth: ...on the spot without notice, and in fact board members have absolutely no power outside of the board itself.

Higgs: That is absolutely correct. That is absolutely correct.

Elizabeth: They don't' know that. They don't know that. When you tell them, it is such a shock.

Higgs: One of the interesting things, I've found out, too, Elizabeth, and that is that those board members who had a high school education, in a correlated study, those who had a high school education, a large majority of them felt that they were administrative officers. [Laughs]

Elizabeth: Oh, it's confusing, it is very confusing. However, ah, we have put forth some effort to try to educate ours, and I would say it's in the pilot and if we find that the results are good, we'll be more than happy to share with other conferences. What happens when the board members are actually
taken aside and given their kudos and at the same time good information as to how they can serve the school best.

Higgs: Well I think you have answered all my questions that I have thus far. I have printed them here, but I think in your conversation you have share with me the information that I am really looking for.

Elizabeth: It sounds good.

Higgs: And I really appreciate it.

Elizabeth: Well, I'd be happy to know the results of your study. And maybe we can use that to give us more education.

Higgs: Thank you. I'll be glad to share it with you. Certainly. Thank you.

Elizabeth: All right. Thank you.

*End of transcription*
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