INFORMATION, TRAINING AND TOOLS
FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN DELAWARE SCHOOL BOARDS

by

David Sechler

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education Leadership

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ABSTRACT

School boards have the power to provide instructional leadership, but few school boards exercise that power and fewer still do so effectively.

The leadership power of school boards derives from their legal authority to set expectations, monitor progress and provide support. School boards that provide effective instructional leadership set district-wide expectations for student academic performance and then those boards monitor the district’s progress toward meeting those goals and provide support, generally in the form of policies and funding.

Most school boards, however, tend to focus on management rather than instruction, and restrict their involvement in instructional issues either to continuing practices of the past or to implementing the agenda of the superintendent.

The goal of this Educational Leadership Portfolio was to encourage and facilitate education leadership by Delaware school boards. The portfolio contains nine artifacts designed to help Delaware school boards to understand and to exercise their leadership power.

The artifacts are divided into three categories: Information, Training and Tools. Three of the four Information artifacts are booklets written for publication by the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA). School Boards in Law and Regulation describes the legal and historical basis on which Delaware school boards exist and derive their power. Key Points in Research summarizes the literature on effective school boards. The Survey Analysis provides the results of a survey of Delaware school board members. The fourth Information artifact is an article, “When
we understand the data, we are equipped to lead,” which was published in the National School Boards Association journal, *American School*.

The three Training artifacts were developed in workshop formats. Standard Setting for DCAS first presented the work of the Standard Setting Panels Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) and then provided guidance on how to understand and interpret the panels’ recommendations in the context of local Delaware school districts. Data 101 for School Board Members introduced participants to the student assessment data available on the Delaware Department of Education’s public web pages, and Data 201 is a follow-up workshop providing updates on the state’s student assessment system and extending participants’ data location and assessment skills.

Of the two Tools artifacts, the Discussion Protocol provides school boards with a structured way to examine and evaluate their work as school boards, and Effective Communication with Legislators is a manual of techniques for successful advocacy with Delaware’s elected officials. Effective Communication with Legislators also is the fourth booklet written to for publication by the DSBA.

Response to seven of the nine artifacts has been universally positive. Participants in Standard Setting for DCAS and Data 101 for School Board Members report increased skills and understanding, and multiple invitations to repeat the sessions indicate that they were valued. The four DSBA publications were well received when presented to the DSBA Board of Directors, and the *American School* article received positive comments from the journal’s editor. The remaining two artifacts are available to Delaware school boards, but have yet to be implemented.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The term “educational leadership” generally brings to mind images of people who work in school buildings and district offices – experienced and effective superintendents, principals and teachers – but school boards are seldom seen as being part of the leadership picture. Because they are the official legal entity and policy making group in nearly all school districts in the United States, it stands to reason that local school boards should be in positions of power when it comes to school reform in general and to improving student achievement in particular. That does not seem to be the case, however, and school boards are only rarely mentioned in the student achievement conversation. In some aspects of the effort to improve schools, school boards are not mentioned at all and their input is not sought regarding either planning or implementing improvement processes. There is a need for school boards not merely to be involved in this conversation, but to lead it.

While war, electronic surveillance scandals, the economy and health care have kept education from being the focus of public attention, the national concern that students are not performing at high levels relative to rigorous standards still lingers. The nation is not backing off from high expectations, but continuing to move toward national standards and national testing. No Child Left Behind remains in effect and unchanged since its original passage on January 3, 2001, and student performance targets for schools to meet Adequate Yearly Progress rise ever more rapidly toward their final status of 100% in the spring of 2014, although changes are in the works to alter the timeline for having all students performing at or above standard.
Whatever changes come, including the long anticipated reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or the circumvention of that act by U.S. Department of Education regulatory actions, it is nearly certain that the future will not alter the decades-long movement in the direction of improving schools and raising student achievement. While many groups are jockeying to be in position to influence and to implement the coming changes, whether or not local school boards will be major players or sideline observers remains an open question.

Both individually and collectively, school boards have important questions to consider: will local school boards be proactive players in this change process, working actively to shape the expectations and the changes to come, or will they be reactive bodies relegated to serving as little more than pass-through entities that simply do what they must do under federal and state legislative mandates? Should local school boards want to be proactive players, are they positioned to be leaders in the work? Specifically, do they have the policies in place and the experience of past practice to be significant forces in shaping the changes to come in their districts?

School Boards and School Improvement

By not specifically tasking the responsibility to the federal government, the U.S. Constitution left the matter of education to the states. As the nation grew, individual states instituted remarkably similar systems for educating their citizens. The first public school in the colonies, Boston Latin, was established in 1635 (The Freedom Trail Foundation, n.d.), and in the following decades similar schools were established across the colony (Meyer, 1957). Each school had its own governance body, and local control of all aspects of the school was the norm.
As other colonies began to consider the issue of educating their youth, “(t)he Massachusetts system of separate educational governance spread throughout the colonies” (Land, 2002, p. 231). This structure of schooling survived through the birth of the new nation. Massachusetts established the first state board of education in 1837 and legislated local school board authority to finance and administer schools in 1891 (Land, 2002). Through the 1800’s the Massachusetts system became “a prototype for today’s governance of schools by local school boards” (Land, 2002, p. 231), and in all its essential aspects this system has remained in place in the United States ever since.

While Congress has created the U.S. Department of Education and that agency has come to wield tremendous power over state policy and regulation by virtue of the requirements attached to federal education funds, the federal government has left local governance largely to the states. The states, in turn, have created legislative and regulatory frameworks within which local boards must operate, but “significant discretion and decision making authority remain in the hands of local boards of education” (Krepel & Grady, 1992, p. 2).

How this freedom might be used to help improve student achievement is largely unexplored territory. Local boards have a relationship with the state that is much like the relationship of individual states to the United States: just as anything not specifically taken on by the United States government is left to the states to control, what is not specifically taken on by the state government is left to the local boards to control. Thus local school boards have potentially broad, if seldom used, powers to pursue improvement in student achievement, but in practice boards are more engaged in ensuring compliance with state laws and regulations than in exploring how to use unregulated areas to the benefit of students. While local boards have drifted into focusing on management issues and become “agencies of legitimation” (Kerr, 2009,
p.34), the vacuum in school improvement leadership has more and more been filled by the state and federal governments.

If school boards are to counter this trend away from local control and retain their traditional role as key decision makers in matters related to the education of their children, then they will need information, training and tools to help them to be effective and reflective governance bodies.

This Executive Leadership Portfolio presents my efforts to provide information, training and tools to help Delaware school boards become educational leaders in their districts and in the state. In the second chapter, I frame the problem and describe my roles and my improvement goals for this work. In the third chapter, I discuss improvement strategies implemented to achieve these goals. In the fourth chapter, I reflect on these strategies and their results. Finally, in the fifth chapter I end with reflections on my growth as an educator, a school board member, a partner, a scholar and a problem solver.
Chapter 2

PROBLEM STATEMENT

My experience as a long-time educator and as a school board member have led me to believe that most school board members are well meaning individuals who run for the school board with a sense that they are taking on an important civic duty. Their previous connections to schools may amount only to having attended them, often quite a while ago, or to having children or grandchildren in the schools now. School board members may run as single-issue candidates whose agenda is limited to monitoring a particular aspect of school operations (such as the budget or facilities use) or to fixing a perceived problem (such as a district’s program for gifted or special education students). Some candidates may run in order to accomplish a single very limited goal (such as to make sure a relative gets a job in the district or that the football field gets Astroturf instead of grass). Other candidates run to ferret out conspiracies (“they’re hiding things from us”) or because they see the school board as a first step in a career in elected office. Least frequently, candidates are trained educators who run for the school board so as to provide the district with informed leadership on instructional issues, a phenomenon that also is noted in the broader literature (Hampel, 1986; Hess & Meeks, 2010).

With this diversity of motives for board membership, it is no wonder that while school boards clearly have the legal authority to lead, research has found they generally do not use that authority to lead district efforts to improve teacher practice and student learning (Miller, 2008; Meyer, 2009; Mizell, 2010). This either leaves school districts without effective leadership or leaves leadership to other parties who may not share the mandate for civic good or the unique
citizen perspective that come with being an elected or appointed school board member (Stover, 2012). Superintendents routinely view managing the board as being one of their primary tasks. Interest groups ranging from employee unions to professional organizations work to lead boards in directions beneficial to those groups. On a larger scale, mayors, governors, legislatures and departments of education will step in and try to lead by legislation and regulation when they perceive a leadership vacuum (Maxwell, 2009; Robelen, 2009). The motivations of these groups, however, may be grounded in concerns that are not specifically related to the best interests of the public school system.

While school boards do not directly influence teacher practice and student achievement, research has shown that they can be an integral part of a culture of learning that pervades effective school districts (Kirst, 1994; Iowa School Boards Association, 2000; Armstrong & Anthes, 2001; Carr, 2001; Hess, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Carr, 2003; Dellagardelle, 2008). Specifically, school boards are essential in setting the overall tone of a district, and then in supporting improved teacher practice and improved student learning by writing and enforcing policy that codifies this support.

In the recent past, Delaware school boards have been ignored or given only minimal involvement in major state education decisions. For example, since 2001 Delaware schools have operated in a system of state (2001-2003) and then federal (2004-present) accountability, but school boards have played little or no role in the decision making regarding school accountability systems. An early Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) training PowerPoint presentation lists participants in the “Committee of Stakeholders” who provided input into the transition from the original Delaware accountability system to the federal system under No Child Left Behind. That list includes “School administrators, district administrators, teachers, parents, community”
(Delaware Department of Education, 2004), leaving school boards conspicuously absent. In spring of 2010 the state was one of only two to receive a federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant and DDOE brought together a wide range of stakeholders to create district RTTT plans through which the state plan would be implemented. The state required school board representation on each Local Education Agency’s RTTT team, but it is apparent that school boards were seen as playing only a minor role. Work with the stakeholder groups is addressed in the DDOE report on the first year of RTTT implementation but school boards are mentioned only once, in a brief reference to the Secretary of Education beginning to hold monthly meetings with “the leadership of…the Delaware School Boards Association” as well as with business leaders and leaders of the state teachers’ association (Delaware Department of Education, 2012, p.6). School boards are not mentioned at all in the report’s section on “Great Teachers and Leaders” (Delaware Department of Education, 2012, pp. 13-15).

The situation is more varied at the district level. School board leadership in instruction differs depending on the views of the superintendent, the traditions of the board, and the views and backgrounds of individual board members.

When local school boards are not consistently engaged in educational leadership, a critical element is missing. Only school boards represent all constituencies in their districts, and school boards are uniquely positioned to be aware of and responsive to the diverse needs and concerns of those constituencies. If school boards are unaware of their potential for leadership or if they lack the means to lead, they cannot act in the best interests of their constituents, their district teachers and staff, or their students.

Delaware, then, is a microcosm of the nation in that school boards are not routinely considered to be part of the state’s or districts’ instructional leadership. Yet school board
members are vital links to their communities, and, if properly prepared to do so, they can provide a type of leadership and a vital perspective that cannot come from other sources.

**School Board Leadership**

I define school board leadership as setting broad scale expectations, monitoring progress made toward meeting those expectations, and taking action to support the meeting of those expectations. My vision for leadership by school boards is consistent with themes from the literature presented later in this document (see especially Coerver and Byers, 2011 and Quinn and Dawson, 2011 regarding leadership by governance boards in general; and see the Center for Public Education, 2011; Quinn, 2010; Walser, 2009; Dellegardelle, 2008; and Board Source, 2005 regarding leadership by school boards in particular). The literature is consistent in holding that the role of boards is in governance/guidance as opposed to management or, even more problematic, micromanagement. Boards fulfill this role by setting expectations, monitoring progress and providing support.

Expectations may be set in the form of official statements from the board (e.g., “It is the expectation of the board that all students will be reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade or, in the case of transfer students, by the end of their 3rd year in the district.”), or in the form of official policies (e.g., “Student grades shall be based solely on a student’s academic performance. Other aspects of a student’s life in school, such as attendance, discipline record or participation in school programs or projects, may be noted and reported but may not be used to raise or lower a student’s grade.”).

In setting expectations, school board members must honor both their unique position as representatives of the community served by the school and their obligation to understand the
education community they have been elected or appointed to govern. This involves being aware, or becoming aware, of the needs, interests and concerns of all parts of the community, including but certainly not limited to those who voted each board member into office. This also involves being aware, or becoming aware, of the needs, interests and concerns of the students, educators and staff who attend or work in the schools. Finally, this involves being aware, or becoming aware, of the world beyond the board’s particular schools and district. Even the most insular of today’s public schools must function in a context that includes the state, the nation and even the world, and school board leadership must help to prepare students to function in that larger context.

Once expectations are set, school board leadership focuses on monitoring progress made toward meeting those expectations. Working through the superintendent, the school board holds district employees accountable by requisitioning and reading reports, analyzing data, and engaging in other such activities as may be necessary to gauge the district’s performance. Based on their monitoring, the school board leads by taking actions that may include reaffirming or revising the expectations; creating, revising or revoking policy; directing the superintendent to take action (such as assessing the effectiveness of the district’s curriculum); retaining or removing the superintendent, and/or advocating for action at the community, state or national level. The monitoring process includes school boards reviewing and reflecting on their own work, being open and earnest about their own effectiveness as a board, and doing what is necessary to improve their practice.

Throughout the process, the board functions as a board and not as a collection of individuals. Board members will have their own interests and sensitivities, of course, but once elected the board represents all citizens and works for the benefit of all students.
My Role

I retired in July, 2006 after thirty years as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. In the spring of 2007 I ran for the Caesar Rodney (CR) School District school board, and in May I was elected to a five-year term. I completed my term and ran for re-election, but I was not elected for a second term.

I served in many roles during my time on the CR board. I was the CR board’s representative on the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) Board of Directors every year of the five. I was elected Second Vice President of DSBA for SY’10, First Vice President for SY’11 and DSBA President for SY’12. In addition, I served as Vice President of the CR school board for SY’12.

I was an active member and officer of DSBA. I was appointed to serve as DSBA’s delegate on four state task forces or committees, including the Delaware State Task Force on School Discipline and Zero Tolerance Policies (summer and fall 2009), the State of Delaware Innovative Action Team #4: Turn-around Schools (spring 2009), the DCAS Standards Setting Panels (panel member, AUG 2010) and the Delaware Education Consortium (AUG 2011 – JUL 2013). (The acronym “DCAS” stands for Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System.)

As DSBA Second Vice President, First Vice President and President, I contributed to the association’s goal setting. I worked with other members of the Executive Committee (which consisted of the organization’s president, both vice presidents, treasurer, chair of the Legislative Committee and the DSBA Executive Director) to set the goals for the year; then through the year I worked with the Executive Director, the Executive Committee and the other members of the Board of Directors to achieve those goals, monitoring progress through the year and reporting
(through the Executive Director) as the work progressed and goals were achieved. Also, in my role as DSBA officer, I attended the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Northeast Regional Conferences in National Harbor, MD in October, 2010 and in Hyannis, MA in October, 2011; the Leadership Conferences in Washington, D.C. in February, 2011 and February 2012; and the Annual Conferences in San Francisco, CA in April 2011 and in Boston, MA in April 2012. As DSBA President, I also attended the NSBA’s Presidents’ Retreat in Groton, CT in August, 2011.

As a member of the DSBA Executive Committee, I participated in monthly meetings between the Executive Committee and the Delaware State Secretary of Education or his/her designee. During these meetings we were free to discuss any issue related to Delaware Education, and the Executive Committee used these meetings as an important vehicle for exchanging information and for sharing local boards’ issues and concerns.

During the five years that I served on the CR school board and on the DSBA Board of Directors, I was a part of the state-wide conversation on issues related to public education. My contributions ranged from being a voice for the school boards in state-wide policy discussions to being a hands-on trainer leading sessions to help school board members understand data about their schools and districts. Although I no longer serve on a school board, I continue to work with schools and districts as a coach and consultant in Delaware and in the surrounding states. I am in schools regularly, and my current work and my continuing relationships with school board members and with educators across the region keeps me current on education issues. In connection with work that I do through the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL), I serve on the board of directors of the National SAM Innovation Project, a non-profit corporation that implements the School Administration Manager (SAM) project in schools across the
country. This work and my status as Past President of DSBA puts me in a position to continue making contributions to the leadership work of school boards.

**Improvement Goals**

My experience as an educator and as a school board member convinced me that school boards and school board members had legitimate roles to play as leaders in education. As I developed my Educational Leadership Portfolio proposal, I considered questions of what those roles might be and why school boards and school board members did not seem to be providing strong education leadership. I concluded that school board members lacked information, training and tools they needed to become effective, proactive education leaders, and I designed my portfolio proposal and planned my artifacts to address these needs.

Specifically, I wanted my artifacts to encourage and facilitate education leadership by local Delaware school boards. First, I wanted to provide a foundation of information on why school boards exist and what they can do provide effective instructional leadership to their districts. Then I wanted to build on this foundation by providing boards with training which they could use to inform their work and to improve their leadership practice. Finally, I wanted to model the level of communication and reflection that Delaware school boards will need to maintain if they are to have a meaningful presence in policy discussions in state and national forums.
Chapter 3

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND RESULTS

I initially proposed work (Appendix A: Proposal for ELP) which I categorized in four areas – Investigation, Data, Training and Evaluation. Based on what I learned while implementing my improvement strategies, however, I reorganized my improvement efforts around information, training and tools. All of the artifacts provide information or processes that can be useful to school boards or school board members. In addition, each artifact focuses on the leadership roles, or at least the potential leadership roles, that school boards and school board members can take on in an effort to improve instruction and student academic achievement. In this chapter, I group the artifacts according to the new categories – information, training or tools – and discuss each artifact and its results.

Information

Four artifacts are categorized as providing useful information for Delaware school board members: School Boards in Law and Regulation (Appendix B), Key Points in Research (Appendix C), Survey of Delaware School Board Members (Appendix D), and “When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead” – an article in American School (The American School Board Journal), July 2012 (Appendix E).

School Boards in Law and Regulation (Appendix B)

While school board members frequently deal with legal issues such as employee rights and district compliance with federal and state education regulations, there was nothing outside of the actual text of laws and regulations that could help Delaware school board members
School Boards in Law and Regulation is grounded in the belief that if the members of any group understand their history and the reasons why their group exists, they will have a greater sense of mission, and perhaps of urgency, about their work. The process of being elected or appointed to be a Delaware school board member includes nothing that explains the foundation on which the whole system of school boards exists, however. Even a civically engaged citizen who regularly attends school board meetings would be unlikely to see or hear anything that would set those meetings in the contexts of the centuries-long history of school boards in the United States, of the legal foundations of their role as the official governance bodies of school systems, or of the school board’s place as one of the best examples of local control in a democratic society.

The goals of the booklet were first to provide a brief history of school boards in the United States in general and in Delaware in particular, grounding Delaware school boards in historical legal context, and then to highlight Delaware law and regulations that specifically applied to school boards, grounding Delaware school boards in their current legal context. Since the text focused on law and regulations that established the existence and operating parameters for school boards, many of the laws and regulations with which school board members are most familiar were not addressed because those laws and regulations dealt with specific things that
boards, districts or staff members should do rather than with the reasons why school boards exist.

The audience for the booklet was current members of Delaware non-charter public school boards. Since school board members come from all socio-economic levels and educational backgrounds, it was important to keep the language as accessible as possible to the lay person. The booklet was kept relatively brief, providing enough information to give board members an overall understanding of the relationship between school boards and Delaware’s laws and regulations but not so much that board members would get bogged down in arcane legal language. I intended to give readers food for thought if they only just read this booklet, but also plenty of connections and directions should they want to investigate issues further on their own.

The booklet has two major parts. The first is the review of the history of school boards and a discussion of the current Delaware law and regulations related to them. This part shows that Delaware’s institution of school governance by local boards has its roots deep in American colonial history, all the way back to the first public school in the colonies, Boston Latin in Massachusetts. Delaware’s state history reveals not only consistency in the role of school boards in school governance (although in various forms over the years), but also recurring discussion over at least the last one hundred years of many still-familiar issues such as state vs. local funding and small local boards vs. larger consolidated boards. This is important because, for example, understanding that Delaware’s schools have been governed by as many as 133 school boards (in 1883) and by as few as three (one per county, in 1887 and, with some exceptions, again in 1919) can give current school board members a more informed perspective as the issue of consolidation of school districts is considered once again in the early twenty-first century.

The second section of the booklet is an Appendix consisting of a summary with annotations of Chapter 10 of Title 14 of the Delaware Code. This particular section of the Code
was selected because it is the most directly relevant to Delaware school boards. While education is mentioned in many places in the Code, Title 14 is the title devoted specifically to education and Chapter 10 deals specifically with the existence, operation and powers of school boards. The subsection-by-subsection presentation of Chapter 10 provides board members with a convenient way to find the exact legal language that addresses issues important to the existence of their boards, such as the mandate that all districts must have school boards in §1043, the mandate that all school district funds shall be processed through the Delaware state system in §1047, or the language giving school boards the right to “examine persons under oath” and making it perjury to lie while under oath during a school board hearing in §1059 and §1060, respectively.

The two sections work together in that the discussion in the body of the booklet provides a broad background, while the Appendix provides the actual language used to establish and structure Delaware school boards. In addition to simply providing information, the two sections also work together to provide issues or courses of action for boards to discuss, either as part of regular board meetings or as part of board training or workshop sessions. For example, the booklet’s section on “Current Laws and Regulations Affecting Delaware School Boards” includes a discussion highlighting school boards’ rights to make policy, to adopt courses of study, to approve instructional materials such as textbooks, and to hire staff. The discussion points out that while many school boards across the country adopt policy only as a way to establish procedures for handling problematic situations (e.g., “we need a policy on bullying”), boards also may choose to use their powers as a means to set the academic expectations and direction for the district. The booklet’s discussion is, in essence, a short introduction to the concept of “policy levers” at the local level.
Key Points in Research (Appendix C)

This second DSBA booklet builds on the foundation laid in the first booklet. After School Boards in Law and Regulation has provided school board members with an understanding of why school boards exist, including an understanding of their legal mandates and powers, Key Points in Research provides insights into the effectiveness of school boards as governance bodies. The intended audience was the same as it was for the first booklet – Delaware non-charter public school board members – but in contrast with the first booklet’s mission to clarify legal language and concepts, this time the goal was to clarify research processes and findings without getting bogged down in arcane research terminology. The research results needed to be clear and accessible to the lay reader.

There is, in fact, relatively little research of any kind on school boards, and even less research that is focused on school board effectiveness. Most of the literature on school boards consists of individuals’ opinions and informal observations, and much of that comes from the experiences these individuals had when they were themselves school board members rather than from any kind of formal inquiry.

Another sizeable block of the literature consists of observations and opinions of individuals who are highly critical of the public schools, most often taking the position that student achievement is low and that the schools are failing, and then taking the school boards to task as the entities that are ultimately responsible for this failure. With respect to school boards, these commentators attribute the failures to weak or misguided leadership from the board, or even contend that school boards provide no leadership at all. Often these commentators go on to advocate alternate governance structures such as the take-over of the schools by mayors or the
state or private contractors, or they advocate for public school systems built around vouchers, school choice or charter schools.

Often overshadowed by all of the commentary, however, is a small but significant body of legitimate research on the effectiveness of school boards and on the links between school board practice and student academic achievement. Key Points in Research highlights two studies, one known as the Lighthouse Study and conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards (Dellegardelle, 2008) and the other conducted by the National School Boards Association (Resnick, 1999). Both of these studies identify characteristics displayed by school boards in districts with high student achievement and then contrast those characteristics with characteristics displayed by school boards in districts with low student achievement. The booklet gives some detail on how each of the studies was conducted and includes a table comparing the characteristics identified in the two studies.

The booklet also highlights other studies that are less comprehensive but which add significantly to the understanding of school boards. One such study found that school boards functioned mostly as agencies “of legitimation,” serving to certify whatever the superintendent wants to do or what the district has done in the past (Kerr, 2009). Another study analyzed school board elections through the lens of Dissatisfaction Theory, holding that when the community feels that all is well in the schools there is little interest in school board elections and the superintendent tends to stay in place, but when the community is dissatisfied then there are hard fought elections with multiple candidates and the superintendent tends to leave or be removed within three years (Alsbury, 2008).

Overall, the research highlighted in this second booklet supports the main discussion point in the first booklet: that school boards that wish to do so can become more than preservers
of the status quo and can make use of their policy and approval powers to set high expectations
for the performance of district staff and students alike. School boards have the potential to be
true educational leaders, to go far beyond being mere agencies of legitimation and become
bodies that provide high expectations, clear direction and worthy challenges that will result in
high quality instruction and high student academic achievement in their districts.

Survey of Delaware School Board Members (Appendix D)

This booklet consists of a survey of Delaware non-charter public school board members
and the report of the results of that survey. Whereas the information presented in School Boards
in Law and Regulation is likely to remain stable over time and the Key Points in Research may
evolve somewhat as new research is done, the third DSBA booklet could undergo yearly
additions and updates if the DSBA Board of Directors chooses to take this survey not as a one-
time project, but as the beginning of annual data collection on its membership.

Prior to this survey, no comparable data collection had been done on Delaware school
board members. Information about the state’s school board members existed mostly informally,
gathered by individuals as they lived and interacted in the very small society of Delaware school
boards. The state’s size has been both a help and a hindrance in this regard. No board member
is more than two hours’ drive from any Delaware school district or from any school-related
activity or ceremony, and it is relatively easy for any board member who wishes to do so to
attend state gatherings such as the annual state Teacher of the Year or Superstars in Education
banquets, or the monthly meetings of the DSBA Board of Directors. With only nineteen school
districts in the state, seating a total of 117 board members, any board member who attends even a
few of these state activities will meet at least those individuals in that subgroup of board
members who choose to be active beyond the bounds of their own districts. So while serving on a Delaware school board can make one a member of a relatively small extended family in which informal information is readily available to anyone who chooses to seek it out, there had been no previous attempts to gather information about school board members in any formal way.

The survey itself was divided into four sections:

1. Current Views on School Boards as Leaders
2. Current Leadership Activities
3. School Board Training
4. Demographics

Each of the first three sections was designed to gather information on some specific aspect of school boards and school board members as educational leaders, and the fourth section gathered information that would help provide insights into who school board members are and possibly identify similarities and differences in the views of demographic subgroups of board members.

The survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Software, available through the University of Delaware. The survey length was limited so that an average respondent could complete the survey in a single session of about twenty minutes. The survey was distributed via e-mail through the DSBA listserv in the form of an email to all school board members from Susan Francis, DSBA Executive Director, in which she explained the survey and provided the link to the Qualtrics survey page.

The survey opened on Wednesday, October 9, 2013 and closed at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, October 16, 2013. All responses were collected online, and the Qualtrics software was used to conduct much of the analysis of responses. Forty-four respondents completed the survey, giving a sample size of 36.7% of the total of 117 Delaware non-charter school board
members. An additional nine respondents started but did not complete the survey, so their responses were not considered in the analysis of results.

The survey produced some interesting baseline information about Delaware school board members. They are a moderately diverse group that is more than moderately consistent in its views on school board service. They generally are middle aged, although there are some board members who are in their thirties and some who are seventy years old or older. They have lived in Delaware for a long time, the vast majority having lived in the state for twenty years or more, with half of respondents being life-long residents. Most have lived in their current school districts for more than twenty years. Nearly all are not interested in running for other political offices, although a few individuals either have some interest in future office or see their school board service as the first step in a political career.

New school board members come into their first terms in office mostly unprepared for many aspects of their work, but they generally are satisfied with the training they receive during their first year in office. They are somewhat less satisfied with training provided to experienced board members, although the training provided at the NSBA annual conference and at the DSBA fall and spring clinics is seen as more valuable by experienced board members than by new board members.

Board members make it a priority to understand education issues at the district, community and state levels. They freely share their information and views with others at the local board level, but they are less likely to be assertive about sharing their information and views at the community or state levels. Most will take advantage of opportunities to share when education topics come up in their lives – as in casual conversations or at community or state functions – but few work to “make their own opportunities” to advance their positions on issues.
They see “citizen representative” as being their most important role, but they do not see themselves as primarily advocates for any specific position or group of constituents. They are ambiguous about whether they are or are not educational leaders, but they do see themselves as being equally as responsible for instructional quality and student performance as they are for making sure their districts are well managed. While they recognize their ultimate legal responsibility for what happens in their districts, they also see themselves as working primarily through their superintendents rather than acting directly as the “bosses” in the district.

Looking to future work, the DSBA may want to dig deeper into school board members’ ambiguity with respect to their roles as educational leaders. While board members see themselves as having responsibility for the quality of instruction and for the academic performance of students in their districts, they shy away from labeling themselves as leaders and they tend to be more focused on understanding issues than on influencing or initiating policy or actions related to those issues, especially at the community and state levels. DSBA might want to determine whether this is because of board members’ beliefs that this is their proper role or because of a lack of opportunity or training on how to move things forward at levels beyond the local district. DSBA may want to distribute the booklet Effective Communication with Legislators (Appendix I) and perhaps conduct some discussions or training around those skills, and then see if there is any change in board members’ views.

Future inquiries might look into board members’ understanding of policy as a lever for action and a way to set expectations rather than as solely a way to specify courses of action for problematic situations. DSBA might consider offering training on this issue, especially if that training targeted board members in their second year or more in office. DSBA and the Delaware Department of Education also might consider gathering more information on board members’
perceptions of the value and quality of the training available to them, especially training targeted to board members beyond their first year of service.

Finally, DSBA might consider changes in the survey itself, partly to gather additional data and partly to make the survey more accessible. Possible changes include adding an ethnicity item to the demographics section, breaking the length-of-residency item into smaller intervals (the interval of 5-20 years may be too big to define a meaningful group of “medium-term residents”), and making the survey available in hard copy for board members who prefer that format or who do not have easy access to the internet.

“When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead” – an article in *American School*, July 2012 (Appendix E)

In my proposal defense in April 2012 I planned for one artifact to be “a publishable Op Ed piece or journal article” arguing that because school boards are close to their communities they are well suited to provide effective, highly democratic governance for our nation’s schools. Later that same month I attended the National School Boards Association’s Annual Conference in Boston. During that conference, Susan Francis, Executive Director of the Delaware School Boards Association, had a conversation with Glen Cook, Editor-in-Chief of *American School*, the journal of the National School Boards Association. Ms. Francis mentioned my plan to write a journal article, and she also mentioned my transition from principal to board member and my general interest in school data. Mr. Cook said that he would be interested in discussing a possible article on data from the perspective of a principal turned school board member, and he and Ms. Francis arranged to include me in a follow-up conversation.

The three of us met the next day, and we came away from that meeting with a plan for me
to write an article that brought together my understanding of school data and my experiences as both a former principal and a current school board member. After the conference Mr. Cook sent me more detailed information about his content requirements for the article and about *American School*’s editorial requirements, and I submitted my draft to him in early May, 2012. The final 1000-word article was titled “When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead,” and it was published in the July, 2012 edition of *American School* (Sechler, 2012).

The article began by recounting my efforts to create a professional data culture when I was the principal at Fred Fifer III Middle School in the Caesar Rodney School District in Camden, DE from 1999-2006. In order to help my staff understand first the Delaware state school accountability system and then the accountability system adopted under the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, I created what I called School Data Packets. Each packet included the test scores from all previous years and analyses of what those scores meant in terms of our academic progress as a school. After the first packet, I updated the packets every summer and distributed them to staff just prior to the beginning of the school year. I made a practice of reviewing the packets during each year’s initial staff meeting, and the content of the packets became the basis for many professional discussions throughout the year.

The article then shifted to the differences between how I looked at data as a principal and how I looked at it as a school board member. Principals (as well as teachers and other school staff) look at data at a very fine level of detail, searching for information that would help them to refine instructional strategies from the school and grade levels down to the level of the individual student. School board members, however, have neither the need nor the right to inspect data at the individual student level, but they do have both the right and the obligation to be very familiar with data at the grade, school and district levels. Whereas principals and teachers look for
insights to improve individual students’ performance, school board members and district curriculum staff look for insights into how to improve performance across the entire district.

The article concluded by giving the reader a series of data questions that would be appropriate for board members to ask that reflect their system-wide level of concern. For example, three of the suggested questions were (as stated in the article):

- In each grade, what percentages of our students are not meeting state performance targets? Are those percentages acceptable?
- Do we have schools or grade levels that consistently break the patterns? Why are they better or worse than the others?
- Does the data indicate that the longer students go to our schools, the better they perform? If not, why not? (Sechler, 2012, p 17)

Each question has at least the possibility for starting lengthy and significant conversations, and possibly for prompting board training sessions or policy action. For example, if a state’s performance target for a given year is for 60% of students to meet the state standard in math and in that year 70% of the students in a district meet that standard, the school board may be happy with the results. The first question listed above invites the board to turn the situation around to focus on the 30% of students who did not meet the standard and to ask “Is it acceptable that nearly one third of our students are not meeting the state standard?” If the board concludes that this is not acceptable, then the board still may celebrate the achievement of exceeding the state target but also decide to consider what actions they should take to support getting the rest of the district’s students to achieve at or above the level of the state standards. The question in the article directs the board’s attention away from the public relations success of having exceeded the state target and toward the educational leadership concern that the district may not be
actualizing its belief that “all students can learn.”

As an artifact, the planned publishable article on the differences between effective and ineffective school boards became a published article on how school board members could make use of data in ways that are appropriate to their education leadership role as members of their district’s governance body. This change in direction resulted in an article that fit the needs of American School’s Editor-in-Chief and came from a perspective different from that of most board members, but that provided insights and suggestions that were useful to all board members.

Training

Three artifacts are categorized as providing training for Delaware school board members:

“Standard Setting for DCAS” – Report and Presentation on the DCAS Standard Setting Panels (Appendix F), Data 101 for School Board Members (Appendix G), and Data 201 for School Board Members (Appendix H).

“Standard Setting for DCAS” – Report and Presentation on the DCAS Standard Setting Panels (Appendix F)

In August, 2010, I was appointed by the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) to serve as one of their representatives on the DCAS Standard Setting panels that were being convened by the Delaware Department of Education. These panels met at Delaware Technical and Community College, Terry Campus (Dover, Delaware) on August 9-11, 2010. “Standard Setting for DCAS” was created to report back to the DSBA membership regarding the process that was followed by the panels, the results of that process, and my observations and conclusions.
regarding the panels’ work.

I presented the report and answered questions about it at the August 26th meeting of the DSBA Executive Committee and then again at the September 8th meeting of the full DSBA Board of Directors. Shortly thereafter I was contacted by Dr. David Robinson, Interim Superintendent of the Cape Henlopen School District, who requested that I present the report to his school board at its September 23rd regular meeting. I also was asked by Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, 2010-2011 President of the Delaware Chief School Officers’ Association, to present the report at the Chiefs’ Annual Retreat on October 7th. At the Cape Henlopen presentation I simply brought copies of my report to distribute to the board, and I projected an image of the report in its Microsoft Word document form for members of the audience to see and also to make clearer any references I made to the document. Based on the types of questions and the level of interest I experienced at the Cape Henlopen board presentation, I decided to upgrade to a PowerPoint presentation and to use the Microsoft Word document as a handout providing back-up documentation. This PowerPoint, with minor edits and upgrades made through the fall and winter, was used in all subsequent presentations.

The PowerPoint presentation was created to make the Standard Setting Panels’ process more accessible to school board audiences, who generally are not trained educators or educational assessment experts, and to make use of materials that had become available since the Standard Setting Panels had met. The presentation was carefully constructed to be an adult education presentation, as opposed to the report, which was constructed as more of a technical document. The PowerPoint includes graphics from public sources and from PowerPoint presentations created by DDOE to be part of its DCAS Training Roadshow and other public information efforts related to DCAS. The presentation was carefully crafted with attention to
flow and attention spans as well as to content, and so it cycles back and forth between lighter graphics (photos and newspaper clippings) and heavier DCAS content. A core portion of the PowerPoint consists of slides created by DDOE and used with their permission. I made the decision to use the DDOE slides because they minimized any potential questions about the accuracy of my information (the information I was conveying was coming directly from the Department of Education) and because I wanted to show solidarity between the School Boards Association and the Department of Education (we shared the belief in the need to inform our constituents). On many of the DCAS content slides, however, I overlaid arrows, ovals and other shapes and animations designed to highlight and clarify the content on the slides. Many of the DDOE slides contained lots of information, and the shapes and animations were used to point out the most important bits of that information and/or the relationships between various bits of information. (Note: When I delivered the presentations I did not work from a script, but for the purposes of this artifact I have added to the PowerPoint notes regarding decisions I made in creating the slides, some of the comments I made about the slides, and comments about other factors that would have been obvious in the actual presentations but which might not be clear in the PowerPoint alone.)

Former Delaware State School Board member James L. Wilson heard about my presentation and offered to allow me to use his guest column from *The School Administrator* as a handout related to my prediction that Delaware’s move from a paper-and-pencil assessment featuring a significant number of constructed responses to a computer-based test consisting entirely of multiple choice items, coupled with the state’s upcoming move from Delaware state standards to the national Common Core State Standards would inevitably lead to a national computer-based assessment related to the national standards (see slide #32 of the PowerPoint.
presentation in Appendix F). His one request in return for his permission to use his column was that I include a disclaimer stating that his comments should not be construed as being criticism of or as showing concern about Delaware Secretary of Education Dr. Lillian Lowery’s efforts to raise Delaware’s achievement standards (see slide #33).

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 9-11, 2010</td>
<td>Delaware Department of Education</td>
<td>Dover, DE</td>
<td>Meetings of the Standards Setting Panels</td>
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<td>DSBA Executive Committee</td>
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<td>Presentation of report</td>
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<td>Caesar Rodney SD Board of Education</td>
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Data 101 for School Board Members (Appendix G)

This artifact consists of three parts:

1. A workshop guide titled “Delaware School Boards Association – Data Workshop” that was used to lead participants through the Delaware School Boards Association workshop session “Data 101 for School Board Members,”
2. An Excel spreadsheet created by the Delaware Department of Education titled “Delaware School Accountability Ratings for 2009,” available to the public on the DDOE website, and

3. A pdf document titled, “2009 Delaware School Accountability System,” also created by DDOE and made available to the public on its website.

The workshop guide was used to structure the session, and the spreadsheet and the pdf document were provided as handouts to workshop participants.

The workshop guide was structured to lead participants on a kind of scavenger hunt through the school data and accountability sections of the DDOE website. Each page of the handout contains a full or partial screen shot from the website and most pages contain questions that can be answered by examining the web page shown in the screen shot. Caesar Rodney School District’s web pages were used as the example for the workshop guide because that is my home district, but participants were instructed to use the pages for their own home districts. See Appendix F for a detailed description of how the workshop was conducted.

This workshop came about because after I retired from a principalship, had been elected to my local school board and had begun to serve as my district’s representative to the Delaware School Boards Association, I had observed that board members had very little familiarity with school accountability data for their districts. At best, that familiarity was uneven across the state, with members of some local boards reporting that their superintendents were very good about keeping them aware of their district’s data and members of other boards reporting that their superintendents barely mentioned data at all. During the summer of 2009, I discussed with DSBA Executive Director Susan Francis the idea of presenting some kind of data workshop to our membership, and together we came up with the basic idea for “Data 101 for School Board
Members.” We envisioned this as something that we would put together over the next two years. When we presented the idea at the September 2009 DSBA Board of Directors meeting, the idea was well received but the timeline was not. We first heard, “How about getting it ready in one year?” and then “How about by Christmas?” As a result, I put together the session on a much accelerated schedule, and the workshop was first offered on November 16, 2009. The session took place at Caesar Rodney High School, an easily accessible central Delaware location, and it was billed as a state-wide workshop. Most participants, however, were from Kent County or northern Sussex County. At the next DSBA Board of Directors meeting, members who had attended spoke of how valuable they had found the session to be, and the decision was made to schedule two additional sessions, one in New Castle County and one in Sussex County. Later, I was invited to do a fourth session for members of the Brandywine School District Board of Education.

### Table 3.2

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>State-wide Local School Boards</td>
<td>Caesar Rodney High School, Camden, DE</td>
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<td>February 24, 2010</td>
<td>Sussex County Local School Boards</td>
<td>Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes, DE</td>
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<td>February 22, 2010</td>
<td>New Castle County Local School Boards</td>
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<td>April 19, 2010</td>
<td>Brandywine School District Board of Education</td>
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**Data 201 for School Board Members (Appendix H)**

This artifact consists of four parts:

1. A workshop guide titled Data 201 for School Board Members: Assessment Data
Analysis Tool that may be used to lead participants through a DSBA workshop session Data 201 for School Board Members,

2. A PowerPoint presentation that closely follows the workshop guide but that also includes five slides that set the stage for the workshop and four slides that guide the debriefing discussion at the end of the session;

3. An Accountability Graphs Template (Excel spreadsheet) which participants will use to create data tables and graphs of Delaware student assessment data for any Delaware public school or district;

4. A Data Transfer Form, to be used by workshop participants as a tool for transferring data from DDOE web pages to the Accountability Graphs Template.

The structure for Data 201 is much like that of Data 101, with participants working in a computer lab or some similar room that contains at least one computer for every two participants. Participants will be encouraged to work in pairs, partly to allow for partners to check each other during the data transfer process, and partly to promote discussion of the data for the school or district that each pair of participants chooses to examine.

The target audience for this workshop will be Delaware school board members who either have completed Data 101 or who consider themselves sufficiently data savvy to work with the DDOE web site and with data tables and graphs. This session does not, however, require any facility with Excel spreadsheets beyond the ability to enter numbers accurately in spreadsheet cells. The Accountability Graphs Template is set up to require only data entry, and everything that will be derived from the data that participants find on the DDOE web pages (i.e., one additional data table and a set of graphs) will automatically build themselves in the Template in real time as the participants enter the data.
The Accountability Graphs Template is based on the work I did to create School Data Packets for the middle school in which I was the principal (see the article “When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead” in Appendix D and the related discussion in the previous section of this chapter). The Data Packets allowed me and my staff to track our school’s progress from year to year, helping us to identify trends in the data and, in turn, to identify areas of need that we would address in our work the following year. Data tables in the Data Packets tracked information related to all tested areas – including writing, science and social studies for applicable grade levels and testing years – and in later years of my principalship the Data Packets also tracked information for all applicable No Child Left Behind accountability cells. As principal, I was the only one who copied the data from the DDOE web site into the data tables for the School Data Packets. This was partly because I wanted to make sure that the process was done accurately, partly because I wanted to be the only one to take the blame if something was not done accurately, and partly because I wanted to be able to improve the process as I saw fit in each successive year’s data packet. As the packet’s creator, I also was the one most in tune with the process and therefore the one most likely to notice possible problems if a spreadsheet formula became unstable or when some inconsistency in a graph raised the possibility that a number may have been copied incorrectly. The actual Data Packets that were distributed to staff were Microsoft Word documents that included only the resultant graphs (not the data tables) and a several lines of text per graph analyzing the trends shown. These short analyses were intended only to point out the most obvious and/or salient features in the data, and then to serve as discussion starters for the school year to come. The finished Data Packets were printed in color and mailed to each instructional staff member each year, and the packets became the basis for much of the professional discussion and for many of the instructional adjustments made each
Data 201 for School Board Members takes the process and materials created for the School Data Packets and repurposes them for use by school board members. With this change of focus, the process has been simplified (e.g., templates are provided only for reading and for math; no Excel skills more complicated than simple data entry are required), and the discussions have become part of the workshop session rather than something provided by a principal. The Analysis Tool and the Template will be provided at no charge to workshop participants, and participants will be encouraged to use the tools with additional schools in their districts and then to use what they find as the basis for discussions across schools and grade levels. At the district level, such discussions could take place informally or formally, and could be facilitated by board members, by district staff, or by representatives of the Delaware School Boards Association.

I made a conscious decision to have participants use a meticulous process of reading each number individually and then copying it into the Excel template for two reasons. First, this forces participants to attend carefully to the data. As they go through the physical copy-and-paste process, they will begin to recognize patterns in the data and also to recognize when those patterns are broken, and both consistent patterns and broken patterns are of interest to anyone analyzing data. Second, as participants write the numbers into the spreadsheet they will see the spreadsheet build several graphs from those numbers. Watching the graphs build gradually with each new bit of data they enter will help participants understand the relationship between the number table and the graphs. As they gain experience through this exercise (and with any additional work they do on their own when they take their copies of the spreadsheet home with them after the workshop), they should be able to transfer that understanding to other data representations that are brought to their school boards.
I should note that I am well aware that comparing DSTP and DCAS scores is comparing apples and oranges in the view of any statistician. The central concept of Data 201 holds, though, because what is being compared in the workshop is the percentage of students meeting the state standard under each of the two systems. Yes, the standards were different (see the discussion of my report and presentation on the work of the DCAS standard setting panels, above), but the important fact here is that ever since the first state accountability testing there have been academic performance standards and there have been annual targets for the percentage of school or district students that should be performing at or above grade level as defined by those standards. Whatever the standards or targets may be, it is the job of the school and district to teach students to perform at grade level, and therefore it is valid to check to see how well the schools have done at this task. In fact, DDOE makes this information available on the public pages of its web site, and it reports DSTP and DCAS numbers in nearly identical formats. None of the participants in Data 201 will be high-level statisticians (or at least that will not be their primary role as they participate in the workshop), and the insights that participants gain even from their apples and oranges data gathering will be useful as they make their educational leadership decisions back in their local district board meetings.

**Tools**

Two artifacts are categorized as providing tools for Delaware school board members: Discussion Protocol (Appendix I) and Effective Communication with Legislators (Appendix J).

**Discussion Protocol (Appendix I)**

Most school board members are well meaning, and they did not run for election simply to
maintain the status quo. Even when board candidates are happy with conditions in their school system, they almost always are thoughtful about the system and believe that they can make a difference. When media question candidates about why they ran for the board, candidates never reply, “So I can continue doing exactly what the previous board members have been doing all along.”

Even so, all too often school boards simply “do” without taking the time to examine what they do. The path of least resistance is for experienced board members to do what they always have done and for new board members to do what their more experienced colleagues are doing.

When board members are unreflective about their work, however, they do not do justice to the community that has elected them. They leave themselves open to excessive direction, not to say outright manipulation, by district superintendents or special interest groups. Even under the best of circumstances, when superintendents “only use their powers for good,” boards that unquestioningly follow the superintendent’s direction are not living up to their civic mandate to supervise the superintendent.

The fact that a school board has “always” done something is no indication that what it always has done is appropriate or effective. School boards can get caught up in managing minutiae, in participating in ceremonial events that get the board lots of positive press but do not move the district forward in any meaningful way, or in orchestrating projects that may be popular with the community but that are at best peripheral to the school board’s central mission of ensuring a quality education for its students. Boards that focus on these peripheral or non-instructional activities may be well regarded by the community and may have very positive relationships with their chief school officers, but they may at the same time be presiding over school systems that show little or no improvement in student academic performance and/or that
have persistent patterns of differing levels of academic achievement for students from varying ethnic backgrounds and/or economic circumstances.

Discussion protocols are widely accepted tools for structuring the examination of such things as plans, procedures and work samples, and in education they frequently are used by teachers who get together to look at student work or to serve as critical friends examining each other’s work. Protocols provide ways to look at something critically, in the most positive and disinterested sense of the term. Protocols generally set and adhere strictly to very specific ground rules that keep participants’ focus on the work and off of the individual or group that created or is presenting that work. More specifically, protocols establish strict steps to be followed, assign times to each step, and often use an experienced neutral facilitator to guide participants through the process. The exact protocol to be used is agreed on in advance, and if problems, concerns or issues arise that fall outside of the protocol, the most common response is to complete the protocol as agreed upon and then, after the session has ended, to investigate future courses of action. Possible actions may include setting up a future session to examine the new problem/concern/issue using the same protocol, using a somewhat modified version of the protocol, or using a completely different protocol. Groups also may decide that while the issue seemed important when it came up in the session, it does not seem so compelling now that the session has ended and therefore should be dropped or delegated. Groups that are experienced at self-reflection or critical friend work may have a considerable repertoire of protocols from which they choose based on their particular tasks and goals of the moment.

This artifact provides a protocol and related materials for guiding school boards through a process of categorizing, analyzing, evaluating and planning their work. The purposes of having this discussion are twofold: 1) to prompt school boards to engage in thoughtful reflection on the
work they do, and 2) to encourage school boards to compare the work they do to the work that
the research has identified as being characteristic of effective school boards.

The artifact consists of:

1. The protocol itself (which includes both instructions and explanatory notes);
2. A Session Record Chart which is keyed to the protocol and which can give boards
   a structured way to record important information and decisions made during their
   session;
3. A handout titled “Focus Areas of Effective School Boards,” listing areas which
   the research shows are characteristic of effective school boards; and
4. A short list of resources and citations for boards or board members that want
   background information or that would like to delve more deeply into the effective
   boards research.

The protocol is divided into five sections:

1. Purpose – A statement of the purpose of the protocol
2. Time Options – Describes three possible lengths of a protocol session:
   - 60-90 minutes – appropriate for use in a normal school board meeting
   - Three hours – appropriate for a half-day workshop session
   - Six hours – appropriate for a full-day workshop session
3. Participant Preparation – Describes how to prepare a school board for using the
   protocol and what materials should be prepared in advance of the session
4. Work Session – Guidelines for conducting the session
5. Debriefing on the Process – Lists reasons and describes options for conducting the
   debriefing
The details and rationales for the steps to be followed in the workshop session are thoroughly described in the protocol document in Appendix H. Each step is designed to embody the concept of “loose-tight” – tightly specifying the goal of the step and structuring the work to keep participants on task, while loosely structuring the conversation that takes place in that step. To put it another way, both for the workshop as a whole and for each step in it, the structure keeps participants focused on the results while giving participants the freedom to consider whatever they deem necessary in order to achieve those results.

That having been said, a special note is in order regarding the warm/cool feedback process used in the analysis of the board’s work (Step 2 in the Work Session). This part of the protocol is based loosely on the process used in the Tuning Protocol developed by the National School Reform Faculty (National School Reform Faculty, n.d.). I saw a variation of this protocol used in a Vision 2015 work session sometime in the first three years of that project. I had seen and experienced activities in which participants were asked to provide warm and cool feedback, but those activities almost always seemed superficial. Even when real, significant and well known differences existed between the parties involved, or when a product or presentation had quite noticeable flaws, participants would praise the obvious strengths and gloss over all but the most glaring flaws. Once everyone had stated the obvious, there would be an uncomfortable silence and then the group would agree to move on.

In the Vision 2015 session, however, the facilitators were adamant that participants must take all of the time allotted for the feedback. What happened was fascinating. The group started in the same manner as I had seen before, but when the obvious had been stated and the uncomfortable silence ensued the facilitators did not allow the group to move on. Instead, the facilitators held fast to their original, well planned time frame. After what seemed like ages but
was probably less than 60 seconds, one of the participants “broke” and offered a bit of feedback that got beyond the superficial. Once that barrier had been broken, other participants offered additional feedback that, in retrospect, turned out to be much more insightful and valuable than the feedback offered in the original round.

A simple but profound truth arose from this. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, a group abhors silence, and rather than endure an extended silence, a group will break its social block and address the most significant, sometimes painful issues that they face. At the end of the Vision 2015 session it was generally agreed that the best, most honest and most useful feedback came after the uncomfortable pause.

The lesson for facilitators was that they must keep their session participants on task even when that task becomes uncomfortable. In fact, the uncomfortable silences seem to indicate that “We’ve done all the easy stuff, and to move on we must dig deeper in our thinking about the issue, and that may require us to risk confrontation with our fellow participants.” Facilitators, then, must be very deliberate about setting up the structure of the feedback conversation and then stick to that structure, while also providing a secure environment in which participants may offer meaningful and quite possibly disconcerting feedback.

The uncomfortable silence is not just about getting beyond being politely superficial, however. The silence also indicates the end of the first round of the participants’ consideration of the issue at hand. In addition to being relatively obvious or superficial, the first round of feedback generally is individual feedback, informed only by each individual’s perceptions of the issue. As that first round of feedback is being given, the participants are not only giving their feedback, they also are listening to the feedback being offered by their fellow participants. When the first round of feedback ends, all that recipients have heard is each individual’s views.
As participants persevere through the silence at the end of the first round, they have the time to process the feedback offered by their colleagues and to consider how their colleagues’ views relate to their own. The first round of feedback, then, informs not only the recipients but also the providers of the feedback. The result is that the second (or even a third) round of feedback has the potential to benefit from the synergy of all participants’ ideas combining to provide insights that are deeper, more detailed and more nuanced than anything provided in the first round of dutiful and largely risk-free feedback.

Another lesson learned from this Vision 2015 session was that the feedback activity works best if participants are told in advance that they will be held to the set time structure, that they should expect to experience a predictable pattern (initial rush of easy, perhaps superficial, feedback → uncomfortable silence → a new round of deeper, more meaningful feedback), and that they should expect the facilitator to be encouraging and supportive, but also unrelenting in keeping to the set times. This forewarning helps to make the silence a bit less awkward because it is expected, but it also sets the stage for getting the most out of the activity. Because participants know that they will have to fill all of the allotted time (there is no reward for being quick and glib – they will not be able to move on if they “finish early”), participants are more likely to listen closely and thoughtfully to the feedback given by their colleagues. This can make the silence more productive because the participants will have taken note of all of the feedback given so far, and in some cases it can make the silences shorter because participants are processing their colleagues’ feedback even as it is being given.

In short, adhering to the time schedule, especially if the facilitator prepares the participants in advance, changes the feedback activity from a time of giving individual opinions to a work session devoted to providing recipients with the most insightful and useful feedback.
Effective Communication with Legislators (Appendix J)

This artifact is a short guide on how to communicate with legislators, specifically with Delaware’s state and federal legislators, and it is the fourth booklet in the DSBA series. Consideration was given to addressing policy makers in county and city/town governments, but the techniques are the same for all levels and addressing only the state and federal levels kept the guide cleaner and more focused.

While there were few resources on this topic, there was remarkable consistency between what those resources had to say. There is broad agreement that face-to-face meetings and individually written letters or emails will get the most attention from legislators, while petitions and form letters or emails will get very little attention. The rule of thumb is that the more time and effort a constituent puts into a communication, the more attention it will get. Thus an email that conveys a constituent’s personal story and tells how the constituent or someone close to the constituent will be directly affected by a bill is likely to be brought to the personal attention of the legislator, while a survey response or form letter is likely to result in little more than one more mark on a tally sheet.

In the course of researching and writing the text of the booklet, the words “communication with legislators” became “advocacy” in most cases. As school board members, individuals are not going to communicate with legislators just to socialize or to keep in touch. As a general practice, when school board members contact a legislator it is for the sole purpose of stating their position on an issue and trying to persuade the legislator to support that position. In most cases “support” for a position translates to voting for or against a bill, although support also may take the form of introducing a bill, shepherding a bill through committees, and/or
working to get fellow legislators to vote for or against a bill. Conversely, support for a school board member’s position may consist of working to prevent a bill from being introduced, blocking attempts to move a bill through committees, and/or convincing fellow legislators to vote against a bill.

The booklet begins by emphasizing that direct contact is the most effective – perhaps the only effective – form of contact one should make when advocating a position with legislators. It then gives guidelines for deciding exactly whom to contact and how to make contact. The booklet then walks board members through six forms of direct contact with legislators, including face-to-face meetings, emails and hand-written letters, providing guidelines for how to make the most of each. Where appropriate, the information given is specific to Delawareans. For example, meeting with Delaware’s federal legislators or their staff at their in-state offices is easier to arrange and is generally more effective than meeting with them in their Washington, D.C. offices because Delaware legislators are frequently in the state and because the local offices are less subject to the national spotlight that is unavoidable in the nation’s capital. Delaware media outlets such as local newspapers and radio stations are listed in the booklet to help board members stay current with their legislators’ positions on current issues. Above all, board members are advised to be clear and concise about three things: who they are (including their connection to their issue), what their position is, and what they want the legislator to do.

The guide was read for accuracy by Susan Francis, DSBA Executive Director, and by Richard J. Anderson, who served as Executive Director of the Minnesota School Boards Association from January 1989 through February 2002 and as an Associate Executive Director of the National School Boards Association from March 2002 through June 2008.
Chapter 4

REFLECTION ON IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Reflections: Results Expected from the Information Artifacts

The information artifacts provide a foundation to support the work of Delaware school board members. School Boards in Law and Regulation provides historical and legal perspectives at both the national and the state levels. From this booklet school board members will get a sense of why school boards exist and of the work they have done leading up to the present day. New school board members will discover that issues that are in the forefront today, issues such as school funding and district consolidation, have histories that go back decades or, in some cases, even centuries. New and experienced board members alike will benefit from having an annotated summary of the portion of the Delaware Code that establishes the existence of school boards as the governing agencies of school districts, providing readers with a key to the Code should they wish to dig deeper into Delaware school board law. Taken together, the history and the current law and regulations will provide school boards and school board members with discussion points or with the basis for workshop sessions on how they might use their policy and approval powers to provide their districts with effective educational leadership.

Key Points in Research builds on the historical and legal foundation in School Boards in Law and Regulation by informing board members on what researchers have discovered about how school boards function. Delaware school board members will find that across the nation, some school boards simply continue the policies and practices of the past or provide an official
seal of approval for whatever their superintendent wants to do. School boards are strongly affected by the perceptions of their communities, with community satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the schools being directly reflected in the number of candidates for school board seats and the intensity of the campaigns. Readers also will find that there are specific characteristics that are associated with school boards in districts with high student achievement and that the opposites of or the lack of those characteristics are associated with school boards in districts with low student achievement. Key Points in Research not only informs Delaware school boards, it invites them to engage in discussions about what sort of boards they want to be and to make what changes they deem necessary to become more effective education leaders.

The Survey of Delaware School Board Members presents the results of a survey administered to Delaware school board members in October of 2013. Some of this information simply describes Delaware board members – they tend to be individuals in their forties or fifties who are long-term residents of both Delaware and their school districts and who are relatively equally likely to be Democrats or Republicans – while other information reveals their views on their potential as educational leaders – as a group, they keep themselves informed about district issues and assert themselves in district meetings but they are not likely to try to influence positions or to initiate action at the community or state levels.

It is clear from School Boards in Law and Regulation that school boards are political bodies (whether they want to be or not) and that they are greatly affected by the actions of legislators at the state and federal levels. Key Points in Research shows that many school boards are content to be passive and to accept whatever is imposed upon them by the legislature or suggested to them by their superintendents. However, Key Points in Research also shows that boards in districts with high student achievement are active rather than passive, and that they are
assertive about determining what they stand for and about taking their message to influential individuals (including legislators) outside of their districts. The results of the survey of Delaware school board members may prompt them to increase the scale and scope of their actions by becoming more assertive about informing, influencing or initiating action outside of their districts. The survey results also may prompt future study by DSBA or the creation of future booklets or training workshops to address needs identified by local board members.

I have no direct evidence of results from my journal article. My article was a companion piece to a longer article by Del Stover, titled “Making Data Work for You” (Stover, 2012). While Stover’s article provided a broader picture of how school boards might use data, my article provided examples of how I used data and a perspective of a person who had used data both as a principal and as a board member. I did not receive any comments or questions from American School readers, but I did get very positive comments when Susan Francis shared the article with the DSBA Board of Directors. I also got positive feedback and a letter of thanks from Glenn Cook, American School’s Editor-in-Chief, who said that he was “confident our readers will find it interesting and useful” (G. Cook, personal communication, June 19, 2012).

At the very least, these information artifacts will give new school board members a solid foundation on which to build as they learn their roles and responsibilities. Experienced board members, the DSBA Board of Directors and the Executive Director will find a wealth of possibilities for fruitful discussions and for topics for additional publications and for advanced school board training.

**Reflections: Results Expected from the Training Artifacts**

This second set of artifacts consists of the materials created and collected for three training
sessions for school board members.

The report and presentation on the DCAS standard setting panels were very well received by a variety of audiences. I came away from the three days of work on the panels with a strong feeling that school board members had no understanding of the complexity of or the principles behind the process used to set the performance standards for the new student accountability test, and that feeling was confirmed by audience responses to the report and presentation. I also came away feeling strongly that I needed to do what I could to make sure that Delaware school board members, whom I was representing on the panel, understood both the process and its implications for instruction. Without such an understanding, school board members would not have the background they would need to make informed decisions on curriculum and instruction issues in their districts.

I first presented my report to the DSBA Board of Directors at their annual organizational meeting on August 26, 2010, and I received their support to make the presentation to the full Board of Directors at their September meeting. That presentation led to five formal presentations, one informal presentation, and a short discussion of the report and presentation at an annual meeting between the Delaware State Board of Education and the Delaware School Boards Association. At each presentation, board members and district superintendents confirmed that they had not been aware of the process that had been used to set the performance standards, nor had they been aware of the implications of the process for future instruction and state testing. The facts that the panels focused solely on computer-based test items and that there were foreshadowings that computer-based state testing could lead relatively quickly and easily to computer-based national testing were eye opening for many local board members.

Board members also were largely unaware of two additional factors related to computer-
based testing. First, questions used in computer-based tests were not going to be just like questions used in paper-and-pencil tests except for being displayed on a computer screen. For at least some questions, students would not simply select a response to a multiple choice question, but rather they would have to use the computer’s capabilities to solve problems. For example, students might be asked not just to interpret a graph, but to use the computer’s graphic environment to manipulate data in the most literal sense – to use a mouse to “grab” data points and move them from one place to another on a coordinate plane, and then to explain how moving the points affected the graphs and the related equations. For board members who would be called upon to lead their districts by adopting relevant curriculum and by approving expenditures for appropriate instructional materials, it became apparent that these changes in testing carried implications not just for instructional materials but also for instructional strategies. Students would have to have computer skills and higher level reasoning skills in addition to content knowledge, and teachers would have to know how to teach students new skills like how to manipulate data on computer screens and how to draw conclusions from the results of that manipulation. My presentation helped board members to understand what they would be facing in the short term, with the coming of DCAS, and also again in the long term, as the state completed the changeover from Delaware state standards to the national Common Core State Standards and to Smarter Balanced testing.

Another indication of the degree to which my report was seen to be relevant is the fact that I was invited to give the presentation at the annual Delaware Chief School Officers’ retreat in October, 2010. After the presentation, several superintendents commented that they already had heard some of what I presented, but that they had never understood it as clearly as they did as a result of my presentation. Three superintendents invited me to present to their boards, and
several other superintendents later told me that they had used my materials and/or given their own version of my report to their boards. (I provided my PowerPoint and other materials gratis to anyone who requested them.)

I developed Data 101 for School Board Members after I had served on my local school board for a little over a year. During that time I had served as my board’s representative on the Delaware School Boards Association Board of Directors and attended a year’s worth of state education events, which gave me the opportunity to talk with local board members from all over the state. Through these experiences I came to realize that school board members were dedicated and engaged, but they did not understand educational data and they often did not even know what sort of data was available to them.

As a result, during the summer of 2009 I discussed with Susan Francis, DSBA Executive Director, the possibility of creating a training workshop on data for school board members. She fully supported the idea, and so we planned what we expected to be a two-year process of developing the workshop. Early in the school year we presented the idea to the DSBA Board of Directors, and the plan was very enthusiastically received, but the time for preparation got compressed to two months and the workshop was delivered in an evening session on November 16th at Caesar Rodney High School in Kent County. The workshop was well received, and as a result of the positive feedback given by those who attended we received invitations to offer additional sessions. Ultimately the session was offered once in Sussex County and twice in New Castle County.

Although no formal evaluation of the sessions was conducted, participants consistently praised the workshop. Prior to the training, most participants had spent little or no time reviewing the Delaware Student Testing Program Online Reports (DSTP-OR) pages for their
districts and had little understanding of how to make sense of the data to be found there. Participants appreciated the insights they gained during the workshop, and they also appreciated the fact that the workshop was set up not just to give them information during the session but to provide them with guidelines for continuing their examination of the data on their own after the session had ended.

With the success of Data 101, we planned to develop a follow-up workshop. That session became Data 201 for School Board Members. While using the same format as was used in Data 101, the content of Data 201 is different in three significant ways. First, it includes scores from the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), which replaced the DSTP in 2011. Second, it assumes that participants have at least some minimal understanding of Delaware state assessment data, although it does not assume that participants have any skill in Excel. Third, where Data 101 has participants discovering data, Data 201 has participants starting to manipulate data.

**Reflections: Results Expected from the Tools**

The Discussion Protocol provides school board members with a tool for self-reflection. Where training such as the data workshops help school board members to think about how their districts are doing with their central mission of educating students, the Discussion Protocol guides members of school boards in thinking together about how they are functioning as a governing body with responsibility for providing big-picture leadership to their districts.

Individual school board members have always had access to some training, such as the state-required financial training and due process training, and the DSBA and other individuals and agencies have offered training that was delivered at district board meetings or in group
venues where all members of a board could attend if they chose to do so. My three training artifacts fall into this category.

Most school boards, however, have received no training on how to work together as a board. Prior to the Discussion Protocol, the best option for Delaware school boards was to contact Susan Francis at DSBA to arrange for ad hoc training. During the 2012-2013 school year, other training became available as Dr. Steven Godowsky of the Delaware Academy for School Leadership developed board effectiveness training titled “Achieving a Peak Performance Governing Team” which he delivered to five different school boards. (I was privileged to be able to co-facilitate with Dr. Godowsky in three of those districts.)

Unlike other training, however, the Discussion Protocol does not consist of “how to” information or instructions for a board to follow. Instead, it provides a process which boards may use for self-evaluation and self-improvement. Perhaps most importantly, it makes school board members reflect on their role as members of a governing body and on their responsibilities to do their parts to make that body provide effective leadership for their districts.

Boards that use the Discussion Protocol may find the process to be uncomfortable at first, as one of its goals it to bring out individual board members’ opinions and concerns about how the board is functioning. The protocol also is designed to get board members thinking about themselves as a cohesive group rather than as a collection of individuals. While recognizing that diversity of opinion is good and that at least some degree of disagreement is a natural part of any group’s dynamics, the protocol gives boards techniques for examining their effectiveness in working together to set and achieve goals for the whole district which result, ultimately, in better instruction and in higher academic performance by the district’s students. To do this, board members must be able, over time, to state their views, to acknowledge and understand the views
of other board members, and to work with those other board members to determine positions and
courses of action that all board members can support.

On the whole, school boards are far more accustomed to evaluating the work of others than
to evaluating their own work. Indeed, there is no formal process for evaluating the work of
school boards, and what evaluation school boards do get generally comes in private
conversations, public comment times in board meetings, in media commentaries, and in the
results of school board elections. If school boards can take on for themselves the task of
evaluating their work and become self-reflective – if in addition to their awareness of conditions
in their district they can reflect on how they function as a board – the result should be much less
frustration, political posturing and wasted time, and much more effective and efficient
educational leadership from the top of the district hierarchy.

Effective Communication with Legislators gives school board members a toolbox for
taking action beyond their local boards. Whether we like it or not, politics is an inextricable part
of education, and education leadership consists not just of stating your views but also of making
sure that your views are heard and acted upon at all relevant levels of government. Effective
Communication with Legislators will make local board members more aware of the larger
political process, of the ways in which legislators may be informed and influenced, and of how
the political system may be used for the benefit of the students and staff in the state and in their
districts. If local board members follow the step-by-step guidelines in this booklet, they will
become more effective educational leaders in their own right and they will help their legislators
to be more effective educational leaders at the state and federal levels.
Recommendations

Delaware is a small state, and compared to other states it has a very small total number of school board members. In Delaware it is no exaggeration to say that there are many hotel meeting rooms and university lecture halls that could accommodate a meeting attended by every board member in the state. In addition to standard email contacts, hard copy mailings and even face-to-face contacts are entirely possible as means to distribute materials and to facilitate both formal training and informal conversations. These factors should provide an ideal situation for any effort to bring school board members together to achieve two purposes that are consistent with the definition of school board leadership which I discussed in Chapter 2: 1) to improve their understanding of school board leadership as making policy, setting expectations and monitoring progress, and 2) to improve their board leadership skills. To that end, I make three recommendations.

1. The Delaware School Boards Association should publish more booklets such as those that I have written as artifacts for this ELP. DSBA should address a broad range of topics and engage the skills of a diverse group of authors, including but not limited to Delaware citizens and school board members. Topics should range from the general (e.g., communicating with constituents) to topics specific to Delaware (e.g., a guide to how policies and regulations are made and implemented in the Delaware legislature and Department of Education). The goal should be to create a body of work that will make up a basic packet of materials for new board members and serve as a ready reference library for experienced board members. The skills and knowledge that board members need to lead by making policy, setting expectations and monitoring progress should be a consistent thread through all of these publications.

2. Current efforts to train Delaware school board members should be expanded to include a
broader range of topics and to examine those topics in more depth and detail. In addition to developing more print materials such as the booklets recommended above, workshop sessions and seminars should be crafted into a multi-faceted but coherent training program. As in any professional field, training should include basic levels for new board members and advanced levels for experienced board members. As noted above and exemplified in the artifacts for this ELP, training should address not just information but also processes (such as the use of protocols) that are vital to school board work, and the skills and knowledge that board members need to lead by making policy, setting expectations and monitoring progress should be a consistent thread through all. Regardless of who develops them, all sessions and materials should be of the highest quality and should exemplify the highest standards of adult education practice. As appropriate, this training should be created and presented by partnerships including the Delaware School Boards Association, the Delaware Department of Education and Delaware’s higher education institutions. As part of this effort, Delaware should reach out to other states, particularly states with greater resources, which may have models or modules which Delaware could adopt or adapt.

3. The Delaware School Boards Association should join with the Delaware Department of Education, the University of Delaware and possibly other appropriate organizations to conduct further research on school boards in Delaware. At minimum, the survey conducted for this ELP should become an annual effort, with each year’s data used to write a new booklet that updates and possibly expands the insights gained from previous years’ surveys. If done diligently and consistently, such a body of data could soon become a national model for understanding who serves on school boards, why they serve, and how boards and board members function.
Chapter 5

REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP GROWTH

For decades, going back to my early years as a classroom teacher and long before I had any thoughts of becoming a principal, much less a school board member, I have read books on leadership. From those books I gained mostly attitudes such as “leading from behind” and leadership as service, and I applied those attitudes mostly in peer leadership positions such as chair of Middletown High School’s vocational department and as lead teacher in the school’s RE:Learning work in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

When I became an assistant principal, I experienced going from being “one of us” to being “one of them,” and learned that leading one’s fellow teachers was quite different from leading one’s staff members. As I moved into the principalship, I gained deeper insights into how a school operates and I had access to confidential information to which I did not have access as a teacher. I learned to deal with the politics of education and I learned that while administration had its official powers, it also had its limitations. I faced barriers that I had not faced as a teacher, and while I was able to influence the education of far more students, I had to do so at a greater distance from them.

Then after 30 years in education I retired, and rather than settle into a comfortable lifestyle of gardening, grandchildren and occasional consulting work, I became a school board member. I quickly learned that this new position came with its own set of powers and limitations. While my career as a teacher and administrator gave me an excellent background for my school board work, I found myself having to grow into yet another level of leadership.
Looking back over the years in which I served on a school board and worked on my doctoral artifacts, including my time as a representative to and later an officer of the Delaware School Boards Association, I can see that I grew professionally from two very different perspectives. First, I grew as a school board member who understands the education profession, and I grew as an educator who understands school boards. Second, as viewed through a somewhat different lens, I grew significantly as a partner, as a scholar and as a problem solver.

Understanding School Boards and the Education Profession

Growth often comes in unexpected ways, and while I knew that being a school board member would bring me new experiences, I did not anticipate how much my two roles of school board member and educator would reinforce and extend one another. Being a career educator informed my school board work, to be sure, but my school board work also informed my ongoing work in schools as a staff developer and administrator coach.

Growth as a School Board Member Who Understands the Education Profession

In some ways I came to the school board with the assumption that being a school board member would be a lot like being an administrator, only more so. I understood the school system that the board was to govern, and I knew how to teach and how to run a school. What I came to realize, however, was that I did not understand the limitations that came with being on the board, that along with the new responsibilities and powers came new barriers and an even greater distance from teachers and students than I had experienced when I transitioned from being a teacher to being an administrator.

From my conversations with school board members from districts across the state, I
found that they had only a limited understanding of many aspects of how schools ran. I noticed particularly that many of them had only a very basic understanding of school data and of how teachers and administrators used that data. Many of the things that my fellow principals and I spent a lot of our time on were barely blips on the radar of many school board members.

In one of my first efforts to rectify this situation, I wanted to show my board colleagues some of the data that was generated by the DSTP and to explain what sorts of things teachers and principals do with that data. I found, however, that I no longer had the same kind of access to DSTP data that I had had as a principal. When I requested that same access again – solely for my high-minded training purposes – I was politely but firmly informed by an Assistant State Secretary of Education that I no longer had the need for or the right to that level of access.

As a principal my attitude was, “If it has to do with my school, I have access to everything.” I had assumed – naively, as it turned out – that being a board member would bring with it similar access, but to all schools district-wide. School boards were policy making bodies, however, and therefore I was told that I had no need for access to any data that could be linked back to any individual student.

While this made sense to me intellectually, my professional pride was hurt. Board members’ low levels of engagement with data became more understandable, however, and I felt compelled to find different ways to make sense of the data myself and to find ways for my fellow board members to do the same. Among the results of this struggle were Data 101 for School Board Members, and then later its sequel, Data 201 for Board Members, as well as the American School article.

Other experiences from my career gave rise to other artifacts. My work in helping teachers and staff members through school change efforts like RE:Learning and Vision 2015
gave me the insights into self-reflection and group processes that led to the Discussion Protocol. My experiences as a principal and in my various positions with the Delaware School Boards Association helped me to understand the multiple layers of education politics, which led to the booklet Effective Communications with Legislators. My concerns about both politics and data led to my Report from the DCAS Standards Setting Panels.

The booklets School Boards in Law and Regulation and Key Points from Research grew out of my desire to understand the basic foundations and functions of school boards. The research I did for School Boards in Law and Regulation helped me to understand why school boards exist, their deep roots in our nation’s history, and the decades-long context of many education issues that are still being discussed by Delaware school boards today. In a sense, it helped me to understand what school boards are supposed to do. Key Points from Research helped me to understand what school boards actually do, and to understand the differences between effective and ineffective boards.

The survey of Delaware school board members brought all of this back home. Constructing the survey forced me to ask how I might find out who served on Delaware school boards and what they saw as their proper roles as school board members. The survey also forced me to bring together what I believed and what I had learned about school boards and education leadership. Having come from positions of leadership myself and seeing school boards as yet another level of leadership, I learned that many other board members in the state were less comfortable in identifying themselves as leaders and that some did not identify themselves as leaders at all.

Growth as an Educator Who Understands School Boards
As I was learning about how my career in education could inform my work on the school board and with DSBA, I discovered that my school board work was informing my work in schools. Although I had retired from the public school system, I had started working for the Delaware Academy for School Leadership, a center in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Delaware. My particular work assignments originally focused first on conducting staff development sessions and on serving as a “thought partner” for schools involved in the state’s Vision 2015 project, but gradually came to focus more on coaching principals and staffs in schools that were involved in the School Administration Manager (SAM) project, which was part of the state’s Race to the Top grant work.

As I learned more about serving on a school board I found that I frequently was able to help the faculties and administrators with whom I was working to understand how issues or situations might be seen by members of their school boards. Sometimes I was able to explain the logic behind a school board’s decision, which improved understanding even if the principal still did not like that decision. More and more frequently I was able to advise principals on how to avoid conflicts with their boards (often simply by helping them to avoid creating problems that would come to the attention of the board) or on how to craft a proposal or a presentation so that it would be most likely to be appreciated or approved by their board. In meetings of state-wide committees such as the Education Consortium, I found that while I officially was representing the Delaware School Boards Association, I actually was bringing to the table an understanding of the positions of the School Boards Association, the Delaware State Education Association and the Delaware Association of School Administrators. I hope that these multiple levels of understanding made me a more effective representative not just of DSBA, but also of all educators. I found myself increasingly able to see behind the surface level of questions and to
understand the motivations and the implicit understandings behind those questions. I believe that this helped me to be more effective in all my education roles.

**Growth as a Partner, Scholar and Problem Solver**

While my new work as a board member and my continuing work as an educator were helping me to grow in both roles, my work on my Education Leadership Portfolio artifacts was helping me to grow in other roles as well. As I gathered the information, developed the training and created the tools, I was growing as a partner, as a scholar and as a problem solver.

**Growth as a Partner**

One cannot do this work alone. Effective school board work can only be done through partnerships, and that turned out to be true of my artifact work as well.

The work behind my artifacts involved partnerships of many types and at many levels. As I learned to fulfill my individual responsibilities as a member of my local school board, I also had to learn how to work as part of the five-member team that is the board. I learned that I needed to express my personal views on the issues that came before the board, but that in the end there needed to be consensus if the board – and therefore the district – was to move forward.

A vivid memory from my first year on the board is the time when I could not agree with the position held by the other four board members. One of the most experienced and most respected of the board members looked at me and said, in essence, that if I did not agree with the rest of the board then by all means I should vote “No” when the motion was brought to a vote. This permission to disagree, this understanding that even as we sought consensus it was
understood and accepted that not all votes would be unanimous, left me both stronger as an advocate of my own views and more open to understanding the views of others. This was the culture of our board, and for me it illustrated how partnership was at the core of board service, both in theory and in practice.

Partnerships were involved in board-related work of all types. As my local board’s representative on the district’s Race to the Top committee, I was part of a partnership between the district and the Delaware Department of Education. As the DSBA representative to the DCAS standard setting panels, to the Education Consortium and to various state task forces, I learned to work in partnership with the state bureaucracy to implement a project with national implications, with other education groups to influence the state legislature, and with representatives of a wide range of the state’s education constituencies to provide better conditions and services for students.

My artifacts reflect this growth. My report on the work of the DCAS standard setting panels reflects work in partnership first with the Department of Education and with other members of the panels, and then with several district superintendents and school boards. I worked with staff at the Department of Education to select and to get permission to use Department PowerPoint slides in my standards setting report. Later as I worked on creating Data 201, I benefitted from information and guidance provided by other DDOE staff members who helped me to make sure that my underlying concepts were correct and that my Excel formulas were manipulating the data correctly. Even my booklet Effective Communication with Legislators arose at least partly out of my growing understanding that effective school board work involved working not in opposition to, but in partnership with our elected legislators.
Growth as a Scholar

I once read a quote that went something like this: “It ain’t what folks don’t know that’s the problem, it’s what they know that just ain’t so.” Experiencing this with respect to school board work led me to grow as a scholar, as I looked at what we board members “knew” and then as I sought to learn what was and was not “so.”

Three of the DSBA booklets – School Boards in Law and Regulation, Key Points in Research and the report of the results of the survey of Delaware school board members – prompted most of my growth as a scholar. I started researching School Boards in Law and Regulation with the assumption that school boards must have some history but not having any idea what it might be. I had absolutely no idea that their history would go back literally to the first schools in colonial North America. I also had no inkling that I would have to cobble together the national history from bits and pieces taken from numerous volumes, or that I would (with thanks to Sue Francis) find much of the history of Delaware school boards embedded in a single, but now very rare, volume published in the late 1960s by the former Delaware Department of Public Instruction. Along the way I learned the pivotal roles played by individuals such as P.S. DuPont and Judge Willard Hall, whose names were familiar but whose works were unknown to me. The survey of Delaware school board members was my foray into original research. While it certainly had its frustrations – learning to use Qualtrics, trying to write survey items that would produce useful information and that were not fraught with multiple possible interpretations – it was exciting to sift through the survey responses and to see what I could learn from the data. Then, of course, came the challenge of trying to report what I had learned in a form that would be accessible to all members of my audience of Delaware school board members.
My article in *American School* also was part of my growth as a scholar, in that it was my first work to be published in a national journal. No one gets through a 30-year career as a teacher and administrator without doing lots of writing, and I had been “published” in countless school newsletters and similar very local publications. The *American School* article gave me my first experiences in working with a professional editor, in writing both to communicate my message and to meet the larger journalistic goals of set of articles to which I was contributing, and in meeting very strict deadlines.

**Growth as a Problem Solver**

Creating my artifacts was nothing if not an exercise in problem solving. From the relatively large scale problem that I outlined in my Problem Statement in my original proposal and then again in this paper, to the relatively minute problems that I faced when I was trying to get my Data 201 spreadsheet to create graphs that matched my mental picture, I was solving problems from the moment I first began working on my Education Leadership Portfolio. Looking back now, I see that each problem confronted and solved represented at least a little bit of personal growth for me.

On the micro level, I really did run into problems creating the Data Template for Data 201. I had assumed that this would be an easy task, but I soon found that creating my original data packets in which only one person would be entering the data was one thing while creating a much more general template that would be used by many individuals with unpredictable tech skills was something else altogether. Setting up the data tables and dealing with the minor but still mildly annoying differences in the ways that DDOE presents DSTP and DCAS data was not particularly difficult, but finding ways to bring together data that related to four different sets of
targets – those matched to the DSTP, to DCAS, to the growth model and to the Common Core State Standards – proved to be quite a challenge. I set up and discarded what seemed like dozens of combinations of chart types, color schemes and data combinations before finally settling on a set of charts that I believe are at least adequate for the task.

I resolved similar sorts of problems in most of my artifacts. For my report on the standard setting panels I had to figure out how to communicate important but technical and potentially confusing information to an audience that was interested but not trained in educational assessment. I resolved this first by including graphics in my report document, and later by carefully designing a PowerPoint presentation that started with a hook and then periodically broke up the heavier content with light and humorous moments.

As I developed the Discussion Protocol, the Session Record Chart progressed through at least a dozen drafts before getting to its final form, and I considered and rejected many variations of materials, order of events and preparation instructions before I was comfortable with the guidelines. Even issues like pacing and how to handle silences presented problems to be solved. Especially when I am taking a hesitant group into unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory – which is largely a given when the goal is to get school boards to be self-reflective – I have to pace the session so as to keep participants in that middle zone between being bored and being overwhelmed. Even such seemingly simple problems such as how to handle silences can make the difference between results that are trivial and results that are deeply meaningful.

Writing the *American School* article gave me the opportunity to reflect back on what my staff and I did in the early years of school accountability, and, frankly, I am proud not only of what we did but of how far ahead of the curve we were in doing it. I produced my data packets beginning in the first year of the “actual” state testing (i.e., in the first year after the state’s field
testing had been completed) and continuing in an unbroken series of annual packets until I
retired. My staff took on the challenge of trying to use data to improve our students’
performance, even before there were readily available guidelines on how to do so.

Although I had no thoughts of becoming a school board member at the time I was creating
the packets and my staff was discussing our school’s data, writing the *American School* article
reminded me of how differently data can look to those on the front lines – in the schools and
classrooms – compared to how it looks to those such as school board members and other citizens
who are several steps removed from students. I keep that awareness of the differing perspectives
with me as I problem-solve in my current work as an education coach and consultant.

All of those are educator problems, however, and although each presented a unique
specific challenge, the overall territory was familiar. My artifact work also addressed much
larger problems, and there the territory was much less familiar.

The larger purpose of all of my ELP work was to examine the issue of school boards and
school board members as education leaders. I came to this work with the assumption that school
boards were natural leadership bodies and that school board members naturally saw themselves
as leaders. I reasoned that what school board members needed to engage more fully as leaders
was information, training and tools. All that turned out to be true, but the reality was less natural
and more complex and nuanced than I had expected.

The reality is that school boards have the potential to be leadership bodies, but that
relatively few school boards rise to the level of true leadership. The research shows that school
boards by and large act to legitimize their districts’ past practice or the plans of their
superintendents. They express beliefs such as “all children can learn” but they seldom back up
that belief with actions designed to make sure that “can learn” becomes “do learn.” The research
also identifies characteristics of school boards that contradict that stereotype, that preside over
school districts with high performing students. My survey provided evidence that Delaware
school board members are at best ambiguous about their status as education leaders. They see
themselves as being responsible for student performance as much as for district management, but
they shy away from identifying themselves as leaders. The national research, the results of my
survey and my experiences in conducting workshops and doing other work to create my artifacts
suggests that school board members are, at best, unaccustomed to the label of “leader” and that
they do not have a clear vision of how to use their board authority to lead. That brings me back
to information, training and tools.

My artifacts represent a start in solving the problem of helping school board members to
see themselves as leaders and to act as leaders. Each category of artifacts represents an area of
work in solving this problem, and each of the individual artifacts is a step toward a solution. My
information artifacts frame the problem for school board members, giving them historical and
legal context and broadly suggesting leadership actions (specifically, using policy as a way to set
direction and expectations). My training artifacts help give school board members the skills and
understanding they need to ask relevant questions and to craft policy that leverages action rather
than just provides legal and procedural cover. My tool artifacts give school boards ways to
reflect on their beliefs and actions, and then to reach out when necessary to build support for
their actions beyond the boundaries of their individual school districts.

Looking Forward

Although I no longer serve on my local school board or on the DSBA Board of Directors,
my experiences with board service and with creating my artifacts will continue to inform my
work in education. I plan to continue my coaching and staff development work, both through DASL and as an independent education consultant. I am branching out into work in other states, and I am eager to find out if my skills and views hold up as well there as they do in Delaware. Having done coaching and professional development with several Delaware charter schools, I hope to learn more about the workings of the governing boards of charter schools. As part of my DASL work on the SAM project, I have been privileged to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the National SAM Innovation Project, the non-profit corporation that is the parent organization of all SAM projects in the world. Building on that experience, I hope to find opportunities to serve on other corporate boards. I plan to use my experience in writing the American School article in writing future articles for that and other publications. I also hope to continue my work with school boards and the DSBA, writing more booklets, seeking permission and support from the DSBA Board of Directors to establish my survey and report as an annual occurrence, and creating other “artifacts” to provide even more information, training and tools that Delaware school board members can use to lead their districts. Finally, I have one idea that I have been nurturing for years that I now hope to expand into a book. If that goes well, I have several other less developed book ideas that I would like to pursue.

My hope, then, is that my future holds a combination of doing coaching and staff development work in schools, of serving on boards of directors of various types, and of writing professional books and articles. Such a future would pull together all parts of my career and, for me, would be the perfect “retirement.”
Reference List


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Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2EUL1eHq9w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2EUL1eHq9w)


Appendix A

PROPOSAL FOR ELP
Proposal
for an
Education Leadership Portfolio

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April 26, 2012
The term “educational leadership” generally brings to mind images of people who work in school buildings and district offices – experienced and effective superintendents, principals and teachers – but school boards are seldom seen as being part of the leadership picture. Because they are the official legal entity and policy making group in nearly all school districts in the United States, it stands to reason that local school boards should be in positions of power when it comes to school reform in general and to improving student achievement in particular. That does not seem to be the case, however, and school boards are only rarely mentioned in the student achievement conversation. In some aspects of the effort to improve schools, school boards are not mentioned at all and their input is not sought regarding either planning or implementing improvement processes. In this proposal I address the need for school boards not merely to be involved in this conversation, but to lead it.

No Child Left Behind remains in effect and unchanged since its original passage on January 3, 2001, and student performance targets for schools to meet Adequate Yearly Progress rise ever more rapidly toward their final status of 100% in the spring of 2014. While war and recession have kept education from being the focus of public attention, the national concern that students are not performing at high levels relative to rigorous standards still lingers. The talk is not of backing off from high expectations, but of moving toward national standards and national testing. Whatever changes come, including the long anticipated reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or the circumvention of that act by U.S. Department of Education regulatory actions, it is nearly certain that the future will not alter the decades-long movement in the direction of improving schools and raising student achievement. While many groups are jockeying to be in position to influence and to implement the coming changes, whether or not local school boards will be major players or sideline observers remains
an open question.

Both individually and collectively, school boards have important questions to consider: will local school boards be proactive players in this change process, working actively to shape the expectations and the changes to come, or will they be reactive bodies relegated to serving as little more than pass-through entities that simply do what they must do under federal and state legislative mandates? Should local school boards want to be proactive players, are they positioned to be leaders in the work? Specifically, do they have the policies in place and the experience of past practice to be significant forces in shaping the changes to come in their districts?

This proposal addresses the role school boards play in the effort to improve schools. I begin by discussing the historical foundation of school boards and the research on their roles and effectiveness. Drawing on this discussion, I consider the problem of school board leadership in the context of Delaware, and finally I present improvement goals that will be the basis for my Executive Leadership Portfolio.

School Boards and School Improvement

By not specifically taking on the responsibility, the U.S. Constitution left the matter of education to the states. As the nation grew, individual states instituted remarkably similar systems for educating their citizens. The first public school in the colonies, Boston Latin, was established in 1635 (The Freedom Trail Foundation), and in the following decades similar schools were established across the colony (Meyer, 1957). Each school had its own governance body, and local control of all aspects of the school was the norm. As other colonies began to consider the issue of educating their youth, “(t)he Massachusetts system of separate educational
governance spread throughout the colonies” (Land, 2002, p. 231). This structure of schooling survived through the birth of the new nation. Massachusetts established the first state board of education in 1837 and legislated local school board authority to finance and administer schools in 1891 (Land, 2002, p. 230). Through the 1800’s the Massachusetts system became “a prototype for today’s governance of schools by local school boards” (Land, 2002, p. 231), and in all its essential aspects this system has remained in place in the United States ever since.

While Congress has created the U.S. Department of Education and that agency has come to wield tremendous power over state policy and regulation by virtue of the requirements attached to federal education funds, the federal government has left local governance largely to the states. The states, in turn, have created legislative and regulatory frameworks in which local boards must operate, but “significant discretion and decision making authority remain in the hands of local boards of education” (Krepel & Grady, 1992, p. 2).

How this freedom might be used to help improve student achievement is largely unexplored territory. Local boards have a relationship with the state that is much like the relationship of individual states to the United States: just as anything not specifically taken on by the United States government is left to the states to control, what is not specifically taken on by the state government is left to the local boards to control. So local school boards have potentially broad, if seldom used, powers to pursue improvement in student achievement, but in practice boards are more engaged in ensuring compliance with state laws and regulations than in exploring how to use unregulated areas to the benefit of students. While local boards have drifted into focusing on management issues and become “agencies of legitimation” (Kerr, 1964, p.34), the vacuum in school improvement leadership has more and more been filled by the state and federal governments.
Research on School Boards

The national literature on the relationships between school boards and student achievement is sparse. Internet searches using the key words “school board” and “local board” consistently return results citing the January 1994 edition of the *Phi Delta Kappan*, which included “A Special Section on School Boards” containing ten articles on a range of issues connected with school boards and in which six of the ten articles are concerned more with general governance and management issues than with student achievement. Eight years later, in introducing a review of the literature, Land still finds it necessary to state that “few empirical studies of (school boards’) effectiveness exist…” (Land, 2002).

The relatively sparse literature does contain some consistent elements, however. School boards emerge as essentially conservative bodies which generally serve to maintain the status quo. “[S]chool boards and administrators are very good at doing more of what they are already doing” (Danzberger, 1994, p. 369), but that is not likely to move school reform forward or to increase student achievement. However, if local boards truly mirror the views of their constituent communities, then even in the face of continuing dissatisfaction with “the nation’s schools” (Phi Delta Kappa, 2011), school boards’ conservatism accurately reflects the public’s positive perception of their local schools (National School Boards Association, 2012). Alsbury sees this as a clear manifestation of Dissatisfaction Theory, which holds that citizen activism with respect to school boards is directly related to the level of dissatisfaction those citizens have with the existing school board. If the public is satisfied, then there are few candidates for board seats, voter turn-out is low, incumbents tend to win reelection and superintendents tend to keep their jobs. High levels of dissatisfaction, however, result in multiple candidates and hard-fought
campaigns, high voter turn-out, the defeat of incumbents and the replacement (generally within three years) of sitting superintendents (Alsbury, 2008). National leaders, meanwhile, have focused on a short list of factors that portray U.S. schools as being seriously lacking. Polls consistently report public dissatisfaction with schools in general (Phi Delta Kappa – Gallup Polls). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows only gradual improvement in student performance in spite of decades of school reform efforts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011b), and also shows U.S. students performing only in the middle of the pack in international comparisons like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 20111a).

Building on this foundation, federal and state governments have taken steps to compensate for what they perceive as the lack of leadership in improving U.S. students’ academic performance. Ever since the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik wrenched politicians out of their complacency regarding the nation’s schools, from the National Defense Education Act (U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission) through A Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind, politicians have become ever more focused on education while the focus of local boards has changed very little. Other research either considers broad topics such as the composition of school boards or focuses very sharply on details of school board operation or viewpoints. A study supported jointly by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Iowa School Boards Foundation surveyed a national sample of school districts and gathered descriptive data (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Findings were grouped into six “areas of interest”: who serves on school boards, what board members think, how school boards go about their work, how school boards are configured, school board elections, and school boards and their superintendents. The study found, among other things, that the average school
board member is better educated than the general population, tends to be politically centrist, generally holds views similar to those of their superintendents, and sees student achievement as an important issue but not necessarily the top priority issue for their boards. While differing somewhat in specific details, these findings were not significantly different from those of an earlier NSBA study (Hess, 2002). Brown, Newman and Rivers focused narrowly on the influence of context on the types of information that board members felt they needed in order to make decisions (Brown, Newman & Rivers, 1985), while Krepel found school board members to be “ambivalent” about national goals for education as compared to the boards’ local goals (Krepel, 1992).

Occasional studies have expressed concern over school boards’ ability to remain viable as governance bodies (Land, 2002; Sewall, 1996) or to function in leadership roles to bring about increases in student achievement (Long, 2005; Ward, 2004; Loring 2005; Campbell & Green, 1994; Nowakowski & First, 1989; Kerr, 1964) in spite of board members’ reporting that they see student achievement as a leading concern (Hess, 2002). Some researchers point out ways school boards could organize in order to continue to function in an ever changing environment (Kirst, 1994; Mizell, 2010; Tucker, 2010). Others focus on contrasting the characteristics of boards in districts with relatively high student achievement with the characteristics of boards in districts with similar demographics but chronically low student achievement (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000).

The Iowa School Boards Association (ISBA) conducted the Lighthouse Study, which is perhaps the most rigorous and respected study of the effectiveness of school boards in improving student achievement. The study was conducted in three phases, beginning in 1998 and continuing through 2012. Phase I was conducted between 1998 and 2000, and it examined
similarities and differences between characteristics of school boards in high-achieving districts and school boards in low-achieving school districts. The study examined six school districts in Georgia. The districts were studied in pairs, with each pair carefully matched for criteria such as size, locale (urban-rural) and student poverty level in an effort to control for factors unrelated to the school boards. This phase of the study found that there were indeed significant differences between the school boards in high- and low-achieving districts, and it identified seven “conditions for productive change” that were found in the boards of high-achieving districts but not in the boards of low-achieving districts (Iowa School Boards Association, 2000; Dellagardelle, 2008). Those seven conditions were connections across the system, knowing what it takes to change achievement, workplace support, professional development, a balance between districtwide direction and building-level autonomy, a strong community connection, and distributed leadership (Dellagardelle, 2008).

Phase II of the Lighthouse Study (2002-2007) extended the original study to examine how boards influence conditions for improving student achievement and the supports needed for boards to do this work. The “Phase II Extension” (2004-2006) turned to an examination of board member and superintendent beliefs about their roles and of how those beliefs reflected board success in improving student achievement. Phase III (2006-2010) expanded the original Lighthouse research into a multi-state study on best practices for school boards and also included a companion study on best practices of state school board associations in developing board leadership (Dellagardelle, 2008).

The Lighthouse Study in all its phases concludes that boards can have a positive effect on student achievement. School boards embody and model belief systems for their districts (for example, “all students can and will learn” vs. “our students may not be doing very well, but
they’re doing the best that they can”), and when articulated from the top of the school district hierarchy these beliefs tend to shape beliefs at the other levels. Effective school boards monitor the performance of the district’s students and set expectations, and then watch to assure that their board policies foster the conditions necessary for student success (Iowa School Boards Association, 2000; Dellagardelle, 2008).

Although not as far-reaching as the Lighthouse Study, other research has indicated that conditions associated with school boards that are effective in supporting high student achievement include an emphasis on data (Armstrong & Anthes, 2001; Carr, 2001; Carr, 2003). Other studies cite the importance of school boards in creating and continuously reviewing policy to assure that it promotes student achievement or, at least, that it does not stand in the way of improving student achievement (Kirst, 1994; Lashway, 2002).

Among authors who base their work on observation or experience rather than research, views on the role and effectiveness of school boards cover the entire spectrum. Often the loudest voices are those attacking the school board as an institution (Finn, in Education Next, 2011; Maeroff, 2010; Miller, 2008), yet others defend it – far more often on the grounds that the school board is a close-to-the-people institution of representative democracy than on school boards’ effectiveness or efficiency (Usdan, 2010; Resnick & Bryant, 2010) – while the best that many can do is to argue, in essence, that “School boards are a flawed form of governance but still serviceable” (Hess, 2010). Perhaps the largest body of pro-school-board literature either describes specific examples of school boards that have been effective (Hardy, 2008; Dillon, 2011; Hardy, 2011; Stover, 2011; Vail, 2011) or provides advice on proper school board operation, training and/or reform strategies (Campbell & Greene, 1994; Bracey & Resnick, 1998; California School Boards Association, et. al., 1999; Smoley, 1999; National School Boards
Overall, there remains far more opinion than research to be found in the literature on school boards. The greatest volume of the literature consists of commentary, position statements and advice, mostly based on authors’ personal views on or experience with schools and school boards. The research that does exist tends to be either global or arcane, or focused on governance issues not specifically related to instructional leadership (as with, respectively, the Lighthouse study’s identification of school board characteristics; Brown, Newman and Rivers’ research on the influence of context on decision making; or Alsbury’s application of Dissatisfaction Theory). This does little to inform the average school board member, for whom school board service is undertaken as a part-time civic duty rather than as a full-time occupation. There is a need, then, for work that brings opinion and research together in forms that are accessible to the lay person and that provide information, tools and strategies that the average school board member can use to lead his/her district in its efforts to improve its students’ academic achievement. As vital as this is on a national scale, it is even more vital in Delaware, a small state with few resources to devote to developing well informed and effective school board members.

Problem Statement

As is the case across the nation (Kerr, 1964; Hess & Meeks, 2010), Delaware school boards are not perceived as instructional leaders by others, and they generally do not perceive themselves as instructional leaders. The common perception of school board members is that they are well meaning individuals who have time on their hands and who run for the school
board as a way to fulfill a civic duty. Their previous connections to schools may amount to having attended them, often quite a while ago, or to having children or grandchildren in the schools now. School board members may run as single-issue candidates whose agenda is limited to monitoring a particular aspect of school operations (such as the budget or facilities use) or to fixing a perceived problem (such as a district’s programs for gifted or special education students). There also are likely some board members who run in order to accomplish a single very limited goal (such as to make sure a relative gets a job in the district or that the football field gets Astroturf instead of grass). Other candidates seem to run to ferret out conspiracies (“they’re hiding things from us”) or because they see the school board as a first step in a career in elected office. Least frequently, school board members are trained educators who run for the school board so as to provide the district with informed leadership on instructional issues (Hampel, 1986; Hess & Meeks, 2010).

With this diversity of motives for board membership, it is no wonder that while school boards clearly have the legal authority to lead, they generally do not use that authority to lead district efforts to improve teacher practice and student learning (Miller, 2008; Meyer, 2009; Mizell, 2010). This leaves leadership to other parties, who may not share the mandate for civic good or the unique citizen perspective that come with being an elected or appointed school board member (Stover, 2012). Superintendents routinely view managing the board as being one of their primary tasks. Interest groups ranging from employee unions to professional organizations work to lead boards in directions beneficial to those groups. On a larger scale, mayors, governors, legislatures and departments of education, both in Delaware and the rest of the states, will step in and try to lead by legislation and regulation when they perceive a leadership vacuum (Maxwell, 2009; Robelen, 2009). The motivations of these groups, however, may be grounded
in concerns that are not specifically related to the best interests of the public school system. With local Delaware school boards not engaged in instructional leadership, a critical element is missing. Only school boards represent all constituencies in their districts, and school boards are uniquely positioned to be aware of and responsive to the diverse needs and concern of those constituencies.

Since 2001, Delaware schools have operated in a system of state (2001-2003) and then federal (2004-present) accountability, and school boards have played little or no role in the decision making regarding the school accountability systems. An early Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) training PowerPoint presentation lists participants in the “Committee of Stakeholders” who provided input into the transition from the original Delaware accountability system to the federal system under No Child Left Behind. That list includes “School administrators, district administrators, teachers, parents, community” (Delaware Department of Education, 2004), leaving school boards conspicuously absent. In spring of 2010 the state was one of only two to receive a federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant and DDOE was bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to create district RTTT plans through which the state plan would be implemented. The state required school board representation on each Local Education Agency’s (LEA’s) RTTT team, but it is apparent that school boards were seen as playing only a minor role. Work with stakeholder groups is addressed in the DDOE report on the first year of RTTT implementation but school boards are mentioned only once, in a brief reference to the Secretary of Education beginning to hold monthly meetings with “the leadership of…the Delaware School Boards Association” as well as with business leaders and leaders of the state teachers’ association (Delaware Department of Education, 2012, p.6). School boards are not mentioned at all in the report’s section on “Great Teachers and Leaders” (Delaware Department
At the district level, school board leadership in instruction varies depending on the views of the superintendent and the traditions of the board, and the views and backgrounds of individual board members.

Delaware, then, is a microcosm of the nation in that school boards are not routinely considered to be part of the state’s or districts’ instructional leadership. Yet school board members are vital links to their communities, and, if provided adequate information and proper training, they could provide a type of leadership and a vital perspective that cannot come from other sources.

**My Role and Improvement Goals**

I retired in July, 2006 after thirty years as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. In the spring of 2007 I ran for the Caesar Rodney (CR) School District school board, and in May I was elected to a five-year term. Now in my fifth year of my first term, I have served as the CR board’s representative on the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) Board of Directors every year of the five. I was elected Second Vice President of DSBA for SY’10, First Vice President for SY’11 and I am now serving as DSBA President for SY’12. In addition, I have been elected as the Vice President of the CR school board for SY’12.

I have been an active member and officer of DSBA. By my second year on the Board of Directors it had become apparent to me that many members of the Board were unfamiliar with even the basics of Delaware school data. To address this need, I first approached the Executive Director and then the Board of Directors as a whole, and with their encouragement I created a workshop on “Data 101 for School Board Members.” I presented this workshop four times, three times as a regional workshop and once for an individual local school board. I was
appointed to serve as DSBA’s delegate on five state task forces or committees, including the Delaware State Task Force on Best Practice in Assessment (NOV 2005 – MAY 2006), the Delaware State Task Force on School Discipline and Zero Tolerance Policies (JUL 2009 – Present), the State of Delaware Innovative Action Team #4: Turn-around Schools (Spring 2009), the DCAS Standards Setting Panels (panel member, AUG 2010) and the Delaware Education Consortium (AUG 2011 – present). After serving on the August 2010 state work group to set cut scores for the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System, I wrote a report to the Board of Directors to explain the process and to express my concerns about the implications of the decisions made by that group. That report grew into another workshop, which I delivered to the Delaware School Boards Association Board of Directors, to the Delaware Chief School Officers Association and to four local school boards during SY’11. Two Delaware superintendents also reported using my PowerPoint to do their own version of the presentation for their boards.

Beginning in August, 2011, I am serving as one of three DSBA representatives to the newly reconstituted Education Consortium, an organization that brings together representatives from major Delaware education organizations – DSBA, the Delaware State Education Association, the Delaware Association of School Administrators, and the Delaware Chief School Officers Association – and representatives from the Delaware Department of Education, the Governor’s Office and the Delaware Department of Finance to discuss Delaware educational policy, legislation and regulation. Where the organizations are in agreement on issues, they present unified positions to the Department of Education, the Governor’s Office and to the Delaware Legislature (generally first to the House and Senate Education Committees, and then as needed to the legislature as a whole).

As DSBA Second Vice President and First Vice President, and now as President, I
contribute to the association’s goal setting. I work with other members of the Executive Committee (president, both vice presidents, treasurer, chair of the Legislative Committee and the DSBA Executive Director) to set the goals for the year; then through the year I work with the Executive Director, the Executive Committee and the other members of the Board of Directors to achieve those goals, monitoring progress through the year and reporting (through the Executive Director) as the work progresses and goals are achieved. Also, in my role as DSBA officer, I have attended the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Northeast Regional Conferences in National Harbor, MD in October, 2010 and in Hyannis, MA in October, 2011; the Leadership Conferences in Washington, D.C. in February, 2011 and February 2012; and the Annual Conferences in San Francisco, CA in April 2011 and in Boston, MA in April 2012. As DSBA President, I also attended the NSBA’s Presidents’ Retreat in Groton, CT in August, 2011.

As a member of the DSBA Executive Committee, I participate in monthly meetings between the Executive Committee and the Delaware State Secretary of Education or her designee. During these meetings we are free to discuss any issue related to Delaware Education, and the Executive Committee uses these meetings as an important vehicle for exchanging information and for sharing local boards’ issues and concerns.

During the more than four years that I have served on the CR school board and on the DSBA Board of Directors, I have been a part of the state-wide conversation on issues related to public education. My contributions have ranged from being a voice for the school boards in state-wide policy discussions to being a hands-on trainer leading sessions to help school board members understand data about their schools and districts. During SY’12, while serving as CR school board Vice President and as DSBA President, I am in a position to continue and to extend these contributions.
Improvements I Hope To Make

There is research that describes the differences between effective boards and ineffective boards. While school boards do not directly influence teacher practice and student achievement, research has shown that they can be an integral part of a culture of learning that pervades effective school districts (Kirst, 1994; Iowa School Boards Association, 2000; Armstrong & Anthes, 2001; Carr, 2001; Hess, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Carr, 2003; Delligardelle, 2008). Specifically, school boards are essential in setting the overall tone of a district, and then in supporting improved teacher practice and improved student learning by writing and enforcing policy that codifies this support.

I want to encourage and facilitate this work by local Delaware school boards by providing them with accurate and accessible information, products and tools. First, I want to provide a foundation of information on why school boards exist and what they can do provide effective instructional leadership to their districts. Then I want to build on this foundation by providing districts with products and tools which they can use to inform their work and to improve their practice. Finally, I want to evaluate the effects on Delaware school boards of the information, products and tools that I have provided, in the hope of improving future versions of the products and tools and of suggesting what might be done to improve Delaware school board practice in the future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>()</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Account of School Boards in Law, Regulation and Practice</td>
<td>Arguments &amp; Accounts</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>White paper to inform local board members</td>
<td>• Read &amp; write</td>
<td>• MAY 2012</td>
<td>Draft (section of EPP proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Key Points of Research</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>White paper to inform local board members</td>
<td>• Read &amp; write</td>
<td>• JUN 2012</td>
<td>Draft (section of EPP proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Differences Between Effective and Ineffective School Boards</td>
<td>Arguments &amp; Accounts</td>
<td>National: ASBJ or similar publication</td>
<td>Op Ed / journal article</td>
<td>• Read &amp; write</td>
<td>• JUL 2012</td>
<td>Reading in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Report from the DCAS Standards Setting Panels</td>
<td>Leadership Communications</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>Written report</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Data 101 for School Board Members</td>
<td>Products &amp; Tools</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>Workshop: PowerPoint presentation with Activity Guide</td>
<td>• Rework Data 101 for DCAS</td>
<td>• Done</td>
<td>Data 101 re-work done; Arrangements in place to work on DCAS dashboard roll-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Data 201 for School Board Members: DCAS Data Analysis Tool</td>
<td>Products &amp; Tools</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>Follow-up to Data 101 – a step-by-step guide for locating school/district data and recording it in a form that will prompt school board and board/administration discussion</td>
<td>• Research effective communications</td>
<td>• MAY-JUN 2012</td>
<td>Participating in meetings of Education Consortium, NSBA, DSBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Create module</td>
<td>• JUL 2012</td>
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<td>• Field test &amp; revise module</td>
<td>• SEP 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Effective Communications with Policy Makers</td>
<td>Products &amp; Tools</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>Training module &amp; step-by-step guide</td>
<td>• Research discussion protocols &amp; create protocol</td>
<td>• AUG 2012</td>
<td>Not started; have experience in facilitation and in use of protocols</td>
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<td>• Field test &amp; revise protocol</td>
<td>• SEP-OCT 2012</td>
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<td>• Field test &amp; revise protocol</td>
<td>• SEP-OCT 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Survey of Local Board Members’ Views on Their Roles, Functions and Effectiveness As Board Members</td>
<td>Empirical Analysis</td>
<td>Local school board members</td>
<td>Survey with analysis: administered initially to identify baseline views and attitudes and later to test for any effects of the other artifacts.</td>
<td>• Create survey</td>
<td>• APR 2012</td>
<td>Survey is in draft form; on track for administration soon after proposal is approved</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Administer survey &amp; analyze results; use in creation of other artifacts</td>
<td>• MAY 2012</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Administer survey</td>
<td>• DEC 2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyze &amp; write up results, including evaluation of effects of artifacts</td>
<td>• JAN 2012</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The first three artifacts will establish a foundation of background knowledge about school boards in Delaware, and then take the position that school boards have not just the ability, but also the responsibility to be proactive agents of school improvement.

1. The **Account of School Boards in Regulation and Practice** will be a white paper intended to help board members understand three legal aspects of school boards in Delaware: the laws under which they were established, their duties and responsibilities, and the limitations to their functioning.

2. **Key Points of Research** will be a companion white paper intended to inform local board members regarding the most important findings of research on school board effectiveness.

3. **Differences Between Effective and Ineffective School Boards** will be a publishable Op Ed piece or journal article which brings together the research and the legal aspects of school boards and takes the position that school boards, as the governance bodies closest to the schools, are in the best possible position to provide guidance and support that balances a sense of urgency for improved student achievement with an awareness of local concerns, issues and values.

The next three artifacts will focus on information which local school boards should have at their disposal and on tools and understandings that school boards must have in order to find and interpret that information.

4. The **Report from the DCAS Standard Setting Panels** is a report prepared following the initial DCAS cut score setting panel meetings held August 9-11, 2010. I served as
the DSBA representative on those panels, and this is the report of that panel’s process and actions that I prepared for the DSBA and which I presented to the DSBA Executive Committee at their planning meeting on August 23, 2010 and to the DSBA Board of Directors at their regular monthly meeting on September 22, 2010. The written report led to the creation of a PowerPoint presentation which was delivered to four local boards (Appoquinimink, Cape Henlopen, Red Clay and Smyrna) in the fall of 2010 through spring of 2011 and also to the annual Delaware Chief School Officers’ retreat in Rehoboth Beach, DE on October 7, 2010. Superintendents in Christina and Milford School Districts reported using this PowerPoint as the basis for presentations that they did with their boards.

5. Data 101 for School Board Members is an information and training module created to introduce local board members to the types of data that are available to them on the public access pages of the Delaware Department of Education web site. This module grew out of a need that I identified over my first three years as a local board member and as representative of that board to the Delaware School Boards Association. The idea of this module was well received when it was presented to the DSBA Board of Directors by me and DSBA Executive Director Susan Francis, and based on the directors’ sense of urgency about the matter, what had been envisioned as a two-year effort was made ready for presentation in approximately two months. It was offered in three county sessions in the winter and spring of 2010 at the request of the DSBA Board of Directors and to the Brandywine School Board at their request.

6. Data 201: DCAS Data Analysis Tool will build upon the process developed for Data
101 for School Board Members and on a data packet template that I developed as a principal to create a tool that will allow local school board members to find information on the public pages of the Delaware Department of Education web site, to organize that information so as to foster insight into what the data says about their schools and districts, and to prompt questions and discussion related to that data. This tool will be created in both in an Excel spreadsheet template version and as a hard copy version on which data may be hand entered and analyzed by those who have internet access but are not comfortable with Excel.

The next two artifacts will consist of practical tools that will help local school board members to be more effective in their work.

7. **Effective Communications with Policy Makers** will consist of a training module and a companion step-by-step guide to show boards how to be effective in communicating their concerns and their action priorities to Delaware legislators. Preparation will include gathering general information related to lobbying and communicating with legislators, as well as interviewing sitting Delaware legislators. The training module and guide will be made available to all local Delaware school boards.

8. The **Discussion Protocol** will describe, in user friendly terms, a method that local school boards can use to structure reflective conversations about their effectiveness. The tool will not be structured to dictate what the specific concerns of boards should be, but will help the boards to a) focus on keeping their work directed toward areas
the research shows are the focus of effective school boards and b) be thoughtful about their levels of effectiveness relative to their chosen goals and priorities.

The final artifact will inform the creation of the other artifacts and will help evaluate any influences the other artifacts have had on Delaware local school boards’ practice.

9. The **Survey of Local Board Members’ Views on Their Roles, Functions and Effectiveness as Board Members** will poll local school board members on their perceptions on issues related to local school governance and the role of school boards in fostering and supporting state of the art teacher practice and ever higher levels of student learning. The survey will be offered to all members of local school boards in Delaware, and a written report of the survey results and analysis will be provided to all Delaware school board members. The survey will be administered twice: once in the early spring of 2012, to inform the creation of other artifacts and to establish baseline data for evaluation of the other artifacts, and again in winter 2013, to provide comparison data to evaluate the impact of the other artifacts.
CITATIONS


Meyer, P. (2009). For better schools and for civic life, boards must assert power. in Leading for Learning, a supplement to the October 14, 2009 issue of Education Week.


Robelen, E.W. (2009). At state level, power over schools a contentious issue. in Leading for Learning, a supplement to the October 14, 2009 issue of Education Week.


Appendix B

SCHOOL BOARDS IN LAW AND REGULATION
SCHOOL BOARDS IN LAW and REGULATION

A Guide for Delaware School Board Members

The General Assembly shall provide for the establishment and maintenance of a general and efficient system of free public schools, and may require by law that every child, not physically or mentally disabled, shall attend the public school, unless educated by other means. (Government for the State of Delaware – the Delaware state Constitution, Article X, §1, Section 1.)

In each...school district there shall be a school board which shall have the authority to administer and to supervise the free public schools...and which shall have the authority to determine policy and adopt rules and regulations for the general administration and supervision of the free public schools of the...district. Such administration, supervision and policy shall be conducted and formulated in accordance with Delaware law and the policies, rules and regulations of the State. (Delaware Code, Title 14, Chapter 10, Subchapter III, §1043)

From its earliest days as a colony, Delaware has engaged in lively debates on school governance. Colonial questions included whether there should be schools at all, then whether education should be a religious or secular responsibility, and then what mechanisms of support and what level of support should be provided by the colonial government. Funding debates continued after Delaware became a state, and the questions of who should govern the schools turned from a religious-secular debate to one between conservatives who wanted complete local control and liberals who wanted at least a minimum level of consistency and support for all schools and for all students. The late nineteenth century and the twentieth century saw swings from well over a hundred local school districts and boards, to local school districts and boards being replaced by three county districts and boards, to a second proliferation and then several rounds of consolidations of local school districts and boards.

Through it all, local school boards have been bastions of local control, if not necessarily of educational leadership. Sometimes the local boards even interpreted the concept of local control to include board having the freedom to do nothing at all. From those early days of extreme decentralization, Delaware has adopted a system making it one of the most centralized state systems in the nation. Debates on issues like local funding levels and consolidation continue into the twenty-first century, and some of the most current issues would sound familiar to our state’s educational forefathers.
By not specifically making education the responsibility of the federal government, the U.S. Constitution left the matter of education to the states. As the nation grew, individual states instituted remarkably similar systems for educating their citizens. The first public school in the colonies, Boston Latin, was established in Massachusetts in 1635 (The Freedom Trail Foundation), and in the following decades similar schools were established across the colony (Meyer, 1957). Each school had its own governance body, and local control of all aspects of the school was the norm. As other colonies began to consider the issue of educating their youth, “(t)he Massachusetts system of separate educational governance spread throughout the colonies” (Land, 2002, p. 231). This structure of schooling survived through the birth of the new nation. Massachusetts established the first state board of education in 1837 and legislated local school board authority to finance and administer schools in 1891 (Land, 2002, p. 230). Through the 1800’s the Massachusetts system became “a prototype for today’s governance of schools by local school boards” (Land, 2002, p. 231), and in all its essential aspects this system has remained in place in the United States ever since.

The federal government has a history of involvement in education dating back at least to the establishment of the original Department of Education in 1867 and continuing through the creation of the current cabinet level Department of Education (USDOE) in 1979 to the present (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). While USDOE has come to wield tremendous power over state policy and regulation by virtue of the requirements attached to federal education funds, the federal government has left school district governance largely to the states. Similarly, the states have created legislative and regulatory frameworks in which local boards must operate, but “significant discretion and decision making authority remain in the hands of local boards of education” (Krepel & Grady, 1992, p. 2).

How this freedom might be used to help improve student achievement is largely unexplored territory. Local boards have a relationship with the state that is much like the relationship of individual states to the United States: just as anything not specifically taken on by the United States government is left to the states to control, what is not specifically taken on by the state government is left to the local boards to control. So local school boards have potentially broad, if seldom used, powers to pursue improvement in student achievement, but in practice boards are more engaged in ensuring compliance with state laws and regulations than in exploring how to use unregulated areas to the benefit of students. As local boards have drifted into focusing on management issues and become “agencies of legitimation” (Kerr, 1964, p.34), the vacuum in school improvement leadership has more and more been filled by the state and federal governments.
Colonial Era through the Nineteenth Century

The history of schools in Delaware is quite consistent with the history of schools in the other colonies. Delaware’s original Swedish settlers had no formal system of education, and through the early 1600’s they relied on church and home to provide such education as was necessary for colonial life. English settlers began to arrive in 1664, but they did no more than the Swedish colonists to establish a formal education system.

While the Delaware colony kept close ties to Pennsylvania, to William Penn and to the Quakers, Delaware was not quick to adopt the educational priorities of its neighbor to the north. The first public school in Pennsylvania was established in Philadelphia in 1698 (Independence Hall Association), but it was not until 1748 that the Friends organized the first school in Delaware.

Education was not mentioned in Delaware’s first Constitution, adopted in 1776, but the Constitution adopted in 1792 contained provisions under which the legislature enacted the legal foundation for a state system of education. That foundation was not quickly put to use, however, and it was not 1817 that the legislature actually appropriated money for education – in this case, specifically for the education of poor children. Finally in 1829 and 1830, federal judge Willard Hall (for whom the education building at the University of Delaware is named) succeeded in getting the legislature and the Governor to enact legislation which resulted in a real public school system. According to a 1969 history of Delaware education published by the Delaware Department of Education:

*The school law of 1830 provided for the voters of a district to have full control of the schools. They were to hold meetings to determine their operation, and could decide how much money they would raise to support them. In 1833, 133 school districts were drawing state aid; 61 districts in New Castle County, 36 in Kent County, and 36 in Sussex County.*

(Delaware Department of Public Instruction, p. 14)

With each district’s voters entirely in charge of their schools, the official “state” system was highly decentralized. This was very much in keeping with Judge Hall’s views on government in a democracy, but it also was the source of much spirited debate over the following decades. Those who believed in the citizens’ absolute right to do as they saw fit – including the right to do nothing, either by design or by neglect – supported education law as it was: enabling legislation that permitted much but required nothing. Liberal opponents argued for “at least a minimum of central control.” These liberal “friends of education” achieved two major steps toward this goal in the fifty years after 1830. In 1861 they helped revise the law to require districts to have at least minimal school taxes (and thus effectively eliminated a local board’s option to do nothing), and in 1875 they supported legislation that created a state board of education and the governor-
appointed position of State Superintendent of Delaware Free Schools.

This debate between conservatives who advocated for control of the schools to be entirely local and liberals who advocated for at least some minimum levels of control and support at the state level became an enduring feature of educational policy making in Delaware. As the political balance of power swung from one group to the other, so also did the proportion of local vs. state control of schools swing back and forth. For example, by 1879 certain incorporated towns like Wilmington and New Castle had won exemptions from state control, and by 1887 “The state board had little authority…and three county boards of education administered the school system. Each county board administered its system independently, with separate, parallel systems operating for Negro and poor white pupils. Within each county, certain independent schools were not required to operate under the laws of the county unless they so desired.” (Delaware Department of Public Instruction, p. 16) The chaos that resulted from this almost entirely decentralized school system swung the political pendulum the other way, and the late 1800’s and early 1900’s saw constitutional changes and new laws that established and protected minimum funding for schools, increased the authority of the state board, established education credentials required for the new position of state commissioner of education, instituted a mandate for the state to collect more and better data about its schools, and regulated teacher employment and student attendance.

Twentieth Century

Over the years just prior to 1918, efforts to study and to improve Delaware schools were led by two citizen groups, the General Service Board and the Council for Defense, which in 1918 combined to form the Service Citizens of Delaware. Led by Pierre S. DuPont, the Service Citizens brought together many groups – including local school boards, the state board of education, the Delaware State Education Association, and other influential individuals and organizations – and played a major role in the passing of the School Codes of 1919 and 1921. The School Code of 1919 contained sweeping changes, including:

- making the commissioner of education the executive officer of the state board of education and giving the state board the authority to run the state’s schools;
- eliminating local school boards for all but the state’s thirteen largest communities and creating three county boards, each with its own superintendent, with authority to raise taxes and oversee the day-to-day operations and management of the schools not in the thirteen largest communities; and
- establishing requirements for student transportation and attendance. (Delaware Department of Public Instruction, p. 24)

The School Code of 1921 recognized the objections of the state’s conservatives by eliminating the county school boards and reinstituting local boards with their own superintendents, by reducing the number of required student attendance days from 180 to 160, and by making certain concessions regarding school taxation. On the other hand, the School Code of 1921 also strengthened the power of the state board of education and
created the foundation for what was to become Delaware’s practice of schools being largely state funded.

Following the fundamental changes of the early 1920’s there was a period, lasting until 1949, in which little changed in Delaware education. Delaware’s economy and population grew only slowly, and the period was characterized by steady institutionalization of the provisions of the School Codes of 1919 and 1921. Notable exceptions include the adopting of a 60/40 formula for state funding of school construction in 1941, the adopting of a “uniform State-supported salary schedule” in 1947 and the 1949 creation of a unit system that linked state funding to districts’ student enrollment (Delaware Department of Public Instruction, p. 31).

From 1950 through 1969, however, Delaware saw a period of rapid growth and significant change. School populations increased by nearly 135% and the state Department of Public Instruction more than tripled in size. At the federal level, the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 led to the federal National Defense Education Act in 1958, which brought a national emphasis on school quality and gave special attention to the education of the country’s most gifted children. The federal influence on education increased dramatically with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. At the state level, Delaware raised the compulsory attendance age from fourteen to sixteen in 1952, and in 1968 the state made its first appropriation for kindergarten and passed the Educational Advancement Act, which “provided the legal basis for reorganization of the public school districts” (Delaware Department of Public Instruction, pp. 31-33).

Desegregation

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Delaware was involved in two significant periods of struggle with desegregation. The first of these periods affected all schools in the state and had national implications. In 1951 two Delaware court cases, Belton v. Gebhart and Bulah v. Gebhart, challenged the state’s system of segregated schools. Both cases later joined four other cases that went to the U.S. Supreme Court and became part of Brown v. Board of Education. As a result, Delaware desegregated its schools in 1964 by consolidating Negro schools with nearby white schools. The second period of struggle focused on schools in New Castle County. In 1977, eleven of the thirteen regular school districts in New Castle County merged into a single district. Appoquimink School District was exempted, as was the New Castle County Vocational-Technical School District. This action was taken in compliance with the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit in Evans v. Buchanan, which argued that while technically desegregated, in fact the largely black Wilmington school district and the surrounding largely white suburban school districts constituted two separate and unequal school systems. The single county-wide district proved to be unwieldy to manage, and in 1981 the schools in New Castle County received court permission to reorganize into four districts, each of which would include some schools in the city of Wilmington and some schools in the surrounding suburbs. In granting permission for this reorganization, the court stipulated that in order to avoid districts slipping back into a pattern of urban-
suburban segregation, all students must spend some of their years in city schools and some of their years in suburban schools. In both of these reorganizations school boards were dissolved and new ones were created, and issues of local control were confronted. In stark contrast to the early days when Delaware school boards ran two separate school systems for white and black students – if those boards chose to run any schools at all – in the late twentieth century New Castle County school boards had little freedom to run the schools as they chose. The system that had been highly decentralized and very locally controlled was determined to be highly inequitable, so while school boards did exist during this desegregation era, their actions were largely focused on complying with judicial mandates (Brown Foundation; Eccel, 2012).

Accountability

During this same fifty year period, Delaware schools faced a series of efforts to improve the academic performance of their students. From Back to Basics in the 1980’s and New Directions in the 1990’s through No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top in the years just before and after 2010, Delaware schools faced continuously increasing focus on student achievement and emphasis on achievement testing, as well as ever increasing scrutiny from the public, the media and the federal and state governments. To address the demand for greater school accountability, Delaware implemented its own state system of achievement-test-based accountability in 1998. In 2003 the Delaware system was reworked to meet the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, and in 2013-2015 the system was again reworked as Delaware joined the national move to adopt the Common Core State Standards and adopted Smarter Balanced testing as the state’s official measure of students’ academic performance. While the move to increased school accountability brought massive changes to school operations and to instructional practice, the process largely bypassed local school boards. Local boards were encouraged (some would say “required”) to sign memoranda of understanding confirming their participation in the state’s Race to the Top efforts, but this school reform effort was driven by federal law and the structures to meet the law’s requirements were crafted at the state level, leaving local districts and their boards with discretion only in the details of school and classroom implementation.

CURRENT LAWS AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING DELAWARE SCHOOL BOARDS

In the hierarchy of governance, whatever is not specifically taken on by the federal government is left to the states, and what is not specifically taken on by the state is left to the local government. In the case of education, “local government” is each individual district’s school board. Local school boards are responsible for complying with all state and federal laws, which they do either by enacting policy, passing motions (such as those setting certain tax rates) or by delegating the details of compliance or implementation to the district superintendent. The superintendent may then further
delegate tasks and responsibilities to other district employees.

Constitution

The Delaware constitution consists of a preamble and sixteen articles. Article X of the constitution is devoted to education, and §1, Section 1 directs the General Assembly to “provide for the establishment and maintenance of a general and efficient system of free public schools...” and gives the General Assembly the power to enact laws to “require that every child, not physically or mentally handicapped, shall attend the public school, unless educated by other means.” Section 5 gives the General Assembly the power to “provide...for the transportation of students,” and the remaining four sections address various aspects of school funding and taxation. (Government for the State of Delaware, Article X) The constitution is otherwise silent on the matter of public education, and it does not contain any references to school boards or to any issues related to local governance of schools.

Law

Just as the Delaware constitution generally addresses issues on the broadest possible scale and leaves the details to be worked out by the General Assembly enacting laws, so the Delaware Code sets the broad framework for how education is to be conducted and then defers to the Delaware Department of Education to address the details through regulation.

The bulk of state law concerning Delaware schools is contained in Title 14 (Delaware Code, Title 14). Title 14 has sixty chapters, each of which deals with a particular aspect of education in Delaware. In some cases the chapters are very broad in scope (e.g., “Chapter 1. Department of Education” or “Chapter 15. Fiscal Provisions”), while in other cases they address single, very specific issues (e.g., “Chapter 83. Eye Protection Devices” or “Chapter 93. Anti-Hazing Law”).

While there are references to school boards throughout Title 14, most of the laws that directly address the composition, powers and responsibilities of school boards are contained in “Chapter 10. Reorganization of School Districts.” The chapter’s six subchapters have varying degrees of importance for a current school board’s operation. The first two subchapters provide the legal structure and processes to accomplish various school district reorganizations, including those resulting from the Education Advancement Act of 1968 and later reorganizations mandated by the courts. Those subchapters certainly have historical interest, but the structure and processes they create also will apply to any future district reorganizations (unless, of course, future General Assemblies choose to pass new legislation). In the context of the early twenty-first century, it is worth noting that “reorganization” includes “consolidations” – a concept that has been at the center of a lot of political conversation in this period. Subchapter IV addresses all aspects of school board elections, a process that is of vital interest to all boards but which happens only once a year. How much of a concern elections are to any individual school board may vary greatly depending on how cordial or contentious the
district culture and climate are in any given year. Subchapter V addresses staffing, allowing districts to add salary supplements on top of the state’s uniform salary schedule for school employees, and requiring among other things that school districts must have a superintendent and that the superintendent must serve as the executive director of the school board, that school employees must meet requirements created by the Professional Standards Board. Subchapter VI addresses the liability of school employees in civil lawsuits brought regarding job-related “actions or omissions” on the part of school employees.

At any given time, school boards may be affected by any of these laws. In some cases the effects will arise only in rare events like district reorganizations. In other cases the Code addresses things for which a local board bears ultimate responsibility, such as the processing of all district funds through the Delaware state financial system, but for which the board almost always delegates day-to-day responsibility to a district employee or department.

“Subchapter III. School Boards of Reorganized School Districts.” is the subchapter that most directly and most consistently affects school boards in the execution of their duties across the entire school year. School boards are mandated and given their authority in §1043, are required to have an annual meeting in which they complete certain organizational tasks by §1044 and §1045, and required to submit to the state an annual report on their district by §1050.

The vast majority of the legislation affecting school boards address management issues. With respect to the core mission of all school districts, the education and academic performance of its students, perhaps the most interesting and consequential powers of the school board come from §1049.

After setting the minimum number of hours that will constitute a school year, §1049 goes on to give the school board broad policy setting powers. Often the greatest powers may be in what is not said rather than in what is said. Among the duties given to the school board, for example, are the duties to:

“Determine the educational policies of the…school district” (§1049(a)(2)),

“Adopt courses of study” (§1049(a)(5)),

“Select, purchase, and distribute…textbooks and other materials of instruction” (§1049(a)(6)), and

“Appoint personnel.” (§1049(a)(9)).

These provisions leave to the individual school boards all the decisions about how to meet the state’s requirements. The details, and the philosophy of education behind them, are up to the districts. If the board believes, for example, that the state standards (now the Common Core State Standards) and course requirements (four credits in English, etc.) represent all that the school should offer, then the board’s adopted policies, courses of study, instructional materials and personnel decisions will all be directed toward that goal. If the board believes that the state standards and course requirements define the minimum that should be offered, however, then the board’s policies, courses of study, instructional materials and personnel decisions are likely to be substantially different. Does the district’s course of study set up all students to complete algebra before graduation, or before entering high school? Does the board believe that the arts are a
necessary part of a student’s education, or an expendable extra? Do the board’s policies encourage innovation and experimentation, including providing support when those efforts fail, or do those policies support lockstep conformity to what has been done for decades? Does the board entrust the selection of texts to teachers and other instructional staff, or does the board involve itself deeply in the process? Does the board direct the superintendent to staff schools according to long established past practice, or to vary staffing based on recent data identifying students’ current needs? These decisions are left to the individual boards.

(See the Appendix for a summary with annotations of all of Title 14, Chapter 10.)

**Regulation**

The Administrative Code, containing Delaware Department of Education regulations related to Title 14, has eleven sections (*Delaware Regulations: Administrative Code: Title 14*). Although these sections contain regulations with which school boards must comply, none of the sections deals directly with the ways that school boards are organized or with how they operate. Even so, it can be beneficial for school board members to be familiar with the regulations related to education. For example, a district might get into a difficult negotiation with its teachers over the issue of the length of time that teachers must work, and specifically over the length of the work day. Teachers might argue that they are required only to put in a 7½ hour work day because they are state workers. The regulation in the Administrative Code, however states that the teacher work day is “a minimum of 1½ hours, inclusive of ½ hour for lunch, plus the amount of time required for the discharge of such duties and services as may be reasonably expected and required of a member of the professional staff of a public school” (*Delaware Regulations: Administrative Code, 700 Finance and Personnel, 710 Public School Employees Workday, 1.0 Required Work Hours, 1.1; emphasis added*). While this language leaves room for intelligent and well-meaning individuals to disagree on the details of implementation, it does raise the requirement for teachers to a level higher than the requirements for other, non-professional, school employees.

**SUMMARY**

From early colonial times to present-day Delaware, the responsibility for running the nation’s schools has been delegated to school boards. It is left to the individual school boards to determine how they will handle their educational leadership challenges and responsibilities, however. Across the United States, some boards serve almost solely as rubber stamp bodies, as “agencies of legitimation” (Kerr, 1964) for the status quo or for whatever the district superintendent wants to do. Other boards focus on management minutiae or on the concerns of vocal special interests. Still others not only find ways to be effective and efficient at complying with all the management mandates in the laws and regulations, but also find significant opportunities for leading their districts to ever higher
levels of student achievement.

Delaware law provides school boards with broad responsibilities for running their districts, but along with very detailed requirements in some management areas the state allows local school boards room for instructional leadership, should they decide to take on the challenge. The power of school boards to take the lead is more implied than stated, however. Boards must take the initiative implicit in their powers to “determine the educational policies of the…school district” (§1049(a)(2)), “adopt courses of study” (§1049(a)(5)), “select, purchase, and distribute…textbooks and other materials of instruction” (§1049(a)(6)), and “appoint personnel” (§1049(a)(9)) to exercise their instructional leadership. Boards must work together first to identify and clearly state their beliefs (does the board believe that all children can learn, or that maximizing each student’s individual academic achievement is a district and community priority?) and then adopt policies and take other actions that are consistent with those beliefs. School boards that take meaningful positions on instructional issues and which then back up those positions through their policies and their actions can provide powerful leadership to move their districts forward.
APPENDIX

Delaware Code, Title 14
Chapter 10. Reorganization of School Districts
Summarized and Annotated
Subchapter I. Reorganization

http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c010/sc01/index.shtml

Subchapter I provides the legal framework for the changes made in school districts as a result of the School District Reorganization Act of 1968 as well as for later reorganizations resulting either from Delaware legislation or from federal court orders. [The title “School District Reorganization Act of 1968” is what appears in Title 14; however, the literature also refers to this law as the “Education Advancement Act.” (Eccel, 2012; Boyer & Ratledge, 2009.)] This subchapter gives the State Board of Education the power to reorganize districts and then sets forth various requirements and limitations for how reorganizations must be conducted.

Key provisions of Subchapter I include:

§1005 Seniority and employee rights regarding fair dismissal

§1006 Ensures “fair and equitable procedure for deployment” of employees into the new districts

§1007 Creates interim school boards in each new district and gives them the authority to oversee the transition

§1009 Requires any district that is being divided to attend to the transfer of property from old to new districts

While the provisions of this subchapter are vital to the reorganization process, especially to assuring an orderly transition from the old to the newly formed districts, these provisions have little bearing on districts or on school boards once the transition has been completed.
Subchapter II. Reorganized School Districts

§1021 Declares that “After July 1, 1969, all school districts in the state shall be known as ‘reorganized school districts’”

This removes any confusion that might result from having to distinguish between districts that have been in continuous existence since before the 1968 reorganization and districts that were created by that or subsequent reorganizations.

§1022 Gives school districts the right to own property

§1023 Sets schools’ fiscal year as being from July 1 – June 30

§1025 Establishes a process for settling district boundary disputes

§1026 Gives the state board the power to change school district boundaries, and sets the process by which this may be done

The state board is required to “consult with the school boards of the districts affected by the proposed change” before changing any boundaries and then throughout the process, and local school boards are required to conduct referenda to get citizen approval of the proposed changes. Special provisions are set up for the State Board to “change or alter the boundaries of the Sussex County portions of the Milford and Woodbridge school districts” in order to clarify the boundaries for tax purposes. The State Board also may change the boundaries of vocational-technical districts providing the boards of those districts have passed resolutions requesting the changes.

§1027 Gives the State Board the power to consolidate two or more contiguous school districts, and sets the process by which this may be done

Although the power is given to the State Board, any consolidation undertaken under this provision of the law must be approved by referendum by the citizens of the districts to be consolidated. The State Board has the power to raise the issue and to certify the result of the referendum, but it does not have the power to consolidate without voter approval.
§1028  Gives the State Board the power to divide school districts into two or more districts, and sets the process by which this may be done

This is the reverse of the power given to the State Board under §1027, and the procedure required here closely mirrors that required under §1027.

§1029  Mandates that vocational-technical school districts shall be run in the same way as other school districts, and mandates that each vocational-technical school district shall have a school board

While vocational-technical districts are “superimposed” over regular districts and have appointed rather than elected school boards, the State Board has the same authority over vocational-technical district boards as it has over regular school boards, and the vocational-technical school boards have the same authority in their districts as school boards in regular districts have in theirs.
Subchapter III. School Boards of Reorganized School Districts

http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c010/sc03/index.shtml

§1041 Defines terms, including “school board” and “school board member”

§1042 States that Title 14 applies to all Delaware public schools

§1043 Mandates that all districts will have school boards, and grants to those boards the authority to “administer and supervise” schools

§1044 Establishes the office of the superintendent or chief school officer as the official office of the school board

The address of the superintendent or chief school officer must also be the address of the school board.

§1045 Sets requirements for a board to have an annual meeting in July at which the board elects officers and designates the superintendent or chief school officer as the board’s executive secretary

Only the offices of president and vice president are specified in the law. Any other officer positions are at the pleasure of the board.

The superintendent / chief school officer must be designated as the executive secretary of the board. The law mandates that boards must take this action every July in their annual meetings, but the law does not give boards the option to appoint anyone else to the executive secretary position.

§1046 Forbids school board members from receiving compensation for their board service

§1047 Makes the state treasurer the treasurer for all school districts, and requires all school money to be processed through the state

The school district’s money must be processed through the state system – districts have no authority to set up accounts outside of the state financial system.

Some districts work closely with district foundations which do raise
and spend money outside of the state system, but these entities must be set up and administered by individuals or entities – such as alumni groups or “friends of the district” – who are not legal representatives or affiliates of the district. The relationship of the board to foundation may be close and cooperative, but it may not be supervisory or controlling.

§1048 Requires boards to hold regular monthly meetings and allows boards to hold additional, “special” board meetings; a quorum must be present for official business to be conducted; meeting minutes are public records, and must record a roll call votes for all motions unless the vote is unanimous.

§1049 Specifies certain policy making requirements for local boards, such as setting the district calendar and the hours of the school day, adopting curriculum and approving textbooks, and enforcing attendance laws; this section also specifies the minimum number of hours in the school year.

A school year is defined as a minimum of 1060 hours for grades K-11 and as a minimum of 1032 hours for grade 12. The Code does not set any maximum number of hours for the year, so districts are free to extend the school year as they see fit. Any extensions, especially beyond the 188-day teacher year (see below), would be at the expense of the district, however.

Title 14, Chapter 13, §1334 defines the teacher work year as being “188 Regular Days x 7.5 hours = 1,410 hours.” Nothing in the Title specifies what districts, schools or teachers are to do with the 350-hour difference between the student year and the teacher year, although in practice the difference is taken up by time that teachers are in the schools before or after students during the school day, by meetings, and by teacher professional development activities. Some districts spread this time out over the school hear, while others use it to create blocks of professional development time before, during or after the student year.

§1049A Establishes the right of school principals or school-based committees to apply to the local board for waivers to that board’s regulations, and sets requirements and a public notification procedure for waiver applications.

§1049B Requires school board members to receive special education due process training.
§1050 Requires school boards to submit an annual report to the state, due August 15

The district’s annual report is to be filed by the school board with the Department of Education (i.e., officially it is a report from the school board as opposed to a report from the district administration), and the report will be a public document.

Title 14 §124A designates these as “Education Profile reports” and details what must be included in them. Emphasis is placed on school and district accountability information; demographics of the district as a whole and of various student populations, district and school curriculum and program offerings, and district financial information. Districts also are “encouraged to include...such additional information as it believes will help its citizens better understand the current conditions, accomplishments, and policies of the school district, as well as the expenditures, revenues and business and financial transactions of the school district for the prior fiscal year, and the need for the improvement and advancement of the schools within the school district.” This section of the law (§124A) requires that these reports will be published by the state, and the state satisfies this obligation by using the information in the reports to create the annual District Profiles and School Profiles, which are available both online and in hard copy from the Department of Education.

§1051 Provides for school board elections, and forbids anyone who is paid by the school district (i.e., school employees) from serving as a school board member

While this section mandates that school board members shall be elected, the details of the school election process are set down in Subchapter IV (see below).

§1052 Requires that school boards consist of five members (see §1061-§1070 below for the only exceptions), sets requirements for eligibility to run for a school board position (e.g., citizenship in Delaware and residence in the district) and sets the length of a school board term as five years

§1053 Establishes the Oath of Office

This section gives the text of the oath and specifies how it will be
§1054 Specifies how school board vacancies will be filled should a board member leave office before the end of his/her term

*The process for filling seats after members have served to the normal end of their terms is addressed in §1052.*

§1055 Makes school boards responsible for maintenance of school property

§1056 Specifies board responsibilities with respect to school property

*This section addresses community use of school property as well as the board’s responsibilities for normal care and maintenance of property.*

§1057 Sets requirements for the sale or lease of school property and for the handling of any compensation received for the sale or lease of that property

§1058 Sets the process for handling any “controversies” related to a school board’s rules, regulations, policies and/or decisions

*This includes a process for appeals to the state board should a complainant not be satisfied by the decision of the local board.*

§1059 Gives school boards the right to “administer and examine persons under oath”

*This provision raises board hearings to the level of formal legal proceedings.*

§1060 Makes it perjury to lie under oath to a school board

*This provides the legal clout that makes the previous section meaningful.*

§1061-1070 The remaining sections in this Chapter deal in detail with the reorganization of the Cape Henlopen, Indian River and Milford school districts on July 1, 1969 and the reorganization of the Brandywine, Christina, Colonial and Red Clay school districts on July 1, 2002. Among other things, these sections set the number of board members in these districts (ten for Indian
River, eight for Milford, and seven for Cape Henlopen and for the four New Castle County districts), define the boundaries of the nominating districts which the board members will represent, and delineate the process of electing board members during the reorganization period.
Subchapter IV. Elections in Reorganized School Districts

http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c010/sc04/index.shtml

Subchapter IV sets the process and requirements for the conduct of school board elections. Much of the subchapter addresses issues such as provision of voting machines, requirements for and responsibilities of polling place personnel, the process for counting and recording votes and for certifying election results, and other such issues that are standard operating procedure for any election in the state.

Key provisions that relate specifically to school board elections include:

§1072 Sets the dates, times and places for annual school board elections.

§1074 Sets requirements for public notifications regarding elections

§1075 Sets requirements for filing to be a candidate and for withdrawing from an election

§1077 Defines who is eligible to vote in school board elections
Subchapter V. Staffing of Reorganized School Districts

http://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c010/sc05/index.shtml

§1091 Requires all districts to have a superintendent who will serve as the chief school officer and as the executive secretary of the district’s school board

§1092 Requires all school employees to meet qualifications to be set by the Professional Standards Board and the State Board

§1093 Permits districts to provide local supplements to the state salary schedule

§1094 Sets requirements for school employees’ employment contracts; states that the suspension or dismissal of school employees will follow the procedures detailed in Title 14, Chapter 14.
§1095  Defines the liability of the state, school boards and school employees in the event of civil lawsuits.

Generally speaking, individuals will not be held liable “for any act or omission arising out of and in the course of the performance of that person’s duties...” or for costs incurred in defending themselves in a civil lawsuit related to such acts or omissions. This protection does not cover criminal lawsuits or damages that are either punitive or related to gross negligence.

The state assumes no liability for “financial obligations incurred by a local district,” but local boards may buy insurance that will cover such costs.
CITATIONS

Delaware Department of Public Instruction (1969). History of education in Delaware: Emphasis department of public instruction. Delaware Department of Public Instruction: Dover, DE
Appendix C

KEY POINTS IN RESEARCH ON SCHOOL BOARDS
KEY POINTS OF RESEARCH ON SCHOOL BOARDS

A Guide for Delaware School Board Members

**Introduction**

_Historically, local school boards believed their role was not to substitute their own views on matters of pedagogy for those of professional educators. Rather, they perceived their role to be supportive in nature, approving the budget and legal documents, dealing with constituents, receiving reports, campaigning for bond issues and providing “cover” on politically sensitive issues. While those are legitimate functions, the challenges of raising student achievement in the 21st century suggest a more meaningful and dynamic governance role for local school boards in setting education policy – that of providing leadership to school systems as they establish and strive for high levels of student performance._

_(Resnick, 1999)_

The national literature on the relationships between school boards and student achievement is sparse. Internet searches using the key words “school board” and “local board” consistently return results citing the January 1994 edition of the _Phi Delta Kappan_, which included “A Special Section on School Boards” (_Phi Delta Kappan_, 1994) That section contained ten articles on a range of issues connected with school
boards and in which six of the ten articles are concerned more with general governance and management issues than with student achievement. Eight years later, in introducing a review of the literature, Land still finds it necessary to state that “few empirical studies of (school boards’) effectiveness exist…” (Land, 2002). The 2002 Eric Digest “Using School Board Policy to Improve Student Achievement’ concludes with the same finding: “Unfortunately, there is little empirical evidence on how board policy affects student learning… Much of the available literature consists of policy recommendations and opinion rather than empirical research.” (Lashway, 2002)

The relatively sparse literature does contain some consistent elements, however. School boards emerge as essentially conservative bodies which generally serve to maintain the status quo. “[S]chool boards and administrators are very good at doing more of what they are already doing” (Danzberger, 1994, p. 369), but that is not likely to move school reform forward or to increase student achievement. Since school boards historically have done little related to improving students’ academic performance (Lashway, 2002), “doing more of the same” manifests as anything from benign neglect to outright avoidance of student achievement issues by school boards. “[D]istrict-level passivity was a common theme” in one study of low-performing schools in Washington state, fostering a culture in which “Principals and teachers felt ‘little performance pressure,’ and boards seemed disengaged.” (Maria McCarthy and Mary Beth Celio, cited in Lashway, 2002)

However, if local boards truly mirror the views of their constituent communities, then even in the face of continuing dissatisfaction with “the nation’s schools” (Phi Delta
Kappa, 2011), school boards’ conservatism accurately reflects the public’s positive perception of their local schools (National School Boards Association, 2012). Alsbury sees this as a clear manifestation of Dissatisfaction Theory, which holds that citizen activism with respect to school boards is directly related to the level of dissatisfaction those citizens have with the existing school board. If the public is satisfied, then there are few candidates for board seats, voter turn-out is low, incumbents tend to win reelection and superintendents tend to keep their jobs. High levels of dissatisfaction, however, result in multiple candidates and hard-fought campaigns, high voter turn-out, the defeat of incumbents and the replacement (generally within three years) of sitting superintendents (Alsbury, 2008).

National leaders, meanwhile, have focused on a short list of factors that portray U.S. schools as being seriously lacking. Polls consistently report public dissatisfaction with schools in general (Phi Delta Kappa – Gallup Polls). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows only gradual improvement in student performance in spite of decades of school reform efforts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011b), and also shows U.S. students performing only in the middle of the pack in international comparisons like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 20111a).

Building on this foundation, federal and state governments have taken steps to compensate for what they perceive as the lack of leadership in improving U.S. students’ academic performance. Ever since the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik wrecked politicians out of their complacency regarding the nation’s schools, from the National
Defense Education Act (U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission) through *A Nation at Risk* to No Child Left Behind, politicians have become ever more focused on education while the focus of local boards has changed very little.

Much of the research either considers broad topics such as the composition of school boards or focuses very sharply on details of school board operation or viewpoints. A study supported jointly by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Iowa School Boards Foundation surveyed a national sample of school districts and gathered descriptive data (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Findings were grouped into six “areas of interest”: who serves on school boards, what board members think, how school boards go about their work, how school boards are configured, school board elections, and school boards and their superintendents. The study found, among other things, that the average school board member is better educated than the general population, tends to be politically centrist, generally holds views similar to those of their superintendents, and sees student achievement as an important issue but not necessarily the top priority issue for their boards. While differing somewhat in specific details, these findings were not significantly different from those of an earlier National School Boards’ Association (NSBA) study (Hess, 2002). A study by Brown, Newman and Rivers focused narrowly on the influence of context on the types of information that board members felt they needed in order to make decisions (Brown, Newman & Rivers, 1985), while Krepel found school board members to be “ambivalent” about national goals for education as compared to the boards’ local goals (Krepel, 1992).

Occasional studies have expressed concern over school boards’ ability to remain
viable as governance bodies (Land, 2002; Sewall, 1996) or to function in leadership roles to bring about increases in student achievement (Ward, 2004; Loring 2005; Campbell & Green, 1994; Nowakowski & First, 1989; Kerr, 1964) in spite of board members’ reporting that they see student achievement as a leading concern (Hess, 2002). Some researchers point out ways school boards could organize in order to continue to function in an ever changing environment (Kirst, 1994; Mizell, 2010; Tucker, 2010). Others focus on contrasting the characteristics of boards in districts with relatively high student achievement with the characteristics of boards in districts with similar demographics but chronically low student achievement (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000).

**The Lighthouse Study**

The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) conducted the Lighthouse Study, which is perhaps the most rigorous and respected study of the effectiveness of school boards in improving student achievement. The study was conducted in three phases, beginning in 1998 and continuing through 2012. Phase I was conducted between 1998 and 2000, and it examined similarities and differences between characteristics of school boards in high-achieving districts and school boards in low-achieving school districts. The study examined six school districts in Georgia. The districts were studied in pairs, with each pair carefully matched for criteria such as size, locale (urban or rural) and student poverty level in an effort to control for factors unrelated to the school boards. This phase of the study found that there were indeed significant differences between the
school boards in high- and low-achieving districts, and it identified seven “conditions for productive change” that were found in the boards of high-achieving districts but not in the boards of low-achieving districts (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000; Dellagardelle, 2008). Those seven conditions were:

1. Connections across the system,
2. Knowing what it takes to change achievement,
3. Workplace support,
4. Professional development,
5. A balance between districtwide direction and building-level autonomy,
6. A strong community connection, and
7. Distributed leadership (Dellagardelle, 2008).

Phase II of the Lighthouse Study (2002-2007) extended the original study to examine how boards influence conditions for improving student achievement and the supports needed for boards to do this work. The “Phase II Extension” (2004-2006) turned to an examination of board member and superintendent beliefs about their roles and of how those beliefs reflected board success in improving student achievement.

Phase III (2006-2010) expanded the original Lighthouse research into a multi-state study on best practices for school boards and also included a companion study on best practices of state school board associations in developing board leadership (Dellagardelle, 2008).

The Lighthouse Study in all its phases concludes that boards can have a positive effect on student achievement. School boards embody and model belief systems for their districts (for example, “all students can and will learn” vs. “our students may not be
doing very well, but they’re doing the best that they can”), and when articulated from the top of the school district hierarchy these beliefs tend to shape beliefs at the other levels. Effective school boards monitor the performance of the district’s students and set expectations, and then watch to assure that their board policies foster the conditions necessary for student success (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2000; Dellagardelle, 2008).

**National School Boards Association – Center for Public Education**

In a report posted on January 28, 2011, the National School Boards Association’s Center for Public Education (CPE) noted that “Despite the pivotal role of school boards in the nation’s educational framework, comparatively few studies focused on the practices and effectiveness of elective school boards.” (Center for Public Education, 2011a and 2011b). Even so, CPE found that three types of research had been conducted of sufficient quantity or quality to provide significant insights into the effectiveness of school boards. The three types of research were:

1. Case studies – detailed examinations of specific school districts, and
2. Studies with comparison districts – studies, including the Lighthouse Study, comparing characteristics of matched pairs of school districts in high-performing and low-performing school districts.
3. Meta-analyses of research – works seeking to identify trends that emerge from the findings of multiple independent studies. (Center for Public Education,
From its analysis of research, CPE found that effective school boards:

1. Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision;

2. Have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels;

3. Are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement;

4. Have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals;

5. Are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement;

6. Align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals;

7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust; and

8. Take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts. (Center for Public Education, 2011a and 2011b)
Other Research

Although not as far-reaching as the Lighthouse or CPE studies, smaller scale research has indicated that conditions associated with school boards that are effective in supporting high student achievement include an emphasis on data (Armstrong & Anthes, 2001; Carr, 2001). Other studies cite the importance of school boards in creating and continuously reviewing policy to assure that it promotes student achievement or, at least, that it does not stand in the way of improving student achievement (Kirst, 1994; Lashway, 2002).

Among authors who base their work on observation or experience rather than research, views on the role and effectiveness of school boards cover the entire spectrum. Often the loudest voices are those attacking the school board as an institution (Finn, in Education Next, 2011; Maeroff, 2010; Miller, 2008), yet others defend it – far more often on the grounds that the school board is a close-to-the-people institution of representative democracy than on school boards’ effectiveness or efficiency (Usdan, 2010; Resnick & Bryant, 2010) – while the best that many can do is to argue, in essence, that “School boards are a flawed form of governance but still serviceable” (Hess, 2010). Perhaps the largest body of pro-school-board literature either describes specific examples of school boards that have been effective (Hardy, 2008; Dillon, 2011; Hardy, 2011; Stover, 2011; Vail, 2011) or provides advice on proper school board operation, training and/or reform strategies (Campbell & Greene, 1994; Bracey & Resnick, 1998; California School Boards Association, et. al., 1999; Smoley, 1999; National School Boards Foundation, 2001;

**Conclusions**

Overall, there remains far more opinion than research to be found in the literature on school boards. The greatest volume of the literature consists of commentary, position statements and advice, mostly based on authors’ personal views on or experience with schools and school boards. The research that does exist tends to be either global or arcane, or focused on governance issues not specifically related to instructional leadership (as with the Lighthouse study’s identification of school board characteristics; Brown, Newman and Rivers’ research on the influence of context on decision making; or Alsbury’s application of Dissatisfaction Theory). This does little to inform the average school board member, for whom school board service is undertaken as a part-time civic duty rather than as a full-time occupation. There is a need, then, for work that brings opinion and research together in forms that are accessible to the lay person and that provide information, tools and strategies that the average school board member can use to lead his/her district in its efforts to improve its students’ academic achievement. As vital as this is on a national scale, it is even more vital in Delaware, a small state with few resources to devote to developing well informed and effective school board members.
## Comparison of the NSBA / CPE and the Lighthouse Studies

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<tr>
<th>NSBA / CPE</th>
<th>Lighthouse</th>
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<td>Knowing what it takes to change achievement</td>
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Workplace support  
A strong community connection |
| Are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement | Knowing what it takes to change achievement                                |
| Align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals | Workplace support  
Professional development |
| Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust | Workplace support  
A balance between districtwide direction and building-level autonomy  
Distributed leadership |
| Take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts | Knowing what it takes to change achievement  
Workplace support  
Professional development |
REFERENCE LIST


2011, pp. 25-27.


National Center for Education Statistics (2011a). Highlights from PISA 2009:


Tucker, M. (2010). Changing the system is the only solution. Phi Delta Kappan, 91 (6)


Appendix D

SURVEY ANALYSIS
Introduction

The national research on school boards is sparse, and this is especially true for research on school board members’ views on their role as educational leaders. The relatively few studies which have been done do contain some consistent elements, however. School boards emerge as essentially conservative bodies which generally serve to maintain the status quo. “[S]chool boards and administrators are very good at doing more of what they are already doing” (Danzberger, 1994, p. 369). Even in the face of continuing dissatisfaction with “the nation’s schools” (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011), the views of school boards generally seem to reflect the public’s positive perception of their own local schools (National School Boards Association, 2012). Alsbury’s research holds
that citizen activism with respect to school boards is directly related to the level of dissatisfaction those citizens have with the existing school board (Alsbury, 2008).

National leaders, meanwhile, have focused on a short list of factors that portray U.S. schools as being seriously lacking. Polls consistently report public dissatisfaction with schools in general (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows only gradual improvement in student performance in spite of decades of school reform efforts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011b), and also shows U.S. students performing only in the middle of the pack in international comparisons like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Overall, there remains far more opinion than research to be found in the literature on school boards, and none of the research done so far has focused on Delaware school boards. This does little to inform Delaware board members, for whom school board service is undertaken as a part-time civic duty with little time available for gathering background information on topics outside of those confronting his/her local board.

There is a need, then, for work that focuses on Delaware school boards, that is accessible to the lay person, and that provides information that the average school board member can use to lead his/her district in its efforts to improve its students’ academic achievement. As vital as this is on a national scale, it is even more vital in Delaware, a small state with few resources to devote to developing well informed and effective school board members.
Purpose

This survey was developed by David Sechler as part of his work toward an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware, and was informed by his experiences as a member of the Caesar Rodney School District Board of Education and as a member of the Board of Directors and then president of the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA). Additional input was provided by Susan Francis, Executive Director of the DSBA. The intent of the survey was to provide information that could be of use to anyone wanting to understand Delaware school boards, and in particular to help the DSBA Executive Director and Board of Directors to better serve the organization’s membership.

In the decades prior to the survey, the United States in general and Delaware in particular had experienced a time of great change and great uncertainty in the field of education. Broad concerns about schools and students’ academic performance contrasted with citizens’ general satisfaction with their own local schools. Pressure from the private sector and from federal and state governments provided incentives to improve as well as confusion and consternation about what schools and districts should do to move forward. In this context, questions arose about educational leadership, and in particular about the leadership role of school boards and school board members. This survey was created to begin this work by providing baseline data about Delaware school board members’ perceptions of their duties and responsibilities in their districts, communities and the state, and about their roles as leaders in the educational system.
The survey targets currently serving members of non-charter Delaware public schools. It was divided into four sections:

I. Current Views on School Boards as Leaders
II. Current Leadership Activities
III. School Board Training
IV. Demographics

Each of the first three sections was designed to gather information on some specific aspect of school boards as educational leaders, and the fourth section gathered information that would help get a better picture of who school board members are and help in identifying any possible trends among subgroups among board members. (See the Appendix for the full text of the survey.)

No comparable data collection has been done on Delaware school board members. Information about the state’s school board members exists mostly informally, gathered by individuals as they live and interact in the very small society of school boards. Delaware’s small size has been both a help and a hindrance in this regard. With only nineteen school districts in the state, seating a total of one hundred and seventeen board members, it is entirely possible for any given board member at least to meet all of the other school board members in the state. No board member is more than two hours’ drive from any Delaware school district or from any school-related activity or ceremony such as the annual state Teacher of the Year or Superstars in Education banquets, or the monthly meetings of the Delaware School Boards Association Board of Directors meetings, so it is highly likely that a board member who chooses to be active in state
activities at least will meet everyone in the subgroup of board members who choose to be active beyond the bounds of their own districts. Communication between Delaware school boards, while far from perfect, is relatively easy. Where other states have hundreds of school boards and must govern their state school board association through representative assemblies, the DSBA’s monthly board of directors meetings regularly bring together representatives of all of the state’s nineteen school districts. So while serving on a Delaware school board can make one a member of a relatively small extended family and informal information is readily available to anyone who chooses to seek it out, there have been no previous attempts to gather information about school board members in any formal way.

**Procedure**

The survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Software, available through the University of Delaware. The survey length was limited so that an average respondent could complete the survey in a single session of about twenty minutes. The survey was distributed via e-mail through the DSBA listserv to current members of the school boards of all non-charter Delaware public school districts. Distribution was in the form of an email to all school board members from Susan Francis, DSBA Executive Director, in which she explained the survey and provided the link to the Qualtrics survey page. The survey opened on Wednesday, October 9, 2013 and officially closed at 11:59 p.m. on
Wednesday, October 16, 2013. All responses were collected online, and the Qualtrics software was used to conduct much of the analysis of responses.

Forty-four respondents completed the survey, giving a sample size of 36.7% of the 117 Delaware non-charter school board members. An additional nine respondents started but did not complete the survey, so their responses were not considered in the analysis of results.

**Respondent Characteristics**

The sample consisted of 28 males and 13 females, giving the sample a 68% to 32% split which approximates the split of 70 males and 47 females (60% and 40%, respectively) among all school board members in the state. Of the 42 respondents who identified their districts, twenty (48%) were in Sussex County, twelve (29%) were in New Castle County and ten (24%) were in Kent County. The sample somewhat over-represents Sussex County and under-represents New Castle and Kent Counties, where the percentages of all school board members are 38%, 33% and 30%, respectively. The sample also is skewed toward relatively new board members, with 48% reporting that they were in their first terms and an additional 7% reporting that they were in their first year of their first term. Eleven respondents (27%) had been teachers and/or school administrators at some time before becoming school board members. Ages ranged from the thirties to over 70, with the largest group being in their forties. No respondents reported that they were under 30 years old.
Table D.1: Age Ranges of Delaware School Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 or older</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School board members are not new Delaware residents. A full 50% of respondents (21) reported being life-long residents, defined as having been born in Delaware and lived here all their lives except for any time they may have spent living out of state while they attended college or served in the military. An additional 33% of respondents have lived in Delaware for 20 years or more, and 17% have lived in the state for five to 20 years. No respondents reported living in the state for less than five years.

Table D.2: Length of State Residency of Delaware School Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Residency in Delaware</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime resident (you were born in Delaware, and except for college or military service you have lived here all your life)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-time resident (more than 20 years)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-term resident (5-20 years)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New resident (less than 5 years)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They also were not new residents in their districts. Seventy-three percent of respondents (30) reported living in their districts for more than 20 years. Other respondents were spread fairly evenly across the other categories, with seven percent living in their districts for 16 to 20 years, seven percent for 11 to 15 years, and 12% for five to ten years. No respondents reported living in their districts for less than five years.
The majority of respondents (55%) were in their first terms on the school board. Three respondents (7%) were in the first year of their first term. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) were in their second terms, and three respondents (7%) were in their serving in their fifth term or more. Eighty-three percent of respondents were elected to their positions, while the remaining 17% were appointed to their positions. (All members of vocational-technical district boards are appointed, and all Delaware district boards have the power to appoint citizens to fill the remainder of the current year of any term vacated in the middle of the school year.)

**Table D.4: Number of Terms Served**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Terms Served</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Less than 1 year (you are starting your first term) | 3  | 7%
| 1-5 years (you are in your first term)      | 20 | 48%
| 6-10 years (you are in your 2nd term)       | 10 | 24%
| 11-15 years (you are in your 3rd term)      | 4  | 10%
| 16-20 years (you are in your 4th term)      | 2  | 5%
| More than 20 years (you have served more than 4 full terms) | 3  | 7%
| Total                                      | 42 | 100%

Respondents were evenly split with respect to their political affiliations, with 38% Republicans, 35% Democrats and 24% Independents. No respondents reported being affiliated with the Green Party or the Libertarian party. The great majority of
respondents generally are not interested in other elected offices. Eighty-three percent of respondents either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the statement “I am not interested in running for other political offices,” although there were respondents who “see the school board as a first step in my political career.”

**Current Views on School Boards as Leaders**

Respondents were given the following prompt: “I believe that my primary role as a board member is to be:

- an educational/instructional leader in my district
- a “citizen watchdog” – to make sure that the district is abiding by the law and not misspending taxpayer money.
- a “citizen representative” – to make sure that the district keeps the views of all district citizens in mind when decisions are being made.
- an advocate for a specific position or group of constituents.”

Respondents were instructed to select “1” for “the statement which represents what you see as your most important role,” a “2” for their second most important role, and so on. Respondents were instructed not to select any number for an item which they did not see as being their role or responsibility as a board member.

The role of “citizen representative” received the highest rankings, with 57% selecting it as their most important role and 32% selecting it as their second most important responsibility, for a total of 89% of respondents ranking this role as being their
first or second most important role. This role also received the highest number of responses (44). This was the only role that was selected at some level by all 44 survey respondents, indicating that everyone who completed the survey considered being a citizen representative to be their responsibility to at least some degree.

The role of “citizen watchdog” received the second highest total of #1 and #2 rankings (65%), but only 24% of respondents selected this as their most important role. It also is important to note that this role received only 37 selections in all, indicating that seven respondents (16%) did not consider “citizen watchdog” to be their role at all.

The role of “advocate for a specific position or group of constituents” received only 30 selections out of a possible 44, but those selections were strongly skewed to the low end, with 63% of the 30 respondents selecting it as #4. Taken together, the number and distribution of responses indicate that advocacy for a specific position or group is considered to be a relatively low ranking role by approximately two-thirds of respondents, and one-third of respondents did not see this as being any role at all for them.

The role of “educational/instructional leader” received the fewest total selections (29), indicating that roughly a third of respondents did not consider “educational / instructional leader” to be any part of their role. Selections by the two-thirds of respondents who did consider it to be one of their roles were distributed quite evenly across the four possible rankings, with only 16% of the total of 44 respondents seeing this as their most important role.
Using the same ranking format, respondents were given the following prompt:

“My job is to make sure that:

- instruction is of the highest quality and that students’ academic performance is the best that it can be.

- the district is well managed. I focus on budget, facilities and other non-instructional aspects of the district.

- the district ‘takes care of its own’ – that as much as possible the district employs residents and their families, buys goods and services from businesses within the district, etc.

- the district is not breaking any laws or regulations. As long as the district is not doing anything in violation of laws or regulations, I do not question the administration’s decisions.”
Unlike “citizen representative” in the previous item, none of the options in this item was selected by all 44 respondents. “The district is well managed” received the most selections (40) with “instruction is of the highest quality” receiving only one less (39). The distributions of the selections was different, however, with the #1 and #2 rankings being essentially reversed for the two options. Of the 39 respondents who selected “instruction is of the highest quality” 67% (26) of them ranked it as #1 and 21% (8) ranked it as #2. While 40 respondents selected “the district is well managed” at some level, only 25% (10) ranked it as #1 while 63% (25) ranked it as #2. Clearly, these two areas were high priorities for respondents, and it may well be that if respondents were given the option to do so they would have ranked these two areas as being equal of equal importance.

The other two options were ranked significantly lower. “The district is not breaking any laws or regulations” received 32 selections, but only nine percent (3) of those ranked this option as #1, while “the district ‘takes care of its own’” received only 28 selections with only 14% (4) ranking it as #1 but 57% (16) ranking it as #4.

Overall, the responses to this item indicate that respondents view both ensuring that their districts provide high quality instruction that leads to high levels of student performance and ensuring that their districts are well managed to be high priorities. Districts abiding by laws and regulations and “taking care of their own” are important also, but not to the same degree.
Chart 2: Board Members’ Views on their Primary Responsibilities

The results from these rank-order survey items are roughly consistent with the responses given to a series of Likert Scale questions on board members’ views on leadership. Respondents felt responsible for management of the district, but they seemed committed to working through the superintendent rather than to micro-managing the district. For example, 90% of respondents either Disagreed (41%) or Strongly Disagreed (49%) with the statement “School boards were elected to run their districts. We are the bosses, and administration, teachers and staff should do what we tell them to do,” while 78% of respondents either Agreed (24%) or Strongly Agreed (54%) with the statement, “Although the school board is the legal employer for everyone in the district, the school board’s only real employee is the superintendent.” Responses to Likert Scale items indicated a somewhat stronger perception of school board members as educational leaders than did the rank-order items. Fifty-eight percent of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement, “I consider myself to be an educational leader” and
66% Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement, “It is my responsibility if students in my district do not perform well.”
Respondents generally felt that when first elected they did not have “the background or training necessary to make informed decisions” but that they had received adequate training after they had begun serving on their boards. They felt that they focused on policy decisions, but that they also should be involved in major non-policy decisions made in their districts.

Regardless of the topic at hand, respondents saw themselves as engaging with the issues rather than just processing things through the system. Eighty-six percent of respondents either Disagreed (49%) or Strongly Disagreed (37%) with the statement, “My school board approves almost everything that is brought to us with little discussion or questioning,” and responses to a series of items on levels of board members’ attention to a range of items related to instructional and management issues indicated that the respondents saw themselves as both aware of and qualified to make decisions regarding instructional issues.

Not surprisingly, a series of items asking how knowledgeable board members need to be on a list of areas including academics, arts, athletics, and non-academic management issues indicated that there are virtually no aspects of a school district’s operation about which board members felt they do not need to have at least some basic level of understanding. Legal and financial issues topped the list of areas on which board members needed to understand, with the highest percents of respondents saying that they needed to be fully informed on
lawsuits involving the district (95%), ethics for school board members (91%), local school board policies and regulations (91%) and budget issues (88%). For 15 of the 29 areas listed, including all of those just listed, zero respondents selected “I do not need to know about this.” The areas on which the most board members felt no need to be informed were “Health & safety issues – individual issues and/or problems that are not likely to have implications for the district” and issues related to individual schools’ master schedules, each of which received a rating of “I do not need to know about this” from 16% of respondents.

**Current Leadership Activities**

The second section of the survey contained three blocks of related questions. Each block took respondents through a continuum of possible levels of involvement with issues of importance to school districts. The underlying principle was that there are four hierarchical levels of an individual’s involvement with policy. At the lowest level, individuals seek only to UNDERSTAND policy issues by gathering information and opinions about them. At the next level, individuals seek to INFORM the policy work by sharing their information and opinions with others. At the third level, individuals seek to INFLUENCE policy work by going beyond sharing
information and opinions to working actively to get others to adopt their positions. At the highest level, individuals seek to INITIATE policy work based on their information and opinions on a given issue. The belief behind this hierarchy is that the higher the level on which the individual is operating, the greater the level of that individual’s engagement with the policy issue. Specifically with respect to this survey, it was taken as given that the higher the level on the hierarchy, the higher the individual’s level of leadership on educational issues. The survey asked respondents to identify their positions on this hierarchy with respect to three levels of policy: local district, community (the city, town or general area in which the district is located), and state.

**Local Level – Understanding Issues and Related Policy** – At the local district level, responses indicated that most board members (56%) paid careful attention to the board packets they received before each meeting, reading the packets carefully before each meeting and preparing questions and/or discussion points in advance to take to the meetings. An additional 35% of respondents indicated that “I read and study the board packet” and may not just prepare points in advance but may begin raising issues that concern them even before the next meeting begins. No respondents indicated that they wait for meetings to begin before reading and thinking about the board packet, relying only on information provided at those meetings to inform their positions.
Table D.5: Level of Engagement - UNDERSTANDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Engagement</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I usually rely on whatever information I already have when dealing with board issues. I usually don’t look at the board packet until I’m actually in the meeting. I ask questions at the meetings if any occur to me at the time.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read the board packet before each meeting and think about issues I want to raise and/or questions I may want to ask at the meeting.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read the board packet carefully before each meeting and I prepare in advance any discussion points I want to bring to the meeting and/or questions I want to ask at the meeting. If I need additional information, I contact my superintendent or his/her designees before the meeting so that I come to the meeting with all the information I need.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read and study the board packet, I prepare issues and/or questions in advance but I don’t necessarily wait until board meetings to raise my issues or to ask my questions. I seek out and read additional information from my district office and from state and national resources (e.g., DSBA, NSBA, American School Board Journal).</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Level – Informing Issues and Related Policy – Whatever their practice with respect to understanding board issues, respondents indicated that they were more activist when it came to working to inform their colleagues regarding district issues. Seventy-six percent of respondents indicated that they worked to help their colleagues and their superintendent be fully informed by sharing their views and all the information they have during board meetings. An additional 19% indicated that they come to board meetings with ideas and views that they want to share, and no respondents indicated that they “do little or nothing” to share their views.

Table D.6: Level of Engagement - INFORMING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Engagement - INFORMING</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do little or nothing to bring additional information or my personal views to the discussion of school board issues.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen to the discussions at our board meetings and if I happen to think of something that relates to an issue then I share my thought.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I come to the board meetings with ideas and/or views that I want to share in the meeting.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During a board meeting, I share my views and all the information I have with my fellow board members and with my superintendent.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Level – Influencing Issues and Related Policy – Respondents were less activist when it came to influencing issues and related policy. The majority of respondents (64%) indicated that they “explain my views on the issues” but do not go beyond that to influence the views of others. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they would “advocate” for their views, while 26% of respondents indicated that they will try actively to influence others’ views and votes if they feel strongly about an issue. No respondents indicated that they cast their votes but keep their personal views to themselves.

Table D.7: Level of Engagement - INFLUENCING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Engagement - INFLUENCING</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I advocate for my views and try to persuade others to support my positions on issues that come before the board.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I explain my views on the issues that come before the board. If that persuades other members to support my positions on issues, that’s fine, but I don’t actively work to change people’s minds.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote on the motions that are made in the board meetings, but mostly keep my personal views to myself. I make no attempt to affect other board members’ positions on issues.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I feel strongly about an issue I work hard to try to get my other board members to see things my way and to vote to support my positions.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Level – Initiating Issues and Related Policy – Levels of engagement moved somewhat higher again when respondents considered their work in initiating motions in board meetings. Roughly one third of respondents (37%) said that they “frequently submit new topics for discussion and/or new action items for my board’s agenda.” The majority of respondents (58%) said that they didn’t generally bring up new issues, but that they will initiate action on an issue they feel is important if no one else raises the issue. Consistent with the other levels in this section, no respondents indicated that they vote on motions but “seldom or never submit topics for discussion or make motions myself.”

Table D.8: Level of Engagement - INITIATING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Engagement - INITIATING</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I vote on the motions that are made in board meetings, but I seldom or never submit topics for discussion or make motions myself.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will start discussions or make motions on routine or on-going issues, but I don’t bring new topics or issues to the board.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t generally bring up new issues, but if there is an issue that is important to me and I don’t see anyone else taking action, I will submit either a topic for discussion or an action item for the board’s agenda.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently submit new topics for discussion and/or new action items for my board’s agenda.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Community Level** – At the community level, the majority of respondents (72%) indicated that they regularly seek out the news on local issues and make a point of understanding all they can about them. An additional 19% indicated that they generally get the local news and that they make a point of following issues of interest to them. Two percent of respondents indicated that they do little or nothing to understand local community issues, and that their only information on community issues is whatever they happen to get as they go about their normal business.

Fewer respondents work actively to inform others on community education issues. Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they “take advantage of normal opportunities to inform community leaders regarding school/education issues,” while only 24% indicated that they “make my own opportunities” to inform those leaders. An additional 24% will share information if they happen to see community leaders outside of school board meetings, and seven percent indicated that they “do little or nothing to inform community leaders” regarding school/education issues.

The shift to less activism continued at the Influence level. Fifty-one percent of respondents indicated that they “take advantage of normal opportunities to convince local leaders to adopt my positions,” but only 16% said that they “make their own opportunities” to do so. Twenty-eight percent will share their views if they happen to see community leaders outside of school
board meetings, and five percent do little or nothing to influence community leaders.

Work to initiate action on community issues related to education roughly mirrors the levels of engagement at the Influence level. Sixty percent of respondents will take steps such as attending public meetings and writing letters to leaders to initiate action if an issue is important to them. Only nine percent said that they “make my own opportunities” to initiate action on education-related community issues which they feel are important.

**State Level** – Respondents indicated a strong effort to understand state issues, with 50% saying that they regularly get state news and that they work to learn all they can about state education issues, and 45% saying that they “generally” get the news on state issues and that they try to stay informed on state issues of particular interest to them. Only five percent said they “only occasionally catch the state news” in the media and tune in when they happen to hear something about an issue of interest to them. No respondents indicated that they do little or nothing to understand state education issues.

Responses at the Inform and Influence levels closely mirrored responses at those levels for community issues, with 48% indicating that they take advantage of normal opportunities to inform state leaders of their views and 50% indicating that they take advantage of normal opportunities to convince
state leaders to adopt their positions on education issues. The distribution of responses at the Initiate level was a bit flatter and somewhat more skewed toward the low end. While 40% of respondents indicated that they will take steps to initiate action on state issues of importance to them, 33% do so only if an issue is “particularly important to me or affects me personally.” Nineteen percent say they will make their own opportunities to advocate for their positions on state issues, while seven percent say that they do little or nothing to begin discussions or actions on state level issues.

**Patterns in Levels of Leadership** – Overall, responses at the district, community and state levels are remarkably consistent at each level of leadership. At all levels, respondents indicate that they make a significant effort to stay informed on the issues. They generally take steps to share their information and views with their colleagues and with leaders at other levels, although that sharing may be mostly in the form of discussion at regular monthly school board meetings or in “normal opportunities” for conversations, such as chance encounters at public or social functions or at community or state meetings organized by other individuals or groups. With respect to moving forward on issues, the work is most activist at the district level, somewhat less activist at the community level, and still less activist at the state level, especially at the level of initiating state action.
Another remarkable pattern is how consistent the responses were across the different demographic groups. A series of cross tabulations of the data show no appreciable differences in responses related to the ages of the respondents, their length of board service, the county in which their district is located, their political affiliation, or any of the other demographic variables for which data was collected by this survey.

**School Board Training**

The shortest section of the survey asked respondents to indicate where they got information to inform their school board practice and to rate the value of various types of school board training they had received.

Most respondents (80%) indicated that they accessed their local district’s web site, giving this source the highest rating of all of the information sources. The second most accessed resources were *American School*, the journal of the National School Boards Association and the Delaware Department of Education web site, each of which were read or accessed by 58% of respondents. The least accessed sources on the list were the Delaware Education Association’s web site (33%) and “NSBA publications other than *American School*” (35%). Forty-five percent of respondents said that they read/accessed the DSBA web site.
All types of school board training were generally well received. All of the trainings listed for new board members were found to be either “Very Valuable” or “Somewhat Valuable” by a majority of respondents. Highest ratings were given to various types of district-level training, to the state financial training and to the New Board Member training provided by DSBA. Training attended after the respondents’ first year on the board was somewhat less highly rated, perhaps because the content of the training remained the same while board members felt they had already become competent with that content. District-level training continued to be highly regarded, although the NSBA’s annual conference received the highest ratings from experienced board members, and the DSBA fall and winter clinics were more highly rated as training for experienced board members than for first-year board members.
Summary and Recommendations for Future Surveys

Based on the sample of forty-four respondents who completed or nearly completed the survey, Delaware school board members are a moderately diverse group that is more than moderately consistent in its views on school board service. They generally are middle aged, although there are some board members who are in their thirties and some who are seventy years old or older. They have lived in Delaware for a long time, the vast majority having lived in the state for twenty years or more, with half of respondents being life-long residents. Most have lived in their current school districts for more than twenty years. Roughly half of respondents were in their first term on the board, and another quarter of respondents were in their second term. Nearly all are not interested in running for other political offices, although a few individuals either have at least some interest in future office or even see their school board service as the first step in a political career.

They see “citizen representative” as being their most important role, but they do not see themselves as primarily advocates for any specific position or group of constituents. They are ambiguous about whether they are or are not educational leaders, but they do see themselves as being equally as responsible for instructional quality and student performance as they are for making sure their districts are well managed. While they recognize their ultimate legal responsibility for what happens in their districts, they also see themselves as
working primarily through their superintendents rather than acting directly as 
the “bosses” in the district.

Board members make it a priority to be understand education issues at 
the district, community and state levels. They freely share their information and 
views with others, especially at the local board level, but they are less likely to 
be assertive about sharing their information and views at the community or state 
levels. Most will take advantage of opportunities to share when education 
topics come up in their lives – in casual conversations or at community or state 
functions – but few work to “make their own opportunities” to advance their 
positions on issues.

New school board members come into their first terms in office mostly 
unprepared for many aspects of their work, but they generally are satisfied with 
the training they receive during their first year in office. The state financial 
training and training provided at the district level was most highly rated. They 
are somewhat less satisfied with training provided to experienced board 
members, although their ratings for training provided at the NSBA annual 
conference and at the DSBA fall and spring clinics is seen as more valuable by 
experienced board members than by new board members.

Looking to future work, the DSBA may want to dig deeper into school 
board members’ ambiguity with respect to their roles as educational leaders.
While board members see themselves as having responsibility for the quality of
instruction and for the academic performance of students in their districts, they shy away from labeling themselves as leaders and they tend to be more focused on understanding issues than on influencing or initiating issues, especially at the community and state levels. DSBA might want to determine whether this is because of board members’ beliefs that this is their proper role, or might it be due to a lack of opportunity or training on how to move things forward at levels beyond the local district.

Future inquiries might look into board members’ understanding of policy as a lever for action and a way to set expectations rather than as solely a way to specify courses of action for problematic situations. The DSBA and the Delaware Department of Education also might consider gathering more information on board members’ perceptions of the value and quality of training, especially training targeted to board members beyond their first year of service.

Finally, DSBA might consider some changes in the survey itself, partly to gather additional data and partly to make the survey more accessible. Possible changes include adding an ethnicity item to the demographics section, breaking the residency item into smaller intervals (5-20 years may be too big an interval to define a meaningful group of “medium-term residents”), and making the survey available in hard copy for board members who prefer that format or who do not have easy access to the internet.
Whatever the future may bring, the process of gathering data on Delaware’s public school board members has begun, and the data collected by this survey gives DSBA and other researchers a baseline from which to work.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDIX

Text of Survey

Downloaded from Qualtrics Survey Software
Welcome, Delaware school board member!  This survey is designed to investigate the views and attitudes of current Delaware public school board members regarding their role as board members. All currently serving members of school boards of non-charter public schools in Delaware are being asked to complete this survey. It should take 20 minutes or less to complete the survey. Your responses will provide insights into who Delaware school board members are and into their perceptions of the work of school boards and school board members. The survey focuses on board members’ views on how boards and board members function; it does not ask for board members’ opinions or positions on specific educational issues. This information will be used by the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) to inform its membership as well as to evaluate and improve the services DSBA provides. This survey also may provide baseline information for future research on Delaware school boards.

The survey is designed to be anonymous and confidential. Results will be reported only for each county and for the state as a whole. The survey does not collect information that can be connected to specific districts or individuals. Your participation in the survey is completely optional; however, the higher the percentage of Delaware school board members that answer the survey, the more accurate and useful the information it produces will be. The survey was designed by David Sechler as part of his work toward an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Delaware, and it is being distributed to local school board members by the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA). David Sechler is a past member of the Caesar Rodney school board and a past president of DSBA. Results of the survey will be released in the form of a written report to DSBA.

Please contact David Sechler at principalteacher@comcast.net if you have questions or if you would like additional information about the survey. Thank you for your contribution to this effort to better understand and to better serve Delaware school boards.
Q2.1 For items #1 & 2, number the statements to reflect your views on your roles and responsibilities as a school board member. For each item, put a 1 by the statement which represents what you see as your most important role or responsibility, a 2 by the statement which represents your next most important role or responsibility, and so on. If a statement describes something which you do not believe to be role or responsibility for in you as a board member, do not select any number for that statement.

Q2.2 School Board member ROLES – I believe that my primary role as a board member is to be:
   ______ an educational/instructional leader in my district.
   ______ a “citizen watchdog” – to make sure that the district is abiding by the law and not misspending taxpayer money.
   ______ a “citizen representative” – to make sure that the district keeps the views of all district citizens in mind when decisions are being made.
   ______ an advocate for a specific position or group of constituents.

Q2.3 School Board Member RESPONSIBILITIES – My job is to make sure that:
   ______ instruction is of the highest quality and that students’ academic performance is the best that it can be.
   ______ the district is well managed. I focus on budget, facilities and other non-instructional aspects of the district.
   ______ the district “takes care of its own” – that as much as possible the district employs residents and their families, buys goods and services from businesses within the district, etc.
   ______ the district is not breaking any laws or regulations. As long as the district is not doing anything in violation of laws or regulations, I do not question the administration’s decisions.

Q2.4 For items #3-16, select the response which most accurately describes your view regarding your work as a school board member.
### Q2.5 Beliefs / Viewpoints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself to be an educational leader.</td>
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<td>It is my responsibility if students in my district do not perform well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am frequently asked for my input regarding educational leadership decisions in my district.</td>
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<td>All district employees are employees of the school board, and therefore the school board should hire, fire and manage all employees as we see fit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Although the school board is the legal employer for everyone in the district, the</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

182
The school board’s only real employee is the superintendent. School boards were elected to run their districts. We are the bosses, and administration, teachers, and staff should do what we tell them to do.
### Q2.6 Preparation / Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I was first elected to the school board, I had the background or training necessary to make informed decisions about instruction in my district.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Since I began serving on the school board, I have received training that has helped me to make informed decisions about instruction in my district.</td>
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### Q2.7 Board Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a board member, I focus on policy and leave any decisions not involving policy to district administration, teachers and staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a board member, policy is not my only concern. Any major decision made in the district should have school board approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school board provides effective educational leadership to the district.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school board approves almost everything that is brought to us with little discussion or</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
questioning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2.8 Instruction / Student Achievement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school board is familiar with all or most of my district’s instructional programs and/or initiatives.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>I personally am familiar with all or most of my district's instructional programs and/or initiatives.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My board closely monitors the quality of instruction that our students receive.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>I personally monitor the quality of instruction that our students receive.</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school board carefully</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitors student achievement data (school AYP ratings, DCAS scores, district common assessment scores, etc.).</td>
<td>I personally monitor student achievement data closely.</td>
<td>My school board initiates policies that support high quality teacher practice and/or high levels of student achievement.</td>
<td>I initiate policies that support high quality teacher practice and/or high levels of student achievement.</td>
<td>My school board</td>
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<tr>
<td>initiates action other than policies to support high quality teacher practice and/or high levels of student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I initiate action other than policies to support high quality teacher practice and/or high levels of student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school board does not feel qualified to make decisions about the quality of instruction that our students are receiving.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not feel qualified to make decisions about the quality of</td>
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<tr>
<td>instruction that our students are receiving. My board believes that our focus should be on management issues rather than on instructional issues. I believe that my focus as a board member should be on management issues rather than on instructional issues.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q2.9 Board Service As a Political Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am not interested in running for other political offices.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>I might be interested in running for other political offices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I see the school board as a first step in my political career.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q2.10 To be an effective school board member, how knowledgeable do you need be on the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY: I need to be fully informed.</th>
<th>MODERATELY: I need only a general understanding.</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL: I do not need to know about this.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum changes / updates</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional strategies used by teachers</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional initiatives, programs, practices (e.g., Learning Focused Strategies/LFS, Professional Learning Communities/PLCs, Positive Behavior Supports/PBS, Danielson’s Frameworks for Teaching)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional materials, technology, etc. used by teachers</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction-related professional development provided to teachers</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The system used to do employee evaluations (DPAS for teachers &amp; administrators; other systems for non-instructional staff)</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports events involving district teams or students</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic events involving district teams or students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; safety issues – initiatives, policies &amp; procedures, programs, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; safety issues – individual issues and/or problems that could have implications for the district (staffing changes, possible lawsuits, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; safety issues – individual issues and/or problems that are not likely to have implications for the district</td>
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<tr>
<td>School scheduling issues (e.g., the times when specific classes meet, the length of classes, the reasons behind why certain subjects are taught while others are not)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buildings &amp; grounds issues (maintenance &amp; custodial issues, construction, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operations issues</td>
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<td>(transportation, food service, etc.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget issues</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q2.11 To be an effective school board member, how knowledgeable do you need to be on the following? (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>VERY: I need to be fully informed</th>
<th>MODERATELY: I need only a general understanding</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL: I do not need to know about this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal issues related to education in general</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawsuits (potential and/or current) that involve the district</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring / firing / human resource issues</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics for school boards (i.e., for a board as a whole)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics for individual school board members</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management-related professional development provided to district staff</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract negotiations</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school board policies &amp; regulations</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing local (community, town, city, county) laws, regulations &amp;</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies related to education</td>
<td>Proposed local (community, town, city, county) laws, regulations &amp; policies related to education</td>
<td>Existing state laws, regulations &amp; policies related to education</td>
<td>Proposed state laws, regulations &amp; policies related to education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q3.1 Think about your work as a member of your local school board. With respect to DISTRICT issues and policy, select the statements which describe you most accurately. Please select only ONE statement for each survey item.

Q3.2 Work to UNDERSTAND issues & related policy:
○ I usually rely on whatever information I already have when dealing with board issues. I usually don’t look at the board packet until I’m actually in the meeting. I ask questions at the meetings if any occur to me at the time.
○ I read the board packet before each meeting and think about issues I want to raise and/or questions I may want to ask at the meeting.
○ I read the board packet carefully before each meeting and I prepare in advance any discussion points I want to bring to the meeting and/or questions I want to ask at the meeting. If I need additional information, I contact my superintendent or his/her designees before the meeting so that I come to the meeting with all the information I need.
○ I read and study the board packet, I prepare issues and/or questions in advance but I don’t necessarily wait until board meetings to raise my issues or to ask my questions. I seek out and read additional information from my district office and from state and national resources (e.g., DSBA, NSBA, American School Board Journal).

Q3.3 Work to INFORM issues & related policy:
○ I do little or nothing to bring additional information or my personal views to the discussion of school board issues.
○ I listen to the discussions at our board meetings and if I happen to think of something that relates to an issue then I share my thought.
○ I come to the board meetings with ideas and/or views that I want to share in the meeting.
○ During a board meeting, I share my views and all the information I have with my fellow board members and with my superintendent.
Q3.4 Work to INFLUENCE issues & related policy:
 I vote on the motions that are made in the board meetings, but mostly keep my personal views to myself. I make no attempt to affect other board members’ positions on issues.
 I explain my views on the issues that come before the board. If that persuades other members to support my positions on issues, that’s fine, but I don’t actively work to change people’s minds.
 I advocate for my views and try to persuade others to support my positions on issues that come before the board.
 When I feel strongly about an issue I work hard to try to get my other board members to see things my way and to vote to support my positions.

Q3.5 Work to INITIATE issues & related policy:
 I vote on the motions that are made in board meetings, but I seldom or never submit topics for discussion or make motions myself.
 I will start discussions or make motions on routine or on-going issues, but I don’t bring new topics or issues to the board.
 I don’t generally bring up new issues, but if there is an issue that is important to me and I don’t see anyone else taking action, I will submit either a topic for discussion or an action item for the board’s agenda.
 I frequently submit new topics for discussion and/or new action items for my board’s agenda.
Q4.1 Think about your work as a member of your local school board. With respect to LOCAL issues and policy, select the statements which describe you most accurately. Please select only ONE statement for each survey item. (LOCAL = community, village, town, city, county, etc.; a level between the school district and the state)

Q4.2 Work to UNDERSTAND issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to understand school-related issues in my community. Any information I have comes from talking with friends or neighbors or from whatever I happen to see or hear from other sources.
- I occasionally catch the local news on the TV or radio, or in the newspaper or online media. I generally am interested in issues when I hear about them, but I do not actively seek out information on local issues.
- I generally get local news on the TV or radio, and/or read my local newspaper or online media. I make a point to follow issues in which I am interested.
- I regularly get the local news on the TV or radio, and/or read my local newspaper or online media. I don’t just follow important issues; I make a point of learning all I can about them. If I feel that I don’t know enough about an issue, I do additional reading and/or research on the topic.

Q4.3 Work to INFORM issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to inform community leaders regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If community leaders come to a meeting I happen to be attending or if I happen to see them at other meetings, I will give them information on school issues.
- I take advantage of normal opportunities to inform community leaders regarding school/education issues. I sometimes attend local government meetings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of local publications.
- I make my own opportunities to inform community leaders regarding school/education issues. I seek out contacts with local leaders. I frequently attend local government meetings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of local publications.
Q4.4 Work to INFLUENCE issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to influence community leaders regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If community leaders come to a meeting I happen to be attending or if I happen to see them at other meetings, I will share my views with them.
- I take advantage of normal opportunities to convince local leaders to adopt my positions on education issues. I sometimes attend local government meetings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of local publications.
- I make my own opportunities to promote my positions regarding school/education issues with community leaders. I seek out contacts with local leaders. I frequently attend local government meetings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of local publications.

Q4.5 Work to INITIATE issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to begin community discussions or actions regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If an issue is particularly important to me or affects me personally, I will try to start a community discussion or to get people moving toward a specific action on an issue.
- If an issue is important to my district or to the community as a whole, I will take steps to begin a discussion or a course of action to address the issue. I sometimes sign up for public comment time at local government meetings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of local publications.
- For any issue that affects the schools and the community, I make my own opportunities to advocate for my positions. I seek out contacts with local leaders. I frequently sign up for public comment time at local government meetings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of local publications.
Q5.1 Think about your work as a member of your local school board and/or with organizations such as the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) or the National School Boards Association (NSBA). With respect to STATE issues and policy, select the statements which describe you most accurately. Please select only ONE statement for each survey item.

Q5.2 Work to UNDERSTAND issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to understand school-related issues in my state. Any information I have comes from talking with friends or neighbors or from whatever I happen to see or hear from other sources.
- I occasionally catch the state news on the TV or radio, or in the newspaper or online media. I generally am interested in issues when I hear about them, but I do not actively seek out information on state issues.
- I generally get state news on the TV or radio, and/or read state news sections of my newspaper or online media. I make a point to follow issues in which I am interested.
- I regularly get state news on the TV or radio, and/or read state news sections of my newspaper or online media. I make a point of learning all I can about them. If I feel that I don’t know enough about an issue, I do additional reading and/or research on the topic.

Q5.3 Work to INFORM issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to inform state leaders regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If state leaders come to a meeting I happen to be attending or if I happen to see them at other meetings, I will give them information on school issues.
- I take advantage of normal opportunities to inform state leaders regarding school/education issues. I sometimes attend state government meetings or hearings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of state publications.
- I make my own opportunities to inform state leaders regarding school/education issues. I seek out contacts with state leaders. I frequently attend state government meetings or hearings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of state publications.
Q5.4 Work to INFLUENCE issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to influence state leaders regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If state leaders come to a meeting I happen to be attending or if I happen to see them at other meetings, I will try to convince them to adopt my position on an issue.
- I take advantage of normal opportunities to convince state leaders to adopt my positions on education issues. I sometimes sign petitions, attend state government meetings or hearings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of state publications.
- I make my own opportunities to try to convince state leaders to adopt my positions on state-level issues. I seek out contacts with state leaders. I frequently sign petitions, attend state government meetings or hearings, write letters to officials and/or write letters to the editors of state publications.

Q5.5 Work to INITIATE issues & related policy:
- I do little or nothing to begin state-level discussions or actions regarding issues related to schools and education.
- If an issue is particularly important to me or affects me personally, I will try to start a state-level discussion or to get people moving toward a specific action on an issue.
- For important state issues, I will take steps to begin a discussion or a course of action to address the issue. I sometimes sign petitions, sign up for public comment time at state government meetings or hearings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of state publications.
- For any state-level issue that affects the schools, I make my own opportunities to advocate for my positions. I seek out contacts with state leaders. I frequently sign petitions, sign up for public comment time at local government meetings or hearings, and/or write letters to officials or letters to the editors of state publications.
Q6.1 The next two sets of items ask you to think about the training you attended since you have become a school board member. For each item, rate how valuable the training was, or indicate that you did not attend.
Q6.2 Training attended DURING your first term on the board (i.e., between the date on which you were elected or appointed and the end of your first year on the board):

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<th>Training Type</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Little Value</th>
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<th>Did not attend</th>
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Q6.3 Training attended during any term AFTER your first term on the board:

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<th>Training Type</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
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<td>Provided at board workshop sessions or special sessions.</td>
<td>District-level training on management issues (does not include presentations made at regular monthly board meetings, but does include training provided at board workshop sessions or special sessions).</td>
<td>Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) Fall Clinics and/or Spring Clinics</td>
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Q6.4 Which of the following describe you? (Check all that apply.)

- I read NSBA publications other than American School.
- I read books and/or articles on school boards from sources other than NSBA or DSBA.
- I read/access resources available on my district’s web site.
- I read/access resources available on the Delaware Department of Education’s web site.
- I read/access resources available on the Delaware Education Association’s (DSEA) web site.
- I read/access resources available on the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) web site.
- I read/access resources available on the National School Boards Association (NSBA) web site.
Q7.1 Your age:
- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 or older

Q7.2 Sex
- Male
- Female

Q7.3 Were you ever a teacher or a school administrator?
- Yes
- No

Q7.4 Delaware residency - are you a:
- Lifetime resident (you were born in Delaware, and except for college or military service you have lived here all your life)
- Long-time resident (more than 20 years)
- Medium-term resident (5-20 years)
- New resident (less than 5 years)

Q7.5 How long have you lived in the district in which you are now a board member?
- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years
Q7.6 How long have you been a school board member?
- Less than 1 year (you are starting your first term)
- 1-5 years (you are in your first term)
- 6-10 years (you are in your 2nd term)
- 11-15 years (you are in your 3rd term)
- 16-20 years (you are in your 4th term)
- More than 20 years (you have served more than 4 full terms)

Q7.7 Were you elected or appointed to the school board (current term only)?
- Elected
- Appointed

Q7.8 Why did you run for or accept an appointment to your first term as a school board member?

Q7.9 If you are now in your 2nd term or more, why did you run for or accept appointment to your later terms? (If you are now in your first term, skip this item.)

Q7.10 In which county is your school district?
- NEW CASTLE (Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, New Castle Co. Vo-Tech, Red Clay)
- KENT (Caesar Rodney, Capital, Lake Forest, Milford, Polytech, Smyrna)
- SUSSEX (Cape Henlopen, Delmar, Indian River, Laurel, Seaforth, Sussex Tech, Woodbridge)

Q7.11 Political affiliation - Please select your political party. (Parties are listed in alphabetical order.)
- Democrat
- Green Party
- Independent (unaffiliated with any party)
- Libertarian
- Republican
- Other (please give the name of your party) ____________________

Q43 You have completed the survey. Continuing will submit your responses and take you out of the survey program. Thank you for participating!
Appendix E

JULY 2012 ARTICLE IN AMERICAN SCHOOL
When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead

David Sechler

Data can be intimidating, but it's a fact of life for every public school educator. As a teacher and principal, I constantly used data to guide my work with students and staff. Today, as a school board member, I don't have access to the same detailed information that I once had, so I look for different ways to use data to inform policy decisions.

In the fall of 2001, I was principal of Fifer Middle School in Delaware's Caesar Rodney School District. The state instituted its own pre-No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system that worked on a two-year testing cycle, but I was far too impatient to wait two years for my school's rating. A central office colleague helped me develop a spreadsheet that mimicked the state's calculations, allowing me to tell my staff what our adequate yearly progress rating would have been if the cycle ended after one year instead of two.

That was the beginning of creating a data culture at Fifer. With NCLB, the spreadsheet grew into a much more comprehensive package that I called the School Data Packet. Each year's packet contained graphs of data pulled from the state department of education's website; it was included in my welcome back packet to staff. I wrote a one-paragraph analysis next to each graph to inform my staff and to model how I wanted them to use the data.

Over the years, the packets became a rich resource, with new graphics that compared our school scores to each year's accountability targets, so we could see how well we had done and how much we needed to improve. As a staff, we worked our way through aggregated data—information combined from several different groups—to data disaggregated by group. Finally, we started examining individual student scores and instructional needs indicators.

I retired in July 2006 and almost exactly 10 months later was elected to the school board. The transition had its challenges, but I felt my 30 years as a teacher and principal prepared me to consider the educational issues our board would face. I was not, however, prepared for the transition from practitioner to policymaker.

The board's bigger picture

At local and state levels, I found that many board members did not have a deep understanding of the data teachers and administrators use. Some board members were largely unaware of the amount and types of data available. Few, if any, knew what it was like to work in a school with a strong data culture.

In my first few months on the board, I asked the Delaware Department of Education about getting "trained" access to the data that I used as a principal. I was informed, gently but firmly, that I did not need it in my policymaking role. For 30 years, I had access to data about my students, but now that access was restricted.

As I gained more experience on the board, I had to admit that Department of Education officials were right. Board members don't need to know the specific test scores or instructional needs of individual students. We did, however, need to know enough about the data to monitor the progress of our schools and the district to make good decisions about how to support our staff's work to improve student learning.

After a career of moving from whole-school aggregated data to individual student data, I needed to back off and look at the big picture. As school board members and district leaders, we must be data informed, but not in such a specific way. For us, data serves as a leadership tool that helps us answer larger, broader questions.

This, of course, is the most important point: It's not the data itself, but the questions it raises that are most important. We also need to think about our schools and ask our own questions, with answers provided by the administration and supported by data.

The data questions

Here are some data-related questions school board members can and should ask. All of these questions and many more can be raised by the data that is available to you, and for that matter, to the public.

- In each grade, what percentages of our students are not meeting the state performance targets? Are those percentages acceptable?
- Do we have schools or grade levels that consistently break the pattern? Why are they better or worse than the others?
- If our district is devoting extra resources to K-3 reading instruction, are all students reading on grade level by the end of third grade? If not, why not? If so, do students stay on grade level through graduation or do they fall behind once the extra support ends?
- Does the data indicate that the longer students go to our schools, the better they perform? If not, why not?
- What percent of students come to us with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in kindergarten? If the percent is low, what resources do we need to provide to get those few students on track by the end of the year? If the percent is high, do we need to consider providing pre-k programs? Would it be more effective and more economical to spend money on bringing students up to age-appropriate performance before they get to kindergarten than to rely on remediation programs that provide help only after students come to us several years behind in their skills?
- As cohorts of students move through our district (third to fourth grade, fourth to fifth grade, and so on), does the percentage of those performing at or above grade level increase steadily?
- Do we see a correlation between report card grades and student test scores?

When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead—to lead by keeping the district focused on answering critical questions, by constantly requesting information to answer our own questions, and by making the data inform fiscal and policy decisions that will move our schools forward.

David Sechler (principal@teacher@comcast.net) is vice president of Caesar Rodney School District Board of Education and president of the Delaware School Boards Association. He also serves as a coach for school administrators at the Delaware Academy for School Leadership.
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At the local and state level, I found that many board members did not have a deep understanding of the data teachers and administrators use. Some board members were largely unaware of the amount and types of data available. Few, if any, knew what it was like to work in a school with a strong data culture.

In my first few months on the board, I asked the Delaware Department of Education about getting “trainer” access to the data that I used as a principal. I was informed, gently but firmly, that I did not need it in my policymaking role. For 30 years, my access to data about my students was virtually unlimited, but now it was restricted.
As I gained more experience on the board, I had to admit that the Department of Education was right. Board members don’t need to know the specific test scores or instructional needs of individual students. We did, however, need to know enough about the data to monitor the progress of our schools and the district and to make good decisions about how to support our staff’s work to improve student learning.

After a career of moving from whole-school aggregated data to individual student data, I needed to back off and look at the big picture. As school board members and district leaders, we must be data informed, but not in such a granular way. For us, data serves as a leadership tool that helps us answer larger, broader questions.

This, of course, is the most important point: It’s not the data itself, but the questions it raises that are most important. We also need to think about our schools and ask our own questions, with answers provided by the administration and supported by data.

@s: The data questions
@b*: Here are some data-related questions school board members can and should ask. All of these questions and many more can be raised by the data that is available to you, and for that matter, to the public.

@b:# In each grade, what percentages of our students are not meeting the state performance targets? Are those percentages acceptable?
# Do we have schools or grade levels that consistently break the patterns? Why are they better or worse than the others?
# If our district is devoting extra resources to K-3 reading instruction, are all students reading on grade level by the end of third grade? If not, why not? If so, do students stay on grade level through graduation or do they fall behind once the extra support ends?
# Does the data indicate that the longer students go to our schools, the better they perform? If not, why not?
# What percent of students come to us with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in kindergarten? If the percent is low, what resources do we need to provide to get those few students on track by the end of the year? If the percent is high, do we need to consider providing pre-K programs? Would it be more effective and more economical to spend money on bringing students up to age appropriate performance before they get to kindergarten than to rely on remediation programs that provide help only after students come to us several years behind?
# As cohorts of students move through our district (third to fourth grade, fourth to fifth grade, and so on) does the percentage of those performing at or above grade level increase steadily?
# Do we see a correlation between report card grades and student test scores?
When we understand the data, we are equipped to lead -- to lead by keeping the district focused on answering critical questions, by constantly requesting information to answer our own questions, and by making the data-informed fiscal and policy decisions that will move our schools forward.

@bio:David Sechler is vice president of the Caesar Rodney School District Board of Education and president of the Delaware School Boards Association. He also serves as a coach for school administrators at the Delaware Academy for School Leadership.
Appendix F

DCAS STANDARD SETTING
This artifact consists of four parts: 1) the report “Standard Setting for DCAS,” 2) a PowerPoint presentation derived from that report, 3) the guest column “Common Core Standards Without National Testing?” written by James L. Wilson for The School Administrator, and 4) a September 17, 2010 Delaware Department of Education press release.

In August, 2010, I was appointed by the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) to serve as one of their representatives on the DCAS Standard Setting panels that were being convened by DDOE. These panels met at Delaware Technical and Community College, Terry Campus (Dover, Delaware) on August 9-11, 2010. “Standard Setting for DCAS” was created to report back to the DSBA membership regarding the process that was followed by the panels, the results of that process, and my observations and conclusions regarding the panels’ work. I presented the report and answered questions about it at the August 26th meeting of the DSBA Executive Committee and then again at the September 8th meeting of the DSBA Board of Directors. Shortly thereafter I was contacted by Dr. David Robinson, Interim Superintendent of the Cape Henlopen School District, who requested that I present the report to his school board at its September 23rd regular meeting. I also was asked by Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, 2010-2011 President of the Delaware Chief School Officers’ Association, to present the report to the Chiefs’ Annual Retreat on October 7th. At the Cape Henlopen presentation I simply brought copies of the report to
distribute to the board and projected an image of the report in its Microsoft Word document form for members of the audience to see and also to make clearer any references I made to the document. Based on the types of questions and the level of interest I experienced at the Cape Henlopen board presentation, I decided to upgrade to a PowerPoint presentation and to use the Microsoft Word document as back-up documentation. This PowerPoint, with minor edits and upgrades made through the fall and winter, was used in all future presentations.

The PowerPoint presentation, “DCAS ‘Standard Setting’” was created to make the Standard Setting Panels’ process more accessible to school board audiences, who generally are neither trained educators nor educational assessment experts, and to make use of materials that had become available since the Standard Setting Panels had met. The presentation was carefully constructed to be an adult education presentation, as opposed to the report, which was constructed as more of a technical document. The PowerPoint includes graphics from public sources and from PowerPoint presentations created by DDOE to be part of its DCAS Training Roadshow and other public information efforts related to DCAS. The presentation was carefully crafted with attention to flow and attention spans as well as to content, and so it cycles back and forth between lighter graphics (photos and newspaper clippings) and heavier DCAS content. A core portion of the PowerPoint consists of slides
created by DDOE and used with their permission. I made the decision to use the DDOE slides because they minimized any potential questions about the accuracy of my information (the information I was conveying was coming directly from the Department of Education) and because I wanted to show solidarity between the Delaware School Boards Association and the Department of Education (we share the belief in the need to inform our constituents). On many of the DCAS content slides, however, I overlaid arrows, ovals and other shapes and animations designed to clarify the content on the slides. Many of the DDOE slides contained lots of information, and the shapes and animations were used to highlight the most important bits of that information and/or the relationships between various bits of information. (Note: When I delivered the presentations I did not work from a script, but for the purposes of this artifact I have added to the PowerPoint notes regarding decisions I made in creating the slides, some of the comments I made about the slides, and comments about other factors that would have been obvious in the actual presentations but which might not be clear in the PowerPoint itself.)

Former Delaware State School Board member James L. Wilson heard about my presentation and offered to allow me to use his guest column from The School Administrator as a handout related to my prediction that Delaware’s move from a paper-and-pencil assessment featuring a significant number of constructed responses to a computer-based test consisting entirely of multiple
choice items, coupled with the state’s upcoming move from Delaware state standards to the National Common Core standards would inevitably lead to a national computer-based assessment related to the national standards (see slide #32). His one request in return for his permission to use his column was that I include a disclaimer stating that his comments should not be construed as being criticism or as showing concern about Delaware Secretary of Education Dr. Lillian Lowery’s efforts to raise Delaware’s achievement standards (see slide #33).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 9-11, 2010</td>
<td>Delaware Department of Education</td>
<td>Dover, DE</td>
<td>Meetings of the Standards Setting Panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 26, 2010</td>
<td>DSBA Executive Committee</td>
<td>Dover, DE</td>
<td>Presentation of report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8, 2010</td>
<td>DSBA Board of Directors</td>
<td>Dover, DE</td>
<td>Presentation of report</td>
</tr>
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<td>September 21, 2010</td>
<td>Caesar Rodney SD Board of Education</td>
<td>Wyoming, DE</td>
<td>Presentation of report (informal, during Board Member Communications)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 23, 2010</td>
<td>Cape Henlopen SD Board of Education</td>
<td>Lewes, DE</td>
<td>Presentation of report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 7, 2010</td>
<td>Delaware Chief School Officers Association</td>
<td>Rehoboth, DE</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 20, 2010</td>
<td>Smyrna SD Board of Education</td>
<td>Smyrna, DE</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 21, 2010</td>
<td>Delaware State School Board</td>
<td>Dover, DE</td>
<td>Report is referenced in a meeting of the State Board with local board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Board of Education</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 17, 2010</td>
<td>Red Clay SD Board of Education</td>
<td>Wilmington, DE</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 14, 2010</td>
<td>Appoquinimink SD Board of Education</td>
<td>Odessa, DE</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Cut scores:** Cut scores are being set with national and international contexts in mind. The cut score for Meeting Standard on DCAS will represent a higher level of performance than did the cut score for Meeting Standard on the DSTP. This has nothing to do with the change from a paper-and-pencil test to a computer administered test. It is solely a function of where the cut scores are being set.

**Implications:** The same level of performance that would have given a student a Meets Standard rating on the DSTP may give a student a Below Standard rating on DCAS. This also is not a function of the test, but of where the cut scores are being set.

In the table below, note the area between the DSTP cut score for Meets Standard and the DCAS cut score for Meets Standard. The space between these cut scores represents levels of performance that would have earned a student a Meets Standard score on the DSTP but that will earn that student a Below Standard rating on DCAS. Note that there are similar discrepancies between the DSTP and DCAS cut scores for Above Standard and Below Standard. (This table is for illustration purposes only, and is not drawn to scale.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ordered Items Book (OIB) – Contains a random sample of 66 items from the DCAS item bank, with one item per page. Items are arranged in order of difficulty, as determined by the performance of students on the DCAS field test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Item Map – Shows information for each item in the OIB, including the DE standard addressed by the item and the correct answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Context Information – Shows the percent of students who answered the item correctly and indicates which item would be the “bookmark” for the DSTP cut score for Meets Standard (i.e., the cut score that marks the boundary between PL 2 & PL 3).
• A list of the DE content standards, by grade level, and Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) that define the four performance levels (Well Below Standard, Below Standard, Meets Standard, and Advanced).

The Process:
1. Training for all participants in the Standard Setting process.
2. In grade-level groups for grades 4, 6, 8 and 10, participants refer to the OIB. Participants review each test item individually and there is table discussion about each item, including the level of difficulty compared to items immediately before and after that item.
3. Participants identify the item (the page in the OIB) which represents the least difficult item in the Meets Standard. This is defined as being the item that two thirds of the students who just barely meet the standard could answer correctly (or alternately, the item that the lowest student who just barely met standard could answer correctly two thirds of the time). Participants place a “bookmark” on that page.
4. In table groups (5-8 people) participants share where they placed their bookmarks and explain why they chose those locations. Participants may change their minds on their placements at any time, but there is no requirement to do so.
5. Participants working on the same grade (typically 2 tables) combine for a larger combined-table discussion. Guidelines are the same as for the individual table discussions.
6. Deciding as individuals but taking into consideration all of the examinations and conversations that have taken place so far, participants complete a form on which they record their decision as to where the bookmark for Meets Standard should be placed. This is the end of Round One.
7. Forms are collected and data is collated and then shared with the entire content area group (all grade levels).
8. Participants are given reports showing the range of pages and the and median page selected by all participants working on their grade. Participants are asked to review their bookmark placements in context of all of the grade levels’ decisions. (Do the cut scores in all grades so far result in “an articulated system” – is there a logical flow from one grade to another, or are the cut scores set by the various grade levels wildly different from each other?)
9. Participants have one last opportunity to change their decision about where to place their bookmarks. They complete a form listing their final decision as to the placement. This is the end of Round Two.

10. Round Two data is collated and distributed to Table Leaders. Table Leaders then meet with AIR representatives to review the decisions and to consider making alterations to make the system more articulated. These meetings are open to DOE staff and to other members of the score setting panels, but it is the Table Leaders who are charged both with fairly representing their table members and with making the decisions. As a group, Table Leaders may decide to stay with the scores identified by their tables or may change those scores. In practice, this process seldom changes the cut by more than an item or two, and these changes are generally made to improve articulation than because of anything having to do directly with the difficulty of the test items. This process is called “Moderation,”

11. All participants reconvene to consider cut scores for the alternate grades. Unlike the process for consideration of cut scores for the initial grade levels, consideration for the alternate grade levels begins with the “interpolated scores” that represent the scores that will make for the most cleanly articulated series of scores for the whole system (i.e., the scores that fit in best with the scores decided upon for the grades already considered). Participants look over the OIB for their grade levels, and if participants can live with the interpolated score, that’s what they select. If not, table discussions are run as with the initial grades.

12. Although the basis is somewhat different (interpolated scores as opposed to consideration of the difficulty of test items and their relationships to the standards) the process is the same, with participants making two rounds of decisions followed by moderation by the Table Leaders. The major difference in this moderation process is that all scores – even the ones agreed on in the previous moderation – are open to be changed. The goal is to end up with a well articulated system of cut scores at all grade levels.
Graphs are only for the purpose of illustrating articulation, and do not represent any actual levels of performance or actual decisions made by the Standards Setting Panels.

13. AIR puts all the information together and prepares a report for the Delaware State Board of Education. Ultimately, all the work of the Standards Setting Panels results only in recommendations to the State Board, and it is the State Board who makes the final decision as to what the cut scores (actually, the level of performance) will be for each Performance Level on DCAS. The State Board has the option to accept the recommendations in full, to reject them entirely, or to accept partially with changes as the Board sees fit.

**Future adjustments:** The scores that are set this summer and that will be used for SY’11 are based at least in part on the information provided by the SY’10 DCAS field test. This is a relatively small sample of tests, however, and with any such field test there are concerns about things like student motivation and like testing conditions as schools worked out their procedures for the new test. With this in mind, DOE expects to convene another Standards Setting group next summer to review the cut scores in light of student results from the first year of “real” administrations of DCAS. Depending on what how student performance in the real administrations compares with student performance in the field test, cut scores may be adjusted for administrations in SY’12 and beyond.

David Sechler  
First Vice President, Delaware School Boards Association  
DSBA Representative at the Standards Setting Panels  
August 20, 2010
• Greetings and introductions
• This presentation is based on what I learned from participating in the August 2009 DCAS Standards Setting Panels and on the recommendations made by those panels.
• I participated as a representative of the Delaware School Boards Association.
This might be what some of us are hoping for, but it’s not going to happen – it’s just not the world we live in today.
This is more the way we feel. There’s something coming at us. It’s big and scary, but somehow shapeless and undefined and completely beyond our control.
Here’s the bottom line...

• The first bullet states the net effect of the panels’ recommendations.
• The second bullet addresses a common misunderstanding. The increased requirements have nothing to do with the change from the DSTP to DCAS. The changes to the new test and to the higher standards happen to come at the same time, but they are otherwise unrelated.
These are challenges which school boards must understand in order to understand what their schools will be facing in the coming year.
The Bottom Line

• Schools that are on Academic Watch or are Under Improvement will find it much harder to raise their ratings.

• Many schools are likely to go on Academic Watch for the first time.
  - Some schools that have always been Superior will drop straight to Academic Watch.
  - This will be particularly shocking to elementary schools that have never had anything but a Superior rating.

• These are possible – even probable – effects of the changes.
• School boards must understand what their schools will be up against, and the boards must be prepared to deal with lower school ratings in the spring.
• So the DSTP was a test that we all had issues with. We complained, but we understood the test and we were able to move forward with it. We are like the runner in the photo on the left. We see obstacles in front of us, but we understand them and we are able to get over them.
• Under DCAS, we – principals and schools in particular – are feeling much more like the runner in the photo on the right.
The Process

- “Standard Setting” was really the setting of the cut points between Performance Levels.
- **Ordered Item Book:** 66 sample test items, in order of difficulty as determined by students’ performance on the spring field test.
- Descriptions of the state standards, by grade level.
- “Think of the lowest performing student who just barely meets the standard.”
  - “What item will he get right 2/3 of the time?”
  - This defines the bottom level of performance for PL3.

This is a definition of “standard setting” as used by the standard setting panels and an explanation of the process that the panels used to set the standards.
The panels were told in the opening session that their charge was to raise the standards. While the panels were officially told that they had the freedom to set the standards as they saw fit, it also was made clear that there was an expectation that the panels would decide on cut points that represented higher levels of performance than the levels represented by the previous DSTP cut scores.
The next 11 slides were created by the Delaware Department of Education and are used in this presentation with permission from DDOE (specifically, permission was granted in an e-mail from Assistant Secretary of Education Linda Rogers).

The overlays and animations on these slides were added by me, to highlight critical points in the slides.
This slide uses students’ performance on the 2010 DSTP to compare percentages of students who would meet the standard on the DSTP, DCAS and NAEP.

In reading, 78% of DE 8th grade students met the standard. That same level of student performance resulted in only 31% of DE students meeting standard on the 2009 NAEP, because the NAEP requires a higher level of performance for students to be considered to meet the standard (i.e., the standards are higher on the NAEP than on the DSTP). At this same level of performance, it was anticipated that 47% of DE students would meet the standard on DCAS.

Two points are to be made here:
1) If students performance does not improve, considerably fewer students will meet standard on DCAS than met standard on the DSTP. Their current level of performance is not good enough.
2) While critics had been complaining that raising the standards for DCAS would be harsh, the “expected” standards to be set for DCAS essentially split the difference between the DSTP and NAEP levels. So while the expected level of performance definitely will increase from the DSTP to DCAS, even that higher level does not bring the DE standards up to national, let alone international, levels.

Essentially the same situation is shown by the math percentages.
Percentages of students meeting standard on the DSTP reading test are compared to the percentages of students who would meet standard on the DCAS reading test, given the same level of student performance on the two assessments.

I overlaid the NCLB targets for spring 2011 to illustrate implications of the change in tests and cut scores for schools’ AYP status. If schools are having trouble making AYP now, they will have far more trouble under DCAS.
Same information as in the previous slide, but for math.
What was the Main Outcome of Standards Setting?

- In general, the interim DCAS standards are higher than the previous DSTP performance standards.
- This will result in fewer students performing at and above the interim DCAS performance standards.
- This is consistent with current federal and state education reform initiatives across the country.
What are the Next Steps?

- The interim standards will also be used as part of Delaware’s growth model reporting and indices of teacher and school effectiveness.

- The Department is organizing a DCAS communication plan with regional forums, media articles, website resources, and other briefings as needed.

This slide deals with what school boards, and the public in general, can expect as DDOE rolls out DCAS and the new standards.
This slide contains a screen shot of a reading passage in DCAS. The slide is included to give school board members at least some idea of what the computerized test will look like.

Students will be able to scroll up and down at will through the reading passage (left side of the screen shot) and through the questions related to the passage (right side of the screen shot).

The official DDOE header is retained on this slide to establish credibility.
The header has been removed and the DCAS item is blown up to provide a better view of the screen shot.
An example of a DCAS math problem.
A larger view of the DCAS math problem.

Points of emphasis:
1) Students will be expected to do more than merely find (or guess at) and select a correct answer. In fact, no answers – correct or otherwise – are even provided for this problem.
2) Students must read and understand the problem, then physically move the coin images into the box to show the correct amount of money.
3) Note that this requires a student to use reading skills, technology skills (an understanding of how a mouse works) and physical skills (eye-hand coordination) in order to create a correct answer to this problem.
4) Question: How many students see this type of testing in the course of their regular schooling (i.e., are classroom teachers creating and using this type of question for their regular classroom assessments)? If not, then students will need to be trained on, or at least familiarized with, this kind of test question so they (students) are not seeing this type of item for the first time in the actual DCAS testing situation.
5) Note that the change to DCAS assumes that students will have different skills and higher level skills than have been the norm in the past. In other words, DCAS assumes a more sophisticated system of teaching and assessment, and if students are going to meet standard on DCAS then schools/districts will have to make changes in multiple areas and on multiple levels.
This is an actual (redacted) DCAS student score report page.
Note specific bits of information contained on the page:

1) Medium red circle (right side): this students “Estimated Performance Level” on both the DSTP and DCAS. (This is an effort to help parents to compare performance between the two tests. This is not a statistically accurate comparison, however, as there have not been, and will not be, any comparability studies done to provide a strict comparison between the two assessments.)

2) Large red circle (left side): a “thermometer” graphic showing the range of DCAS scores and the cut scores for and explanations of each level.

3) Small red circle (left side): the cut score marking the boundary between “Meets Proficiency” and “Advanced” levels.
SO NOW WHAT?

Transitioning from information to implications.
The Implications

- For Teachers
  - The experienced teacher’s mental image of what level of student performance meets standard is no longer valid.
  - It probably will take several administrations of the test for teachers to “recalibrate” their understanding of the levels of performance that are associated with the different Performance Levels.

Over years of working with the Delaware curriculum standards and with the DSTP, experienced teachers have developed a mental image of what level of student performance equates to what scores on the DSTP. (“I know John’s work, and he’ll come in at a low 3 on the DSTP.)

With the newly set cut scores, teachers will have to recalibrate themselves to recognize student performance at the new standard levels.

School boards should understand that:
1) This will cause frustration among teachers, but also among principals and anyone else who deals more or less directly with instruction.
2) The more experienced teachers – those who had the most finely calibrated understanding of DSTP performance levels – were likely to be the most frustrated.
3) This is not the fault of the teachers, it is a function of the changes in the assessment system.
4) Teachers, principals and others will need understanding and support though this recalibration process.
This chart illustrates what Performance Levels certain levels of student performance would earn on the DSTP, DCAS, NAEP and PISA. (The areas on the chart are intended only to illustrate the concept. They are not meant to show any specific scale.)

Specific examples overlaid on the chart:
1) A scale score that would have earned a student a middle-PL2 on the DSTP will put that student right on the border between a PL1 and PL2 on DCAS. The red box represents the increase needed to maintain a PL2 score.
2) The level of student performance needed to earn PL3 – the minimum level that indicates that a student has met the standard – has risen considerably.
3) A score that would have earned a student a middle-PL4 (a designation well above the minimum of meeting the standard) on the DSTP would put a student just on the border between PL3 and PL4 on DCAS, just into the “Proficient” level on the NAEP, and only into the “Approaching Instructional Standard” category on the PISA. In other words, even some of our higher scores on the DSTP and DCAS still do not represent levels of student performance that meet international standards.
This and the 3 following slides list implications for different categories of educators.

PRINCIPALS will have to provide the instructional leadership to get teachers and students prepared for DCAS. This will include issues related to everything from test logistics (moving from paper-and-pencil to a computer-based test) to curriculum alignment to changes in teachers’ instructional practice.
The Implications

• For District CIA Staff
  - Doubly important that the district’s curriculum be:
    • Aligned with the standards
    • Aligned vertically within the district (no instructional gaps)
    • Rigorous
    • Competitive on a national, even global, playing field

DISTRICT Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) staff will have to monitor and where necessary change curriculum across all grade levels. Alignment and articulation will be vital concerns.
SUPERINTENDENTS will have to manage the changes at all levels and prepare all constituents for the inevitable lowering of school ratings hits the media in the summer. In this effort, superintendents have partners and allies in organizations like the Department of Education and the Delaware School Boards Association (which I was representing in making these presentations).
SCHOOL BOARDS need to be aware of the coming changes so as not to be blind-sided by them. School boards will be the intermediaries between the community and the educators, and as such school board members need to be able to explain the situation to constituents and to support educators through the changes.
So...we all may be feeling like something impossibly big, powerful and unmanageable is headed directly for us.
Or we may feel that there is something ominous just below the surface of our understanding.
The Future - Short Term

- **Monitor the testing process & learn from it**
  - Technical & logistical issues
  - “Implementation dip”

- **Make good use of the immediate feedback**
  - Recalibrate our understanding of cut scores
  - Adapt “on the fly”
  - Cycle between short term (instructional strategies, individual student help) and long term (curriculum alignment & revisions)

- **Keep working for the best interests of our students.**

To make this all manageable, here’s what we must do.
We are seeing changes from one kind of assessment (the familiar classroom assessments and DSTP) to a very different type of assessment in DCAS. If we take into consideration these current changes plus the coming move from Delaware curriculum standards to the National Common Core Standards, it is logical to predict the next big change in the school accountability system will be a move to a national computerized assessment.

For better or for worse, this would eliminate the current disparities between the current 50 state assessments and allow direct comparisons between schools, districts and states across the country. Depending on one’s point of view, this could be either a necessary move to bring the level of student performance up to international standards, thus preparing U.S. students to compete with students from anywhere in the world, or it could be a tragic loss of local autonomy, as states and communities have less and less ability to set expectations according to the shared values of those individual states and communities.
This refers to two documents that I provided as handouts in some presentation. Jim Wilson is a former member of the Delaware State Board of Education.
Comic relief.
A visual reminder of what our common focus is, and always should be: doing the best we can for kids.
Common Core Standards Without National Testing?

BY JAMES L. WILSON

A great deal of energy and support exists in many circles over the United States finally developing a common core set of standards for English-language arts and mathematics.

The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers are committed to the development of these common standards, an effort supported by 48 states, professional organizations, businesses and government agencies.

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm is dampened because of the lack of commitment to put the same effort into developing a national test to measure those standards.

Although states are being asked and financially enticed to form consortia to develop a common test for those in the consortia, nothing compels a state to enter such an alliance. Even when joining a consortium, if the state doesn’t like the test that’s developed, it can withdraw and use any test it wants that meets the requirements of No Child Left Behind. In fact some states that originally supported the development of the standards have already indicated they will not be adopting them.

During the past year, education experts and elected officials across the country overwhelmingly emphasized the need for one set of academic standards in the core subjects. A considerable investment of dollars and effort has been put into developing those standards, and the subsequent review process has been extensive. What now seems incomprehensible is that after all that has been said and done to develop a single set of standards, states will have multiple options for determining whether their students have met those standards.

“These important standards are being viewed as national standards, and we need to be straightforward about the need for a national test to measure their attainment.”

The Hypocrisy

Although states have supported common core standards none has proposed a need for a national test. Ironically, these same states insist that local school districts must administer a single statewide test to validate student achievement of their state standards.

Probably nothing demonstrates the fallacy of multiple tests more than a 2009 study published by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The study, “Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto NAEP Scales,” shows that in most states fewer than 50 percent of students, classified as meeting their own state’s proficiency standards in reading and math, scored high enough to be rated proficient on the NAEP national tests for reading and math.

A study released last spring by Paul E. Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón, both affiliated with Harvard, reported: “Every state, for both reading and math (with the exception of Massachusetts for math), deems more students ‘proficient’ on its own assessments than NAEP does. The average difference is a startling 37 percentage points.”

The most misleading perception being put out there, though, is that the common core standards and the assessment of those standards are state efforts and not something required by the U.S Department of Education or the current administration. While states have not been mandated to adopt the standards, the Department of Education has made it perfectly clear: A state won’t be won’t
eligible for millions of federal dollars unless it adopts the common core standards.

So why are people trying to disguise what the common core standards really are? One needs only to look at the bruises previous administrations suffered when they tried to promote a national assessment to know why this approach is being taken. You’ve heard the saying, “If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and makes a noise like a duck, chances are it probably is a duck.” These important standards are being viewed as national standards, and we need to be straightforward about the need for a national test to measure their attainment.

A Right to Know

Ever since I’ve been involved in education, parents, employers and community members have wanted to know just where their students and schools stood competitively. They have asked how they ranked not only locally but also in their state, nationally and, in some cases, internationally. It means little to anyone if students are rated proficient in their own state but may not be considered proficient nationally or even in another state to which they might relocate.

Throughout the United States, parents lack a realistic understanding of their children’s performance level. Because of wide-ranging philosophies and practices in schools, it is not unusual for students to have all A’s and B’s on their report cards, earn "met standard" ratings on their state and local tests, and yet still perform significantly below grade level. While the merits of certain practices may be defended, parents should not have to wait for their children to take the SATs to know where they stand on a national scale.

Like the SATs, a national assessment would not be perfect, but it would yield information that parents, employers and the public need to know and are entitled to know.

“Like the SATs, a national assessment would not be perfect, but it would yield information that parents, employers and the public need to know and are entitled to know.”

State Powers

If we are to truly have common core standards for our country, we need national tests. Many argue correctly that education is a right given to the states by the Constitution. However, national tests for math, reading and language arts do not interfere with that right or prohibit individual states from doing their own additional assessments. National tests also do not interfere with states determining how, when and where students are taught or any of the other powers states have regarding education.

James Wilson, a former superintendent, is a member of the state board of education in Delaware. E-mail: imjwilson@comcast.net

This article is also available online at http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=16256

The School Administrator is a publication of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
State Board of Education Raises Student Standards

Raising Expectations of What Makes a Student Achieve "Proficient Rating" in Core Subjects Means Scores will be Lower to Start in Federal Reporting

Dover, DE – To better measure the ability of Delaware's children to succeed in a global economy, the Delaware State Board of Education today voted to implement new interim standards that require greater mastery of core subjects to achieve a rating of "proficient." The new scoring system will replace previous measurements that were reported each year as part of the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP).

"Delaware had statewide measurements and standards in place for many years but it was clear they needed to be stronger to be meaningful," Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery said. "The previous standards delivered higher scores because there was a lower bar. The new standards and new expectations will better measure what we need to do to compete and win against schools and students around the country and around the world."

Because the new standards raised the level of what constitutes "proficiency," initial scores under this new system will likely be significantly lower than years past. Looking at fourth grade reading proficiency, for example, 78% of students have been rated proficient under the DSTP 2008 standards but based on Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System field testing results, only 48% would achieve that rating now. In math, 78% of fourth graders under the former standards would have been rated proficient but only 53% would be now (see attached chart for more details). The new standards are the result of recommendations made by over 150 Delawareans who volunteered hundreds of hours to develop more rigorous expectations and measurements.

"From the educators and parents, and from private sector managers and public sector school administrators in the group, there was real agreement that we should not continue to keep standards lower or less competitive simply so we could point to higher scores," Lowery said.

Parents, students and teachers alike should understand that these lower scores do not mean students know less than they did the year before, or that they are somehow "doing worse in school," just that the new interim standards require a higher level of mastery of information and concepts. Just like the traditional DSTP scores, the new scores will not impact a student's grades or be reported to any colleges where a student is applying. Nor will teacher effectiveness ratings drop because of the expected drop in test scores under the new, higher standards. The scores will, however, serve to better inform parents, teachers and students of the areas that need focus for improvement.

"The new proficiency standards and new scores will also give our students, parents and teachers an accurate roadmap for improvement so that, when they graduate, Delaware students will truly be ready to "take on the world," Lowery said.

To help provide parents, students and schools some context and continuity as we move forward with this more informational rating system, the new scores using the higher proficiency standards will be accompanied by information that demonstrates how the student would have done against the old proficiency standards that were in place with the DSTP.

This new effort is an important step to ensuring Delaware's long-term economic impact and will be an important signal to companies considering Delaware as a place to expand or locate.

"The most important thing we can do to ensure our state's economic future in the long-term -- and the greatest gift that we can give to our children now, to ensure their future success -- is to make sure we are on our way to having some of the strongest schools in the country and that our students graduate ready and able to compete and win. That means being more open about where we stand and where we need to go," Governor Jack Markell said. "When talking with national and international business leaders responsible for creating jobs, they want their companies to be in places with great schools or schools that are on their way to being truly great. They want to be able to hire and provide careers to students who graduate prepared to succeed. To be clear, our competition in this regard is no longer just our neighboring states, it includes countries around the world seeking to bring those jobs to their shores."
Delaware’s Department of Education is committed to promoting the highest quality education for every Delaware student by providing visionary leadership and superior service.

Contact Info:
Alison Kopner
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, Delaware 19901
Phone: (302) 735-4035
Fax: (302) 739-4654
Email: akopner@doe.k12.de.us

Other Press Releases

Artifact #5: Data 101 for School Board Members

This artifact consists of three parts: 1) a workshop guide titled “Delaware School Boards Association – Data Workshop” that was used to lead participants through the Delaware School Boards Association workshop session “Data 101 for School Board Members,” 2) an Excel spreadsheet created by the Delaware Department of Education titled “Delaware School Accountability Ratings for 2009,” available to the public on the DDOE website, and 3) a pdf. document titled, “2009 Delaware School Accountability System,” also created by DDOE and made available to the public on its website. The workshop guide was used to structure the session, and the spreadsheet and the pdf document were provided as handouts to workshop participants.

The workshop guide is structured to lead participants on a kind of scavenger hunt through the school data and accountability sections of the DDOE website. Each page of the handout contains a full or partial screen shot from the website and most pages contain questions that can be answered by examining the web page shown in the screen shot. Caesar Rodney School District’s web pages were used as the example for the workshop guide because that is my home district, but participants were instructed to use the pages for their home districts.

Participants entered the workshop room to find computers already showing the main School Profile page of the DDOE website. After introductions and a few quick comments on the purpose of the workshop (to give participants a beginners-level understanding of the information available on the website), I oriented them to the handout structure and, using Page one of the guide as a reference, had them find the main School Profile page for their district.

Page two of the guide shows district-level information. This page begins the pattern of showing a sample screen shot at the top of the page and then asking a series of questions that
could be answered on the web page corresponding to the page in the screen shot. Participants were encouraged to work in pairs, and they were reminded to be looking for information on their own districts. After walking participants through the different parts of the handout page and the web page, I gave participants time to read the web pages and to find and record answers to the questions. Participants were encouraged not just to find the answers to the specific questions, but to take the time to get acquainted with both the format and the information available on the web pages. While participants worked, I circulated and made myself available to answer questions. Note that the oval at the top of the handout page emphasizes the fact that there are three tabs on this web page, and that there are questions related to each of these three tabs. Also note that the handout questions are at a low level on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Outcomes, and that they ask mostly for demographic information. This was done intentionally, partly to ease participants into the higher level work to come and partly to make sure that the school board members were at least moderately familiar with the demographics of their districts.

The third page of the guide is navigational, directing participants to another set of pages on the web site.

Page four of the guide relates to the School Accountability Summary, which is shown in the Excel spreadsheet provided as part of this artifact. Most of the questions on this page still are low on Bloom’s Taxonomy, but the information requested is more arcane to the school accountability process and therefore is more difficult for lay people to process than is the basic demographic information. Between the questions, this page also includes directions designed to get participants to start moving beyond just finding and recording information to thinking about the meaning and/or implications of that information. The guide comment about the statistical tests indicated by a C, S or H was explained orally in the presentation, but only at a very basic
level (something on the order of, “You made the target, but only because the margin of error was too great for DOE to feel correct in stating that you did not make it.”). Participants were told that they would be provided additional information on request. Finally, this guide page ends with some higher-level Bloom questions that require participants to begin applying the information that they have been finding.

Page five is another navigation page.

Page six takes participants to the main page for their district’s section of the DOE website. The ovals direct participants to two specific links on that page that will be explored on this page: “Overall Summaries” and “Disaggregated Summary at the District Level.” Questions below the screen shot are divided into two sections, one for each of the highlighted links. This page moves participants deeper into the data, first asking for some very specific facts and then directing participants to “Explore and look for trends.” With this, participants are now moving to at least the analysis level on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Also at this point in the presentation, I was intentionally spending less time in my explanation of the page and giving participants more time to explore on their own. As a result, I was spending more time working with individual district teams, answering their questions and guiding them in their explorations and their identification of trends in the data.

Page seven mimics page six, but for two different links: “Achievement Gap Analysis” and “Matched Scores.” This page follows the pattern from page six of asking for specific information and then directing participants to explore and look for trends. Achievement gap analysis and matched scores are more difficult concepts than straightforward reporting of achievement levels in the individual AYP cells, though, and therefore represent more of a challenge for the participants.
Page eight provides participants with an opportunity to move deeper than the district level data to explore school-level data. Little additional explanation is given because the school pages mirror the format of the district pages. At this point, participants were engaged in highly individualized explorations (having started the session in a much more lockstep fashion), and my role as facilitator became even more focused on helping participants with individual questions and issues.

Page nine points out two more links that participants might like to follow after the session. This served the superficial purpose of directing participants to the additional information while also pointing out that the evening’s session had only just scratched the surface and inviting participants to continue the conversation after the session. The bottom of page nine lists URLs for the DDOE web pages used in the session. This Word document was made available in electronic form to participants, on request, to allow them both to use it as a reference and to be able to click on the live links in the document rather than having to copy some rather complex URLs into their web browsers.

This workshop came about because in the time after I retired from a principalship and after I had been elected to my local school board and had begun to serve as my district’s representative to the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA), I had observed that board members had very little familiarity with school accountability data for their districts. At best, that familiarity was uneven across the state, with members of some local boards reporting that their superintendents were very good about keeping them aware of their district’s data and members of other boards reporting that their superintendents barely mentioned data at all. During the summer of 2009, I discussed with DSBA Executive Director Susan Francis the idea of presenting some kind of data workshop to our membership, and we came up with the basic
idea of “Data 101 for School Board Members.” We envisioned this as something that we would put together over the next two years. When we presented the idea at the September 2009 Board of Directors meeting, the idea was well received but the timeline was not. We first heard, “How about getting it ready in one year?” and then “How about by Christmas?” As a result, I put together the session on a much accelerated schedule, and the workshop was first offered on November 16, 2009. The session took place at Caesar Rodney High School, an easily accessible central Delaware location, and it was envisioned as a state-wide workshop. Most participants, however, were from Kent County or northern Sussex County. At the next DSBA Board of Directors meeting, members who had attended spoke of how valuable they had found the session to be, and the decision was made to schedule two additional sessions, one in New Castle County and one in Sussex County. Later, I was invited to do a fourth session for members of the Brandywine School District Board of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 16, 2009</td>
<td>State-wide Local School Boards</td>
<td>Caesar Rodney High School, Camden, DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 24, 2010</td>
<td>Sussex County Local School Boards</td>
<td>Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes, DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 22, 2010</td>
<td>New Castle County Local School Boards</td>
<td>Stanton Middle School, Wilmington, DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19, 2010</td>
<td>Brandywine School District Board of Education</td>
<td>Brandywine School District, District Office, Claymont, DE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Profiles:

**State of Delaware**

Date updated: Summer 09

**District:** Department Of Education

**Address:** 401 Federal Street, Suite 2, Dover DE 19901

**Secretary of Education:** Lillian Lowery

**Telephone:** (302) 735-4000

**Web:** DepartmentOfEducationDea.gov

**AYP:** School Accountability Summary Details

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**Enrollment Information**

**State Enrollment History for Public Schools**

- Enrollment Data Over Time

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**Schools:***
- Appoquinimink
- Brandywine
- Caesar Rodney
- Cape Henlopen
- Capital
- Christina
- Colonial
- Delaware
- Indian River
- Lake Forest
- Laurel
- Milford
- NCC Vo-tech
- Polytech
- Red Clay
- Seaford
- Smyrna
- Sussex Technical
- Woodbridge
- Charter Schools
Find your district, then find the District, Staff and Student tabs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DISTRICT TAB</strong></th>
<th><strong>Category</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Answer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students Who Reside in the District</strong></td>
<td>What is the Number of Students in Public Schools (Non Charter), 2007-08?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment History</strong></td>
<td>Is your district’s total enrollment higher or lower in 2009 than in 2008?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delaware Accountability</strong></td>
<td>What is the general trend over the last 10 years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Rating for your high school(s)?</strong></td>
<td>What is the School Rating for your high school(s)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STAFF TAB</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Answer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you have any teachers who are not highly qualified?</strong></td>
<td>If so, what content areas, and what percentages?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the salary of a teacher with a Master’s degree and 15-19 years’ experience?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STUDENT TAB</strong></th>
<th><strong>Category</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Answer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>In 2008-09, what percentage of your students were:</td>
<td>American Indian?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>African American?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian American?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of Students Meeting State Standards (2008-09)</strong></td>
<td>In 2008-09, approximately what percent of students in your district met the state standard in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Accountability Summary Details

### Find your district, and pick any school. For that school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the school’s rating?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the total number of active accountability cells?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The more cells, the more diverse the student population.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In how many cells did the school meet the state targets (Number of Cells Made)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In how many cells did the school miss the state targets (Number of Cells Missed)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice the difference between the Performance Cells and the Participation Cells. Look at the Legend (the last section on the last page)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In how many Performance ELA cells did the school meet the state target?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did any of those cells have a C, S or H in them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In how many Performance Math cells did the school meet the state target?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of those cells have a C, S or H in them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wherever you see a C, S or H it means that the school met the target with the help of a statistical test (C or H) or an alternate set of criteria for meeting the state targets (S).

Notice how to check the same information for other years.

### EXPLORE

In terms of this accountability data, are your schools moving forward? Static? Losing ground?

Note the links to Research and to Reports/Documents in the bar on the left side of the page.
Delaware Student Testing Program Online Reports

- **Statewide Summaries**
  - Percent meeting or exceeding standards, percent below standard, average scale scores, and number of students aggregating at state level for each of the five content areas on any DSTP test.

- **Summaries By District**
  - Various summary statistics for each of the five content areas and any DSTP test by district for cross district comparisons.

- **Disaggregated Summary at the State Level**
  - State level disaggregated summary statistics by Education Type, Low Income, Race, Gender, ELL Status, Title 1 Status, and Migrant Status for any content area and any DSTP test.

- **Achievement Gap Analysis - State Level**
  - Statewide Achievement Gap Analysis for minorities, low income, student with disabilities, ELL, and Title 1.

- **District Summary**
  - For the selected district, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, INC reports, Matched Score reports, By-School reports. Also drill down to school level summary reports.

- **Charter School Summary**
  - For a selected charter school, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, INC reports, Matched Score reports, By-School reports.

- **Instructional Needs Reports**
  - Instructional Needs Summary Reports for Reading, Math, and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.

- **Matched Scores Performance Level Comparison Matrix**
  - Comparison matrix of performance levels for various matched score parts. For example, reading performance levels comparison based on matched scores of students tested in 2006 grade 9 and 2002 grade 5.

- **DAPA Summaries**
  - Summary for Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment (DAPA).

- **Student Survey Summaries**
  - Summary for Student Survey at each DSTP test.

- **Customized DSTP Summary Reports**
  - Build your customized DSTP report.
## School District Information

### Overall Summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of students in your district scored at PL3 in Reading in 2nd grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of students in your district scored at PL2 in Reading in 8th grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of students in your district scored at PL3 in Math in 8th grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2008, what percent of students in your district scored at PL3 in Math in 8th grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the difference between the percent of students who scored at PL3 in Math in 8th grade in <strong>Spring 2008 compared to Spring 2009</strong>? (e.g., +10.2%, -7.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Disaggregated Summaries at the District Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of White 5th grade students Met or Exceeded the Standard in Reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of African American 5th grade students Met or Exceeded the Standard in Reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of White 10th grade students Met or Exceeded the Standard in Math?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spring 2009, what percent of African American 10th grade students Met or Exceeded the Standard in Math?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the difference between the percent of African American 5th and 10th grade students who Met or Exceeded the Standard in Math?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In your district, is the Achievement Gap getting wider or narrower for African American students in Math in 10th grade? By what percent?

In your district, is the Achievement Gap getting wider or narrower for Low Income students in Math in 10th grade? By what percent?

In your district, is the Achievement Gap getting wider or narrower for Special Education students in Reading in 8th grade? By what percent?

In your district, is the Achievement Gap getting wider or narrower for Special Education students in Reading in 5th grade? By what percent?

EXPLORE & LOOK FOR TRENDS

In your district, 7th grade vs. 8th grade, Reading:

How many students met the standard in 7th grade and met the standard again in 8th grade?

How many students met the standard in 7th grade and Exceeded the standard in 8th grade?

How many students scored Below the Standard in 7th grade but met the standard in 8th grade?

How many students met the standard in 7th grade and scored Below the standard in 8th grade?

EXPLORE & LOOK FOR TRENDS
### School District Information

#### Caesar Rodney School District (10)

**Overall Summaries**
- Percent meet or exceed standard, percent below standard, average scale scores, and number of students aggregated at state level for each of the five content areas.

**Summaries By School**
- Various summary statistics for each of the five content areas by school for each of the five content areas.

**Disaggregated Summary at the District Level**
- District level disaggregated summary statistics by Education Type, Low Income, Race, Gender, ELL Status, Title 1 Status and Migrant Status.

**Achievement Gap Analysis**
- Achievement Gap Analysis for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.

**Instructional Needs Reports**
- Instructional Needs Comments Reports for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.

**Matched-Scores**
- Comparison measures of performance scores for various matched-score tables. For example, reading performance levels comparison based on matched scores of students tested both in 2008 grade 8 and 2002 grades 5.

**School Summary**
- For a selected school, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, IVE reports, and Matched-Score reports.

**Brown Farms**
- Caesar Rodney, Middle
- Caesar Rodney, Junior-H
- Charter School
- DAPS Middle
- FHS Middle
- FHS Elementary
- Goler Middle
- Kent Elementary, ILC
- Padgett Middle
- Pinaron Farms
- Star Hill Farms
- Stocks Elementary
- Walsh Farms
School District Information

**Delaware Student Testing Program On-line Reports**

- **Statewide Summaries**
  - Percent meet or exceed standards, percent below standards, average scale scores, and number of students aggregated at state level for each of the five content areas on any DSTP tests.

- **Summaries By District**
  - Various summary statistics for each of the five content areas and any DSTP test by district for cross-district comparisons.

- **Disaggregated Summary at the State Level**
  - State level disaggregated summary statistics by Education Type, Low-Income, Race, Gender, ESL Status, Title I Status and Migrant Status for any content area and any DSTP test.

- **Achievement Gap Analysis - State Level**
  - Statewide Achievement Gap Analyses for minorities, low-income student with disabilities, ELL, and Title I.

- **District Summary**
  - For a selected district, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, INC reports, Matched-Score reports, By-School reports. Also drill down to obtain school level summary reports.

- **Charter School Summary**
  - For a selected charter school, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, INC reports, Matched-Score reports, By-School reports.

- **Instructional Needs Reports**
  - Instructional Needs Community Reports for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grades.

- **Matched Scores Performance Level Comparison Matrix**
  - Comparison matrices of performance levels for various matched-score pairs. For example, reading performance level comparison based on matched scores of students tested both in 2005 grades 8 and 2006 grades 9.

- **DAPA Summaries**
  - Summary for Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment (DAPA).

- **Student Survey Summaries**
  - Summary for Student Survey at each DSTP test.

- **Customized DSTP Summary Reports**
  - Build your customized DSTP report.

---

**Links used in this workshop session:**

DOE Home

[http://www.doe.state.de.us/](http://www.doe.state.de.us/)

School Profiles


Delaware Student Testing Program

[http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/)

Accountability

[http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/account.shtml](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/account.shtml)

School


School Accountability Summary Details


**DSTP Online Reports – DSTP-OR Public Access**

[http://dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DSTPmart9/](http://dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DSTPmart9/)  
Note the “Districts” link in the bar on the left side of the page
2009 Delaware School Accountability System

Delaware’s accountability system is exceptional in several ways. The system was designed to merge the existing state accountability processes with the federal requirements, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. This merger yielded a unique accountability system that not only meets the needs of the federal legislation but also addresses the federal requirements. The system allows Delaware to monitor student progress in various subgroups of students, at the school, district and state levels.

The following conditions are applied to calculate district accountability. The district progress result, the state component, and an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status, the federal required computation, are the primary outputs of the accountability system. District accountability combines students into three component grade level clusters: Elementary (grades K – 5), Middle (grades 6, 7 & 8) and High school (grades 9-12).

In determining percent meeting/exceeding the standards (Performance target), the percentage of students meeting standards is compared to a State target. The higher of two measures is used to determine progress for the performance target: the current year’s test data or the average of the current year and the previous year of test scores. If a score does not meet the target, a mathematical confidence interval is calculated, added to the district’s score and compared to the target. A similar comparison is used to determine if the 95% participation target was met, the higher of the current participation rate or the two-year average will be used.

Eight steps have been established between 2003 and 2014 to guide Delaware’s student progress toward 100% of Delaware students meeting/exceeding standards for both English/language arts and math. If a district or the state does not meet the target for a given year, a second look is used to see if indeed there has been progress toward the target. If the progress shows a 10% or greater decrease in the percent of students not meeting the standards as compared to the previous year, then that district or the state is granted ‘Safe Harbor’ and will meet the annual performance target provided that progress in the Other Academic Indicator is demonstrated.

To attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a district must meet: (1) participation standards for all subgroups that have a population of 40 or more students; (2) performance targets or attaining Safe Harbor for all subgroups that have a population of 40 or more students; and (3) maintain or show progress toward the appropriate Other Academic Indicator for the total district population. The district must maintain or show progress towards both the elementary/middle school Other Academic Indicator (scale score performance on the reading and math assessments) AND the high school Other Academic Indicator (graduation rate).

Districts must also meet a State Progress Target. This district-wide calculation is a scaled composite score consisting of the percentage of students in each performance level for reading, math, science and social studies tests. The district must achieve a certain composite score AND show specified amounts of progress over last year’s composite score to be rated Above Target, Meets Target, or Below Target.

District improvement status is based on a district’s progress or lack of progress toward the targets. If a district has a Below target rating in English-language arts, mathematics or Other Academic Indicators, in each of the grade-clusters, the district will not have met AYP, it will be Below target. If a district does not meet AYP for two consecutive years because of the same content area or because of not maintaining or showing progress on Other Academic Indicators for two consecutive years, that district is designated as Under Improvement (UI).

Page two of this District Accountability System document contains charts which display data used to determine this district’s AYP and State Progress ratings.

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<tr>
<th>2009 Composite Score Target</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>75.00 to 74.99</td>
<td>6.00 points increase or more</td>
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<tr>
<td>61.00 to 74.99</td>
<td>1.00 points increase or more</td>
<td>Meet Target</td>
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<td>45.00 to 60.99</td>
<td>2.00 points increase or more</td>
<td>Meet Target</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.00 to 44.99</td>
<td></td>
<td>Below Target</td>
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</table>
# 2009 Delaware School Accountability System

## 2009 District Rating Status:
Adequate Yearly Progress Status (Federal Requirement): Meet Target
State Progress Status: Meet Target. (Composite Score = 80, Percent Increase = 0)

### Elementary School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>ELA % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
<th>ELA % Participation</th>
<th>Math % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
<th>Math % Participation</th>
<th>Other Indicators (grade K-5) Improvement of Low Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State 2009 Goal</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>95</td>
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### Middle School Level

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>ELA % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
<th>ELA % Participation</th>
<th>Math % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
<th>Math % Participation</th>
<th>Other Indicators (grade 6-8) Improvement of Low Performance</th>
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### High School Level

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<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>ELA % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
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<th>Math % Meeting/Exceeding Standards</th>
<th>Math % Participation</th>
<th>Other Indicators (grade 6-8) Improvement of Low Performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>State 2009 Goal</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- **MP** means this cell met the Target Percentage or this cell met the target percentage with a confidence interval applied and Safe Harbor was not needed
- **N** means this cell did not meet Safe Harbor (did not have a 10% reduction in the # of students who did not meet/exceeded standards) OR did not maintain or improve their Other Indicator score
- **S** means this cell did not meet the Target Percentage, but did qualify for Safe Harbor status
- **A** means that the number of eligible students was less than 15 and, therefore, not reported
- **(%)** indicates that the number of students in that cell was <40 and was not used in accountability calculations, but was >15 and, therefore, reported
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<th>District/School</th>
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<th>Proficient Reading</th>
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Database School Accountability Ratings for 2003

31-Jul-03: Performance ELA

Participation ELA | Participation Math | Performance Math | All School Grades

Data Source: District

Notes: This table provides performance ratings for various schools in the database. The ratings are based on various factors including GPA, AR Index, and proficiency levels in English and Math. The data includes ratings from schools in different districts, such as Lamar, Byrd, and Swan Lake High School.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Delaware School Accountability Ratings for 2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Mar-20</td>
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| School Name | AYP Met | AA Met | AA Progress | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ |
|------------|---------|--------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |

| School Name | AYP Met | AA Met | AA Progress | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ |
|------------|---------|--------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |

| School Name | AYP Met | AA Met | AA Progress | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ |
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| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |

| School Name | AYP Met | AA Met | AA Progress | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ |
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| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |

<p>| School Name | AYP Met | AA Met | AA Progress | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ | AA Econ | AA Prof | AA Art | AA Econ |
|------------|---------|--------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Dover High School | A | A | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |</p>
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**Legend:**
- `A`: Actual Goal
- `B`: Basic Goal
- `C`: Identified Target
- `D`: Identified Target (with criteria)
- `E`: School Improvement Status
- `F`: Measure of Effectiveness
- `G`: Overall Rating
- `H`: Participation BLA
- `I`: Performance BLA
- `J`: Participation Math
- `K`: Performance Math
- `L`: All School
- `M`: All School BLA
- `N`: All School Math
- `O`: Overall Participation
- `P`: Overall Performance
- `Q`: Overall All School
- `R`: Overall BLA
- `S`: Overall Math
- `T`: Overall Participation
- `U`: Overall Performance
- `V`: Overall All School
- `W`: Overall BLA
- `X`: Overall Math
- `Y`: Overall Participation
- `Z`: Overall Performance

**Note:** The table includes data for various categories such as student performance, school improvement, and overall participation, but specific values are not provided in the image.
Appendix H

DATA 201
Artifact #6: Data 201 for School Board Members

This artifact consists of four parts: 1) a workshop guide titled “Data 201 for School Board Members: Assessment Data Analysis Tool” that may be used to lead participants through a Delaware School Boards Association workshop session “Data 201 for School Board Members,” 2) a PowerPoint presentation that closely follows the workshop guide but that also includes five slides that set the stage for the workshop and four slides that guide the debriefing discussion at the end of the session; 3) an Excel spreadsheet titled “Accountability Graphs Template,” which participants will use to create data tables and graphs of Delaware student assessment for any Delaware public school or district; 4) a “Data Transfer Form,” to be used by workshop participants as a tool for transferring data from Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) web pages to the workshop spreadsheet.

As with Data 201, the workshop guide is structured to lead participants on a kind of scavenger hunt through the school data and accountability sections of the DDOE website. Each page of the handout contains full or partial screen shots from the website, and most pages contain questions that can be answered by examining the web page shown in the screen shot. Caesar Rodney School District’s web pages were used as the example for the workshop guide because that is my home district, but participants were instructed to use the pages for their home districts.

The structure for Data 201 is much like that of Data 101, with participants working in a computer lab or some similar room that contains at least one computer for every two participants. Participants will be encouraged to work in pairs, partly to allow for partners to check each other during the data transfer process, and partly to promote discussion of the data for the school or district each pair of participants chooses to examine.

The target audience for this workshop will be Delaware school board members who
either have completed Data 101 or who consider themselves sufficiently data savvy to work with 
data tables and graphs. This session does not, however, require any facility with Excel 
spreadsheets beyond the ability to enter numbers in spreadsheet cells. The Accountability 
Graphs Template is set up to require only data entry, and everything that will be derived from the 
data participants find on the DDOE web pages (i.e., one additional data table and a set of graphs) 
will automatically build themselves in real time as the participants enter the data.

The workshop session will begin with introductions, an overview of the session, and a 
brief orientation to the DDOE home page and to the workshop materials. Computers will 
already be showing the DDOE home page when participants enter the room. Participants will be 
asked to decide which school or district they would like to use as their “practice school” for this 
workshop. Participants will be informed that upon completion of the workshop they will be sent 
a copy of the Accountability Graphs Template which they may then use to organize for any 
Delaware school or district.

The workshop will begin with the PowerPoint presentation. Slide one is a cover slide and 
Slide two shows the session agenda. Slide three begins to execute the agenda, with the facilitator 
leading introductions of him/herself and all participants and then stating the purpose and goals of 
the workshop. Introductions may be individual, but if the facilitator feels that there are too many 
participants for that to be practical, the facilitator may modify the introductions (e.g., by 
recognizing each of the individual school districts from which the participants have come).

Slides four through six address “Ground Rules and Common Understandings.” Slide 
four guides explanations of why the workshop is based on DSTP and DCAS scores and of why 
bar graphs were selected as the method for displaying the session’s data.

Slides seven through eighteen show the same DDOE web site screen shots that are on
pages through nine of the workshop guide. From this point on until the final minutes of the session, participants will follow along in their workshop guides while the facilitator displays the corresponding graphics in the PowerPoint.

In the workshop guide, pages one through three of the workshop guide lead participants from the DDOE home page to the DSTP data for the school or district they have selected. This process is essentially the same as was used in Data 101, except that Data 101 participants used what they found to get a general “feel” for what data was available on the DDOE web site, while Data 201 participants go directly to the annual performance level data for their school or district.

Page four shows a screen shot of a DSTP summary page and small picture of the Data Transfer Form. While this page of the guide is being displayed, the facilitator will explain the process of finding the desired data on the web page and copying it onto the proper cells on the Data Transfer Form.

Page five contains detailed instructions for this process. The facilitator will review this page with participants, provide appropriate time for questions and answers about these instructions, and then provide time for participants to copy the DSTP data from the web page to the Transfer Form. As participants copy the data, the facilitator will circulate and monitor to answer questions, make suggestions, and generally make sure that participants are being successful with the task.

Pages six through eight take participants back to the DDOE home page and lead them to the online data tables containing DCAS data for their schools or districts. This essentially duplicates the process participants just went through to get DSTP data. Page 8 also contains a short set of instructions for copying the DCAS data and for checking and saving the Accountability Graphs Template when all of the data has been copied.
Page nine shows three sample graphs and asks the question, “What do you see in the graphs?” The facilitator will provide time for participants to look at the graphs they have created and to discuss with their partners what information they can gain from the graphs. After an appropriate time, the facilitator will call the pairs together and lead a whole-group sharing and discussion of information, insights and/or realizations gained by the participants. As the facilitator deems appropriate, the discussion will gradually broaden to include the process that participants have just been through as well as the results they have found. When the session is near its scheduled end time or when facilitator feels that the sharing and discussion have run their course, the facilitator will direct participants’ attention back to the PowerPoint.

Slides nineteen through twenty-two of the PowerPoint guide participants through the official session wrap-up. Slide nineteen suggests questions that participants may have been able to answer as a result of the work they did during the session (generally speaking, these may be classified as “What” questions), while slide twenty raises questions that should not or cannot be answered by the type of work done in this session (generally speaking, these may be classified as “How” or “Why” questions).

Slide twenty-one cautions participants that while the very limited data explored in this session can be very valuable, there are many other kinds of data that are highly relevant to the effectiveness of schools. Participants are advised that to answer different kinds of questions, they may need different kinds of data. Finally, this slide ends with a caution about confusing correlation with causation. The graphic “Correlation ≠ Causation” is shown in red on the slide and has the most dramatic entry animation of anything in the presentation, but the facilitator will use his/her discretion as to exactly how to make the point to participants. A more statistically sophisticated audience may simply need to see the graphic, while a less statistically sophisticated
audience may need an explanation that makes the point without getting deeply into the math.

Slide twenty-two brings the workshop to a close by framing the expectations that participants should have (“Data is better at raising questions than at answering them,”) and then framing the whole session in the context of their service on school boards (“but…raising questions is precisely what good school board members should be doing”).

The workshop guide provides two pages of materials that are not shown in the PowerPoint. Page ten of the guide is a sample of the Data Transfer Form. Separate copies of this form will be provided to participants as handouts along with the guide.

Page eleven contains a list of URLs for the most important web pages used in this presentation, as well as URLs for links to web pages that might provide worthwhile additional information to participants. (For the web pages used in this workshop, URLs also are provided under each screen shot in the guide.)

The Accountability Graphs Template is based on the work I did to create School Data Packets for the middle school in which I was the principal. The Data Packets allowed me and my staff to track our school’s progress from year to year, helping us to identify trends in the data and, in turn, to identify areas of need that we would address in our work the following year.

Separate data tables in the Data Packets tracked information related to all tested areas – including writing, science and social studies for applicable grade levels and testing years – and in later years of my principalship the Data Packets also tracked information for all applicable No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability cells. As principal, I was the only one who copied the data from the DDOE web site into the data tables. This was partly because I wanted to make sure that the process was done accurately, partly because I wanted to be the only one to take the blame if
something was not done accurately, and partly because I wanted to be able to improve the process as I saw fit in each successive year’s data packet. As the packet’s creator, I also was the one most in tune with the process and therefore the one most likely to notice possible problems when a spreadsheet formula became unstable or when some inconsistency in a graph raised the possibility that a number may have been copied incorrectly. The actual Data Packets included only the resultant graphs (not the data tables) and a several lines per graph analyzing the trends shown. These short analyses were intended only to point out the most obvious and/or salient features in the data, and then to serve as discussion starters for the school year to come. The finished Data Packets were mailed to each instructional staff member each year, and the packets became the basis for much of the professional discussion and for many of the instructional adjustments made each year.

Data 201 for School Board Members takes the process and materials created for the School Data Packets and repurposes them for use by school board members. With this change of focus, the process has been simplified (e.g., templates are provided only for reading and for math; no Excel skills more complicated than simple data entry are required), and the discussions have become part of the workshop session rather than something provided by a principal or superintendent. The Analysis Tool (spreadsheet) will be provided at no charge to workshop participants, and participants will be encouraged to use the tool with additional schools in their districts and then to use what they find as the basis for discussions across schools and grade levels. At the district level, such discussions could take place informally or formally, and could be facilitated by board members, by district staff, or by representatives of the Delaware School Boards Association.
DSTP Online Reports – DSTP-OR Public Access

http://www.doe.state.de.us/
School Information

Caesar Rodney School District (10)

- Overall Summary
  - Percent meet or exceed standard, percent below standard, average scale scores, and number of students aggregated at state level for each of the five content areas.
  - Summary by School
  - Disaggregated Summary at the District Level
  - District level disaggregated summary statistic by Education Type, Low-Income, Race, Gender, ELL Status, Title 1 Status and Migrant Status.
  - Achievement Gap Analysis
  - Achievement Gap Analysis for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.
  - Instructional Needs Reports
  - Instructional Needs Comments for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.
  - Matched Scores
  - Matched scores of performance levels for various matched-score pairs. For example, reading performance levels comparison based on matched scores of students who took the SAT in 2010.

School Summary

For a selected school, aggregated or disaggregated summary reports, IIC reports, and Matched Score reports.

Fifer (Fred) Middle School (625)

- Overall Summary
  - Percent meet or exceed standard, percent below standard, average scale scores, and number of students aggregated at state level for each of the five content areas.
  - Disaggregated Summary at the School Level
  - School level disaggregated summary statistic by Education Type, Low-Income, Race, Gender, ELL Status, Title 1 Status and Migrant Status.
  - Achievement Gap Analysis
  - Achievement Gap Analysis for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.
  - Instructional Needs Reports
  - Instructional Needs Comments for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.
### Data Transfer

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#### Diagram

- **Reading**: Spring 2010 RHW
- **Math**: Grade 6
- **PL1**: 262
- **PL2**: 236
- **PL3**: 301
- **PL4**: 217
- **PL5**: 250
- **Baseline 1998-DSTP**: 23.28
- **Baseline 1999-DSTP**: 25.17
- **DE Cycle #1 2000-DSTP**: 12.40
- **DE Cycle #1 2001-DSTP**: 10.05
- **DE Cycle #2 2002-DSTP**: 8.63
- **NCLB 2003-DSTP**: 7.08
- **Smarter Balanced 2014-SB**: 5.50
- **2015-SB**: 4.00

#### Other Summary Reports

- Download
Data Transfer

Copy data from the Delaware Department of Education web pages into the DATA TRANSFER FORM (see hard copy), and then into the ACCOUNTABILITY GRAPHS TEMPLATE (Excel spreadsheet).

INSTRUCTIONS:

- If possible, work with a partner. When doing the data transfer, one partner can read the data and the other partner can write it.
- Decide whether you want to analyze data for the entire district or for a particular school, then use what you have been show so far in this session to find the DSTP data for the district/school you want to analyze.
- Decide which grade level you want to analyze, and then always copy data for the same grade level.
  - In 1998-2002 only grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 were tested.
  - Starting in 2003, all grades 3-10 were tested. If you’re not careful, it is easy to copy data for one grade for 1998-2002 but then copy data for another grade for 2003-present.
  - Watch for changes in grade configurations (e.g., 8th grade was in the high school in 1998-2004 but moved to the middle school starting in 2005).
- Make sure you are always copying the number into the correct cell in the Graphs Template.
  - NOTE: The order in which the Performance Levels are presented reversed when the state changed from the DSTP to DCAS.
    - For 1998-2010 (state field testing and the DSTP), the state web pages show PL5 on the left and PL1 on the right (i.e., the order is PL5-PL4-PL3-PL2-PL1).
    - Starting in 2011 (the first DCAS year) the order is reversed, so PL1 is shown on the left and PL 4 is on the right (i.e., the order is PL1-PL2-PL3-PL4).
    - The Graphs Template uses the newer (DCAS) order, so you need to be extra careful when entering DSTP data.
  - Starting in 2011, there are only 4 performance levels. The DSTP had five levels (PL1 through PL5), but DCAS has only four performance levels (PL1 through PL4).
    - In addition to making sure that you copy your data correctly, take the changes in performance levels into consideration when you analyze your data. Although you will not see PL5s after 2010, that is not evidence that top students are not performing as well as before.
- If less than 5% of students score at a given performance level, the state does not report that percentage and you will see only “<5.0” in that cell on the web page.
  - Leave those cells blank on the Transfer Form and the Graphs Template. While this will make the graphs slightly inaccurate, this is the best that can be done with publically available data and the effects on your overall analysis will be minimal.
Generally speaking, if you see “<5.0” in a PL1 cell, that’s a good thing (less than 5% of students are performing at the lowest level on the test), while seeing “<5.0” in the highest PL is not such a good thing (less than 5% of students are performing at the highest level on the test).

- If everything is going well, you should see your graphs building in real time as you enter your data. Check periodically to make sure that each new number you enter gives you a new bar on your graphs. Also check to see if your graphs are showing patterns. If you see a drastic change in any pattern, check to make sure that you have not made a copying error.
DCAS Online Reports – DCAS-OR Public Access

http://www.doe.state.de.us/
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/assessment

http://www.doe.k12.de.us/dcas/

http://dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DCASOR/default.aspx
Data Transfer

Work with your partner to continue the work you started with the DSTP data, but now copying DCAS data onto the Data Transfer Form (hard copy) and then entering it onto the Accountability Graphs Template (Excel spreadsheet).

When you have entered data for all testing years into the Accountability Graphs Template, be sure to:

- Double check your work to make sure that all numbers have been copied correctly.
- Save your spreadsheet either onto your computer’s hard drive (if you own the computer on which you are working) or onto a flash drive (if you do not own the computer on which you are working).
Data Analysis – What do you see in the graphs?
## Parting Thoughts
*(notes)*

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<td>What other data would I like to see?</td>
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<td>What questions do I have now, that I need to take back to my district?</td>
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<td>Other thoughts…</td>
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# DATA TRANSFER FORM
for
Accountability Graphs Template

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</table>
Main Links Used in this Workshop

DOE Home
http://www.doe.state.de.us/

School Profiles

School Accountability Summary Details
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/accountability/Accountability_Files/2012_School_Detail_Summary_11-2012.pdf

DSTP Online Reports – DSTP-OR Public Access
http://dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DCASOR/default.aspx Note the “Districts” link in the bar at the top of the page

Related Links

Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) – General Information
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/dcas/

Accountability Information – Main page
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/accountability/accountability.shtml

School Accountability Information
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/accountability/school_account.shtml

District Accountability Information
http://www.doe.k12.de.us/aab/accountability/district_account.shtml
Data 201
for
School Board Members

USING A DATA ANALYSIS TOOL
TO
LOOK AT STATE ASSESSMENT DATA
Session Agenda

• Introductions
• Purpose and goals of the session
• Ground rules & common understandings
• Finding and transferring data – “Data Transfer”
• Studying the graphs – “Data Analysis”
• Discussion of data, possibilities & paths forward
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introductions, Purposes &amp; Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Introductions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Purpose of the session</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase familiarity and comfort level with data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate what one type of data can tell school board members about a school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ground Rules & Common Understandings

• **Why this data?**
  • Available to the public – no special permissions needed
  • Everyone’s heard of state assessments, but few have looked beyond what’s in the news media
  • For School Board Members…
    • There’s more to state assessment data than what’s in the media.
    • This session will help prompt board members to do their own reflections on data.

• **Why graphs? Why these graphs?**
  • Graphs help people to visualize trends that are in the data, but that may be hard to see in data tables (columns of numbers)
  • Bar graphs are relatively simple and familiar – they make relationships and trends easy to see
  • The way the DDOE web site presents DSTP and DCAS data makes bar graphs relatively easy to create.
Ground Rules & Common Understandings

**A few words about math and computer skills...**

- You do not need higher level math skills for this workshop. If you can copy numbers and you can tell if one bar is taller than another, you can learn something from this session.

- You do not need higher level computer skills for this workshop. If you can use a mouse and if you can type a number, you have all the computer skills you need.
Ground Rules & Common Understandings

- **A few words about apples and oranges...**
  - The DSTP and DCAS are different tests – a specific score on one does NOT equate to a specific score on the other.
  - State targets for school accountability purposes changed with the change in tests (DSTP → DCAS).
  - “Percent of students meeting standard” is the ONLY common element in what we are going to look at in this session.
  - “Standard” = scoring at or above Performance Level 3 (PL3)
DSTP Online Reports – DSTP-OR Public Access

Delaware Student Testing Program On-line Reports

- Statewide Summaries
- Summaries By District
- Disaggregated Summary at the State Level
- Disaggregated Summary at the State Level
- Achievement Gap Analysis - State Level
- Achievement Gap Analysis - District Summary
- Charter School Summary
- Instructional Needs Reports
- Matched Scores Performance Level Comparison Matrix
- DAPA Summaries
- Student Survey Summaries
- Customized DSTP Summary Reports

DCAS On-line Reports

http://dps.doe.k12.de.us/DSTP/OR/Default.aspx
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Summary</th>
<th>[\text{Achievement Gap Analysis}]</th>
<th>[\text{Instructional Needs Reports}]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance below standard, percent below standard, average scale scores, and number of students aggregated at scale level for each of the five content areas.</td>
<td>[\text{Achievement Gap Analysis}] for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.</td>
<td>[\text{Instructional Needs Reports}] for Reading, Math and Writing for a selected test year and test grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
See “Data Transfer” instructions on page 5 in your packet.
DCAS Online Reports – DCAS-OR Public Access

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Fax: (302) 739-3092

Common Core Alignment to DCAS for Mathematics – Alignment document depicting the shifts in the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and the alignment of the DCAS to the CCSS. This is an important document for educators as it reinforces the importance of the shift of instruction to CCSS but also highlights a few areas in which the DCAS assesses standards that have “shifted” to a higher grade level in the CCSS.

- Common Core Assessment Documents (updated July 2, 2013)
  - 2013-2014 State Assessment Calendar (May 2013)
- Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) Portal
- DCAS Information and Reports - access historical DISTP reports from this web page
- Accountability
See "Data Transfer" instructions on page 8 in your packet.
Data Analysis – What do you see in the graphs?
Wrap-Up

• Questions you may have answered...

• Historically, what percentage of your selected school’s or district’s students have tested at or above the standard set by the official state assessment?

• Is your school/district consistently getting more and more students to achieve at or above the standard set for the state assessment?

• Are there trends? Do the trends suggest consistent improvement?

• Are there sudden increases or decreases in the percents of students meeting standard? Do those increases or decreases come at the same time as other significant events (e.g., did the percentages drop in the year after an experienced principal or superintendent left? After a change in school feeder patterns?)?
Wrap-Up

- Questions this data can or cannot answer...
  
  - Data is very good at answering the “What?” questions.
    
    - What are the trends in our student assessment scores?
    
    - Generally speaking, are our students scoring higher or lower on the state assessments?

  - Data such as we have examined in this session cannot answer the “How?” or “Why?” questions
    
    - Why are our students scoring higher/lower?
    
    - How effective is our new reading curriculum?
Wrap-Up

• To answer different questions, you may need different data.
  • Disaggregated data (e.g., data on individual student subgroups)
  • Data related to student health factors, family status &/or income, school attendance rates
  • Student achievement levels upon entering the system (e.g., pre-K, transfer students)

• To answer different questions, you may need other information.
  • Is our new reading program being implemented with fidelity?
  • Did our teachers get the quantity and quality of training they needed?

→ Correlation ≠ Causation ←
Data is better at raising questions than at answering them,

but...

raising questions is precisely what good school board members should be doing.
Appendix I

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL
Most school board members are well meaning, and they did not run for election simply to maintain the status quo. Even when board candidates are happy with conditions in their school system, they almost always are thoughtful about the system and believe that they can make a difference. When media questions candidates about why they ran for the board, candidates never reply, “So I can continue doing exactly what the other board members have been doing all along.”

Even so, all too often school boards simply “do” without taking the time to examine what they do. The path of least resistance is for experienced board members to do what they always have done and for new board members to do what their more experienced colleagues are doing.

When board members are unreflective about their work, however, they do not do justice to the community that has elected them. They leave themselves open to excessive direction, not to say outright manipulation, by district superintendents. Even under the best of circumstances, when superintendents “only use their powers for good,” boards that unquestioningly following the superintendent’s direction are not living up to their civic mandate to supervise the superintendent.

The fact that a school board has “always” done something is no indication that what they always have done is appropriate or effective. School boards can get caught up in managing minutiae, in participating in ceremonial events that get the board lots of positive press but does not move the district forward in any meaningful way, or in orchestrating projects that may be popular with the community but that are at best peripheral to the school board’s central mission of ensuring a quality education for its students. Boards that get focus on these peripheral or non-instructional activities may be well regarded by the community and may have very positive relationships with their chief school officers, but they may at the same time be presiding over
school systems that show little or no improvement in student academic performance and/or that have persistent patterns of differing levels of academic achievement for students from varying ethnic backgrounds and/or economic circumstances.

Discussion protocols are widely accepted tools for structuring the examination of such things as plans, procedures and work samples, and in education they frequently are used by teachers who get together to look at student work or to serve as critical friends examining each other’s work. Protocols provide ways to look at something critically, in the most positive and disinterested sense of the term. Protocols generally set and adhere strictly to very specific ground rules that keep participants’ focus on the work and off of the individual or group that created or is presenting the work. Specifically, protocols establish strict steps to be followed, assign times to each step, and often use an experienced facilitator to guide participants through the process. The specific protocol to be used is agreed on in advance, and if problems, concerns or issues arise that fall outside of the protocol, the most common response is to complete the protocol as agreed upon and then, after the session has ended, to investigate future courses of action. These may include setting up a future session to examine the new problem/concern/issue using the same protocol, using a somewhat modified version of the protocol, or using a completely different protocol. Groups also may decide that while the issue seemed important in when it came up in the session, it does not seem so compelling after the session and should be dropped or delegated. Groups that are experienced at self-reflection or critical friend work may have a considerable repertoire of protocols from which they choose based on their particular tasks and goals of the moment.

This artifact provides a protocol and related materials to guide school boards through a
process of categorizing, analyzing, evaluating and planning their work. The purposes of engaging in this discussion are twofold: 1) to prompt school boards to engage in thoughtful reflection on the work they do, and 2) to encourage school boards to compare the work they do to the work that the research has identified as being characteristic of effective school boards. The artifact consists of the protocol itself (which includes both instructions and explanatory notes); a Session Record Chart which is keyed to the protocol and which can give boards a structured way to record important information and decisions made during their session; a handout titled “Focus Areas of Effective School Boards,” listing areas which the research shows are characteristic of effective school boards; and a short list of resources and citations for boards or board members that want background information or that would like to delve more deeply into the effective boards research.

The protocol is divided into five sections.

**Purpose:**

This section states the two-fold purpose of the protocol: to structure work sessions that 1) focus school boards on what the research says about effective school boards, and 2) guide school boards in evaluating their own work through the lens of research on effective boards.

**Time Options:**

While this protocol was originally envisioned as being for a short discussion, other possibilities emerged as the protocol was being developed. Based on my experience with school boards and with work groups in general, it became apparent early on that the protocol would engage boards in far more work than could be done properly in a short conversation. This would be especially true for contentious boards or for boards that were unaccustomed to reflecting on
their own work. Three possible structures emerged, allowing boards to choose one or the other based on the characteristics of the board, their experience with self-reflection, and the depth to which they wished to go in their examination of their work. The protocol is the same for each option; only the times assigned to each step in the protocol are different.

The shortest option is for a sixty to ninety minute session, which would be best suited either for boards that are new to self-reflection and that want to get a “taste” of what the process would be like, or for boards that are both collegial and experienced in self-reflection. For the first group, the session serves as an introduction to the process. For the latter, the session could serve as a status check in an ongoing process. This option could be implemented in a regular monthly board meeting, either as an activity during the meeting or as a special session immediately before or after the board’s business meeting.

The middle option is for a three hour session, which would work well either as a half-day session or as an evening session that is devoted solely to this process. This option is best suited for boards that are at least basically collegial and that want a longer introduction to the process or for boards that are experienced but feel that they need more than just a status check.

The longest option is for a six hour session, and should be scheduled for a full day. This option is best suited for boards that feel they need to do an in-depth examination of their work, and/or that have many goals spread across a wide spectrum of issues. This option would work well as one day of a multi-day annual retreat or for a board that is considering a major restructuring or redirecting of its work.

**Participant Preparation:**

Regardless of the time option selected by a board, effective preparation will help the
board to get the greatest benefit from the time spent in the workshop session. The benefits of designating a facilitator and a session recorder beforehand are self-evident – those individuals will not have to get themselves organized while the board waits, but instead can prepare ahead of time and come to the session ready to begin immediately. As part of that preparation, the facilitator can provide the board with advance materials on school board effectiveness, such as the handout “Focus Areas of Effective School Boards” and related documents, as well as gathering together statements of the board’s goals, meeting agendas and minutes and other such documents that can inform the board’s reflections.

**Work Session:**

The work session takes board members through four steps:

1. **Categorizing their work** – labeling the work and sorting it into three categories: work related to board goals, work that is required but that is not related to the board’s goals, and other work.
2. **Analyzing their work** – determining what percent of the board’s time is spent on each task and each category of work.
3. **Evaluating their work** – first determining whether or not the work is consistent with the research on effective school boards, and then deciding that the goal has been achieved, or that the work is on track to achieve the board’s goal, or that the work needs to be reconsidered (and either restructured or discontinued).
4. **Planning their work** – using what was learned/determined in the first three steps to plan the board’s future work. If the session has gone well, work on goals that have been achieved will be celebrated and ended (or perhaps moved into a “maintenance”
or “monitoring” mode), work that is on track will be continued (although possibly tweaked to make it more efficient or effective), and work that needs to be reconsidered will be dropped (because it is not consistent with what effective school boards do) or will be restructured (to make it consistent with what effective boards do).

The details and rationales for the steps to be followed in the workshop session are thoroughly described in the protocol document. Each step is designed to embody the concept of “loose-tight” – tightly specifying the goal of the step and structuring the work to keep participants on task, while loosely structuring the conversation that takes place in that step. To put it another way, both for the workshop as a whole and for each step in it, the structure keeps participants focused on the results while giving participants the freedom to consider whatever they deem necessary in order to achieve those results.

That having been said, a special note is in order regarding the warm/cool feedback process used in the analysis of the board’s work (Step 2 in the protocol). This part of the protocol is based loosely on the process used in the Tuning Protocol developed by the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). I saw a variation of this protocol used in a Vision 2015 work session sometime in the first three years of that project. I had seen and experienced activities in which participants were asked to provide warm and cool feedback, but those activities almost always seemed superficial. Even when real, significant and well known differences existed between the parties involved, or when a product or presentation had quite noticeable flaws, participants would praise the obvious strengths and gloss over all but the most glaring flaws. Once everyone had stated the obvious, there would be an uncomfortable silence and then the group would move on. In the Vision 2015 session, however, the facilitators were adamant that
participants must take all the time allotted for the feedback. What happened was fascinating. The group started in the same manner as I had seen before, but when the obvious had been stated and the uncomfortable silence ensued the facilitators did not allow the group to move on.

Instead, the facilitators held fast to their original, well planned time frame. After what seemed like ages but was probably less than thirty seconds, one of the participants “broke” and offered a bit of feedback that got beyond the superficial. Once that veneer had been broken, other participants offered additional feedback that, in retrospect, turned out to be much more insightful and valuable than the feedback offered in the original round. A simple but profound truth arose from this. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, a group abhors silence, and rather than endure an extended silence, a group will break its social block and address the most significant, sometimes painful issues that they face. At the end of the Vision 2015 session it was generally agreed that the best, most honest and most useful feedback came after the uncomfortable pause. The lesson for facilitators, then, was that they must keep their session participants on task even when that task becomes uncomfortable. In fact, the uncomfortable silences seem to indicate that “We’ve done all the easy stuff, and to move on means that we have to dig deeper in our thinking about the issue, and that may require us to risk confrontation with our fellow participants.”

Facilitators, then, must be very deliberate about setting up the structure of the feedback conversation and then stick to that structure, while also providing a secure environment in which participants may offer meaningful and quite possibly disconcerting feedback.

The uncomfortable silence is not just about getting beyond being politely superficial, however. The silence also indicates the end of the first round of the participants’ consideration of the issue at hand. In addition to being relatively obvious or superficial, the first round of feedback generally is individual feedback, informed only by each individual’s perceptions of the
issue. As that first round of feedback is being given, the participants who are giving the feedback are also listening to the feedback being offered by their fellow participants. When feedback ends after the first round, all that recipients have gotten is each individual’s views. As participants persevere through the silence at the end of the first round, they have the time to process the feedback offered by their colleagues and to consider how their colleagues’ views compare to their own. The first round of feedback, then, informs not only the recipients but also the providers of the feedback. The result is that the second (or even a third) round of feedback has the potential to benefit from the synergy of all participants’ ideas combining to provide insights that are deeper, more detailed and more nuanced than anything provided in the first round of dutiful and largely risk-free feedback.

Another lesson learned from this Vision 2015 session was that the feedback activity works best if participants are told in advance that they will be held to the set time structure, that they should expect to experience a predictable pattern (initial rush of easy, perhaps superficial, feedback – uncomfortable silence – a new round of deeper, more meaningful feedback), and that they should expect the facilitator to be encouraging and supportive, but also unrelenting in keeping to the set times. This forewarning helps to make the silence a bit less awkward because it is expected, but it also sets the stage for getting the most out of the activity. Because participants know that they will have to fill all of the allotted time (there is no reward for being quick and glib – they will not be able to move on if they “finish early”), participants are more likely to listen more closely and thoughtfully to the feedback given by their colleagues. This can make the silence more productive because the participants have taken note of all of the feedback given so far, and in some cases it can make the silences shorter because participants are processing their colleagues’ feedback even as it is being given.
In short, adhering to the time schedule, especially if the facilitator prepares the participants in advance, changes the feedback activity from a time of giving individual opinions to a work session devoted to providing recipients with the most insightful and useful feedback.

Debriefing on the process

This process is important for at least three reasons. First, it will provide information on participants’ reactions to the activity itself. This information can be used to focus and to improve future sessions. Second, it can give insight into participants’ frame of mind coming out of the session. Ideally, first-time participants may report having been skeptical going in, then finding that the work was hard and/or emotionally draining, but that ultimately board members came out of the session with a better understanding of each other and of their work as a governing board. Third, not doing a debrief makes it easy to see the session as a one-time activity, whereas doing a debrief – and finding an appropriate time and method of reporting results back to the board – helps to frame the activity as part of an ongoing and evolving process of reflection.

The protocol suggests three possible options for conducting the debriefing: holding the debriefing as a short and relatively informal final activity of the session; holding the debriefing as a more formal, structured activity at the end of the session; and conducting the debriefing as a separate activity at some time soon after the end of the workshop. Each option has possible strengths and weaknesses that should be considered. The first option can be completed relatively quickly, completing the workshop session during its scheduled time but risking getting only limited or superficial feedback from the board members. The second option may get more and better feedback on the session, but carries the risk of overextending already exhausted
participants. The third option has the potential of getting the best feedback – reflections from well rested participants who have had some time to process the experience – but at a high risk of having other life events interfere with getting participants’ responses back from them.

**WEB SITES FOR PROTOCOLS**


National School Reform Faculty (NSRF)
- NSRF home page: [http://www.nsrfharmony.org/index-2.html](http://www.nsrfharmony.org/index-2.html)
- List of NSRF protocols: [http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/a_z.html](http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/a_z.html)


Analysis of School Board Work

Session Protocol

Purpose: This session protocol provides a method that local school boards can use to structure reflective conversations about their effectiveness. This protocol is not structured to dictate what the specific concerns of boards should be, but will help the boards to:

a) Focus on keeping their work directed toward areas the research shows are the focus of effective school boards, and

b) Be thoughtful about their levels of effectiveness relative to their chosen goals and priorities.

Time Options:

Option 1: Introduction / Refresher / Status Check session (60-90 minutes)
Option 2: Half-day or evening workshop (3 hours)
Option 3: Full-day workshop (6 hours)

Participant Preparation:

1. Review research-based “Focus Areas of Effective School Boards” (see attachment to this protocol), or any other research-based listing of the areas on which effective school boards focus.

2. Review the stated/published goals of your school board for the period covered by this discussion (e.g., for the past semester, for the coming year, goals in a 3-5 year strategic plan).

3. Review relevant documents – agendas, meeting minutes/notes/transcripts, reports and any other sources that might document:
   a. Issues, topics, projects, etc. on which the board has been spending its time, and
   b. The board’s progress – or lack thereof – toward meeting its official goals for the period covered by this discussion.

4. Designate a session facilitator.
   a. Boards that are new to the process of evaluating their work OR that have contentious relationships between board members may wish to bring in a neutral, outside facilitator.
   b. Boards that are experienced in evaluating their own work AND which have collegial relationships between board members may choose to designate a board member, a district office staff member, or some other trusted “friend of the board” to act as facilitator.
   c. The key consideration in selecting a facilitator should be the individual’s facilitation skills, particularly the facilitator’s ability to stay personally neutral, to keep the group focused on the task and steadily progressing toward achieving the session’s goals, and to make sure that all participants get roughly equal “air time.” Another important consideration is the facilitator’s understanding of school boards (or of governing boards in general) and of the characteristics of effective boards as compared to ineffective boards.

5. Designate a session recorder – This individual will be responsible for recording the important points made during this session. At the discretion of the board and the facilitator, this may include writing notes on chart paper or on a computer (projected for all to see) as the session progresses, or keeping notes to be distributed to the board after the session, or any other equally effective process for preserving the work done during the session.
Work Session:

1. Categorizing the board’s work (discussion)
   a. Based on the work done in preparation for this session, divide the work done by the school board into one of three categories:
      i. Work directly related to the board’s stated goals.
      ii. Work that the board is required to do (e.g., by statute or regulation), but which does not directly relate to the board’s stated goals. (Work in this category might include “routine business” such as approvals of standard personnel items, student travel, or policies dictated by state or federal regulation; review and acceptance of regular and non-controversial reports from district office staff; or such actions as the setting of tax rates, where these are not directly related to specific goals of the board. (If any of these required/routine tasks are related to specific goals of the board, they should be sorted into the first category.)
      iii. Any other work that is done by the board, but that is neither required by statute or regulation nor related to the board’s stated goals.

NOTE: For the purposes of this session, “work” includes only activities related to decisions that the board must make or chooses to make. Ceremonial activities such as attending/participating in graduations, dedication ceremonies, etc.; attending sports events, plays or presentations put on by students; or other such school or district programs may take up considerable time for board members but do not count as “work.” Boards may find it valuable, however, to conduct a similar session that does include board activities not directly related to decision making and to analyze the relative amounts of time spent by the board in ceremonial versus decision-making activities.

   b. Post the work categorization so it is visible to all participants. (Facilitators may use the format shown in “Categorizing the Board’s Work” or any other format with which their board is comfortable.)

   c. Assign rough percentages or fractions to each category.
      i. Do not over think this or spend too much time on it. For the purposes of this session there is no practical difference between 33% and 34%, so any time spent debating single-digit differences is time wasted. Do not think in increments of less than 5%, and increments of 10% are fine.
      ii. If the board is not comfortable assigning percents to individual goals or if doing so becomes too tedious or impractical, the facilitator and the board may choose to give percentages just to the three main categories (goal-related work; required work; other work). This also may be a good option for boards that are new to the process of evaluating their work.

2. Analyzing the board’s work – Where are we putting our effort?
   a. Individual Work – Working quietly and independently, each board member writes answers to the following questions:
      i. Which of the board’s goals are consistent with the research on what effective boards do? Explain.
      ii. Is the board spending an appropriate percentage of its time focused on accomplishing its stated goals?
         1. Why do you believe the percent of the board’s time to be adequate, OR
         2. What do you feel needs to be done to change the way the board spends its time so as to better accomplish its goals?
   b. Sharing and discussion:
i. The facilitator should call on each board member to share his her responses to the Individual Work questions. After a board member has shared his/her responses, other board members may ask clarifying questions but may not offer comments or critiques of any response. This continues until all board members have shared.

ii. Warm feedback – Board members offer warm feedback about the responses.

iii. Cool feedback – Board members offer cool feedback about the responses.

**Notes on Feedback:** Feedback should be general, directed toward the work of the board as a whole and not to any individual member of the board. As a rule of thumb, the facilitator should allow 2 minutes of feedback time for each board member (e.g., a 5-member board would use 10 minutes for warm feedback and 10 minutes for cool feedback), although this does not mean that every board member must speak for 2 minutes. The facilitator should be firm about reserving the full length of time for each type of feedback. Often there will be an initial flurry of feedback, followed by an uncomfortable silence. The facilitator must not allow the board to assume that they have said everything that needs to be said and move on – often the most meaningful feedback comes after participants have given all the “easy” initial feedback and had to struggle with uncomfortable silences. These silences can drive participants to look deeper and to identify and address more complex and/or more sensitive issues.

3. Evaluating the board’s work – Now that the board has examined its work in detail, the facilitator should guide the board through an evaluation of that work. The general questions to be considered are, “Is this where we want to be putting our effort?” and “Is this where we should be putting our effort if we want to be an effective board?” Using the same pattern as in Step 2 above, board members should work individually first, and then share and discuss as a group. During this part of the session, the facilitator should keep the board aware of two levels of context: the “local context,” which consists of all of the local conditions, issues and circumstances that shape the school district, and the “national context” which consists of the research-identified characteristics of effective boards.

a. Areas of focus – Consider each of the board’s work areas, and for each area answer the following questions:
   i. Are our efforts focused on the areas that research shows to be characteristic of effective boards?
   ii. If not, why not? (If yes, then how could we improve our focus so as to be even more effective?)

b. Effectiveness
   i. Are we devoting the proper amount of effort to each of our goals, so as to be able to accomplish those goals?
      1. If “no,” then how should the board’s time be adjusted so as to accomplish its goals? Should the total time spent by the board remain about the same, with only the time on specific goals adjusted up or down? Does the board need to spend more time overall in order to accomplish its goals? Does the board need to revise its or postpone work on one or more of its goals (does the board have more goals than it can ever hope to accomplish in the time it has available for board work)?
      2. If “yes,” then should the board maintain its current time allotment? Should the board consider ways to deepen or to extend its work on its
current goals, or should it consider taking on new goals? If so, what exactly should be done?

ii. For the work that the board does that is not directly related to its goals, is that work necessary? Does it support or detract from the work the board needs to do to achieve its goals?

iii. To what degree are we an effective board? Are we currently accomplishing our goals? Why or why not?

4. Planning the board’s work (Action Plan / Path Forward) – For each of the board’s work areas, including but not limited to its goals, determine what must be done to move the board forward.
   a. For work that is related to the board’s goals (where those goals are consistent with the research on effective boards) and which are either Achieved or On Track, the path forward may be simply to celebrate the accomplishment (for Achieved goals) or to continue doing what the board is already doing (for goals for which the work is On Track).
   b. For work that is not related to research-supported goals and/or for work on research-related goals that are not On Track, the board should first reconsider whether that work is necessary and appropriate for the board and then what the board should either agree to create a research-supported goal or to stop working on that area. Depending on the work areas and on the characteristics of the board, the board may do this reconsideration as a part of this session, or the board may schedule one or more follow-up sessions to address these decisions.

5. Debriefing on the process – The facilitator should lead a short debrief on the process the board has just experienced. Options for this debrief include:
   a. A short time for open and unstructured comments from the board (best used with experienced and effective boards); or
   b. A structured feedback time, using the same warm/cool feedback process used in the Analysis of the Board’s Work earlier in this session (see Step 2.b. above); or
   c. A structured process that takes place after the session, perhaps with board members submitting written comments to the facilitator, who then uses those comments to prepare a debrief report for the board (best used if the session has used all of its allotted time or if board members are too tired to do the debrief immediately after the session).
Focus Areas of Effective School Boards

Effective Boards:

Set the philosophical tone for the district (e.g., both state and exemplify the belief that all students can learn)

Set expectations / goals / targets for the district, but leave implementation and management to the superintendent and district staff

Work at the policy level, not at the management level, and watch to assure that board policies foster the conditions necessary for student success

- Monitor the district’s progress toward achieving the expectations / goals / targets set by the board
- Work through the superintendent (consider the superintendent to be the board’s sole direct employee) and then hold the superintendent accountable for achieving the expectations / goals / targets set by the board
- Understand and use data as a basis for their decision making

Make connections across the system

Know what it takes to improve student achievement
Provide workplace support (in schools and offices)
Provide/support professional development
Maintain a balance between district-wide direction and building-level autonomy
Establish/maintain strong community connections
Distribute leadership
# Analysis of Board Work

## SESSION RECORD CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Description or Label</th>
<th>% of Board's Time</th>
<th>Consistent with Research?</th>
<th>Status (✓)</th>
<th>Action Plan / Path Forward</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>On Track</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Work Related to Board Goals
- Subtotal: % %

### Work That is Required but Not Related to Board Goals
- Subtotal: % %

### Other Work
- Subtotal: % %

**Total: 100% 100%**

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Appendix J

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH LEGISLATORS
Citizen Advocacy

Few seem to realize the ominous implications of an efficient federal government. If the population rebels at the thought of the power the anonymous feds wield now, think of the horrors that could be perpetrated if the Imperium ever ran lean and mean. The last time Washington “worked,” in the sense of its various appendages pulling in more or less the same direction, the United States ended up with half a million troops in Vietnam. – Joel Garreau (Garreau, 1981)

You have citizens who don’t understand how government works and they’re kind of soured on it. All they do is criticize. They have no idea that they can make things happen. As a citizen, you need to know how to be a part of it, how to express yourself – and not just by voting. – Sandra Day O’Connor (Gergen, 2012)

Governments in the United States are not designed to be efficient. In fact, our national forefathers went to great lengths to construct a system of checks and balances precisely to inhibit the rapid action of the government. This is not surprising,
considering our founders’ experience with governments acting rapidly to implement measures that were designed very specifically to punish its citizens (Kush, 2004).

Since most state and many local governments are modeled after our federal system, we must cope with our forefathers’ legacy of inefficient government at all levels. While this often frustrates advocates who are seeking quick action on specific issues, the deliberative nature of our governments has its value in keeping our nation, our states and our communities on relatively stable and predictable courses. Citizen input is a vital element in this process.

The system is workable, and there are tried-and-true methods for concerned citizens to engage their representatives in meaningful discussion of issues. Working as individuals or through organizations, citizens reaching out to contact their legislators can be very effective in influencing the outcomes of those discussions.

**The Importance of Direct Contact**

It is no exaggeration to say that direct contact from constituents is the only kind of contact that truly matters to legislators. Money from professional lobbyists, information from professional organizations, and the opinions of a legislator’s friends and colleagues all have some influence, but when push comes to shove it is voters – those who determine whether a legislator gets re-elected or put out of office – whose views matter the most (Fitch, 2010).

Time is a critical factor in communicating with legislators. The amount of
time spent on communicating with a legislator gives that legislator an indication of the constituent’s level of commitment to the issue at hand. Thus quick and easy communications – signing a petition or forwarding an email message written by an advocacy organization – requires little effort and generally gets correspondingly little attention from legislators, and most often only get counted rather than read in detail. On the other hand, personal visits, handwritten letters or original emails take more of a constituent’s time and consequently send the message that the constituent is more than just casually interested in the issue. The greater the perceived level of commitment on the part of the constituent, the greater the attention the legislator is likely to pay to the constituent’s concerns. In school board work in Delaware, for example, one person speaking for the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) will be heard, but the message will not be as influential as one hundred original messages written by individual school board members.

**Whom to Contact**

The only legislator who really cares what you have to say is a legislator who directly represents you – a legislator for whom you are a constituent. Other legislators may appreciate your passion on an issue or respect the information you can provide from your personal expertise, but that appreciation or respect pales before the power that constituents wield in being able to decide whether or not a legislator remains in office. This is not to suggest any particular spinelessness on the part of legislators.
Most would prefer to remain in office (why else would they put themselves through the trials and tribulations of an election campaign?), but more importantly, most legislators really do want to represent the people in their home districts.

All work to influence a legislator’s position on an issue, then, ultimately comes down to a person-by-person, vote-by-vote effort. Legislators do not need to hear from every citizen on every issue, but they are always monitoring their constituents’ views and calculating their constituents’ levels of concern on a wide range of issues. If a legislator hears little or nothing about a particular issue, that legislator generally assumes either that constituents do not care deeply about it or that they are satisfied with the position that the legislator already has taken. Receiving no push to do otherwise, responsible legislators will rely on their own information or instincts when deciding how to vote. They may be influenced by information provided by industry or organization lobbyists (the majority of whom are sincere in wanting to provide legislators with accurate information in support of their positions), or they may vote the position advocated by their party, caucus or similar group.

Contacts from lobbyists or representatives of interest organizations do have their place. Often these representatives have accurate information on an issue (although what lobbyists share may be incomplete, especially if they have information that does not support their position). Lobbyists and organizations may have the resources to help determine how a large sample of voters feels about a particular issue. When a legislator has a gut feeling about what is the right way to vote on an issue, lobbyists and advocacy organizations may be able to help by giving the legislator the
information and arguments needed to defend that gut-level position (Fitch, 2010).
Organizations in particular may be able to mobilize large numbers of voters, and while
the public may feel that organizations most often mobilize against a position they do
not like, organizations also can mobilize members in support of a legislator who wants
to vote their way on an issue.

Individual lobbyists are only constituents for a very few legislators, however,
and no lobbyist can match the attention-getting power of a simple statement like, “My
name is John Smith, I live at 102 Main Street in your district, and I vote in every
election.”

How to Contact

“In 2004-2005, the Congressional Management Foundation conducted the
most extensive survey ever done of congressional staff… According to staff, the
factors that most influenced an undecided legislator were, in this order: 1) constituent
meetings; 2) personally written letters and emails, and; 3) anyone who represents a
constituent (such as a union leader, state association president, or large employer)”
(Fitch, 2010). Clearly, the most effective way to influence a legislator is by contacting
that legislator directly. The medium may vary, but the citizen who expects action to
be taken must take responsibility for reaching out to those who represent him.
Face-to-face meetings:

Meeting in person with a legislator is, of course, the gold standard in communication. There is no better way to show your commitment to an issue than to take the time and make the effort to meet with a legislator in person. Even before you walk into the room, the fact that you feel so deeply about an issue that you are willing to take time away from your work or family to express your concerns sends a strong message.

Legislators are busy people, so be sure to make an appointment in advance and then to confirm your appointment a day or so before the agreed upon time. Legislators have different mechanisms for making appointments, but the best way to start is to call the legislator’s office. (For your U.S. senators and representative, start with the Delaware office rather than the Washington, D.C. office.) How quickly you can get an appointment and how long your meeting will be depends on factors like the timing of your request and what else is on in the legislator’s schedule. Take whatever you are offered, and then come prepared to make the most of the time you have. If you present a compelling position and the legislator wants to know more, that legislator will find a way to meet with you again or for you to have a follow-up meeting with a staff member.

At the meeting you should follow the same rules as you would for any other method of communicating with legislators (see “Content of Contact” below), but with a few additions:

- **Dress appropriately**, as you would for a business meeting. Even if part of your
message is that you are “just an ordinary citizen,” you should respect the fact that the halls of government, including legislators’ offices, are formal places.

- **Be aware of time.** A typical meeting may last only fifteen minutes, so you will have no time to waste. You should be prepared to introduce yourself, to state your case, maybe have a short dialog, and then leave. Be prepared for the possibility that the legislator may arrive late or have to leave early, leaving you with less time than was originally planned. If you are scheduled for a fifteen minute meeting, for example, it is a good idea to plan for a ten-minute meeting. That way if the meeting gets cut short you will still have time to get your message across, and if the meeting goes the full length you always can provide more information or offer to answer questions. Always be prepared to start and end on time, and if the meeting goes off schedule for any reason make sure that the change comes from the legislator and not you.

- **Stay on message.** This is important for all communications with legislators, but staying on message can be even more difficult in face-to-face meetings than in any other form of communication. While it is good to start with introductions and perhaps some general, non-threatening conversation, make sure that you do not waste precious time on chit-chat and that you avoid any temptations or tendencies to allow the stream of the conversation to take you off message (Kush, 2004). In some cases, especially when you are dealing with a particularly sensitive issue or when your legislator’s position is not the same as yours, you may find that the legislator is fine with letting you to go off
message or that the legislator may even try to lead you off message. Do not hesitate to recognize any drift and to make mid-course corrections (“Yes, Senator, I would be happy to discuss the proposed gambling legislation, but right now I’m here to talk to you about school safety.”). If you are part of a group that is meeting with the legislator, monitoring for drift can be a role assigned to a member of your group (see below).

- **Follow up.** Shortly after your meeting (from several days to several weeks, depending on the urgency of the situation), write a short thank-you to the legislator or staff member with whom you met. Follow the guidelines in Content of Contact (below), but keep in mind that your purpose here is only to remind the legislator of your visit and to keep your issue and your requested action on the legislator’s mind.

- **Group meetings require extra care and planning.** If you are part of a group that is meeting with the legislator, be sure either to select a spokesperson (and then to let that person speak for the group) or to carefully plan out the part that each group member will play in the meeting. It can be very powerful to have different group members speak about their individual areas of expertise, but avoid feeling that every group member has to have a speaking role. Also avoid temptations to “pack the office.” Having standing room only at your meeting may enhance the message that other people share your concerns, but it also may add confusion that gives you less time to deal with the substance of your message. You do not want to use up half of your meeting time just finding
seats and doing introductions. If you really want to enable many people to
have their voices heard, organize a special meeting of your group and invite
the legislator(s) to be your guests at the meeting (Murphy, 2011; National
School Boards Action Center, 2012).

For more on meetings with legislators, see Bradford Fitch’s chapter “Face-to-
Face Meetings” in the Citizen’s Handbook To Influencing Elected Officials (Fitch,
2010), Christopher Kush’s chapter “Have a Face-to-Face Meeting with Your
Representative” in The One-Hour Activist: The 15 Most Powerful Actions You Can
Take to Fight for the Issues and Candidates You Care About” (Kush, 2004) and “A
Guide for Effective Meetings with Members of Congress” in NSBA’s Support Public
Education: Our School Children, Our Economy, America’s Future (National School
Boards Association, 2013), from which much of the information above was taken. To
see examples off what successful and unsuccessful meetings with legislators might
look like, watch the YouTube video “How To Advocate,” created by the Virginia
Interfaith Center (Virginia Interfaith Center, 2011).

At the Delaware School Boards Association Fall Clinics on October 10, 2012,
Kent County (Delaware) Chief Prosecutor Ken Haltom stated that, “Delaware is still a
one-phone-call state,” (K. Haltom, in a presentation to the Delaware School Boards
Association Fall Clinics, October 10, 2012) and scheduling an in-person meeting with
your legislators generally is easier in Delaware than in most other states. One of the
advantages of Delaware’s small size is that legislators often represent fewer
individuals than do legislators in other states, so there is less competition for a legislator’s time and attention. Delaware also has a cultural expectation that legislators will interact frequently and naturally with their constituents. Delaware legislators do not have multiple layers of staff positions between them and their constituents, and Delawareans expect that contacting their legislators will be relatively quick and easy. Because of Delaware’s proximity to Washington, D.C. it is not uncommon for our federal legislators come home to Delaware every night, and experience has shown that we get longer appointments when we set them up at their Delaware offices than we do when we set up appointments in their Washington, D.C. offices (S. Francis, personal communication, February 15, 2013).

Delaware’s small size also increases the chances that you will come across your legislators as part of your everyday life. Delawareans are more likely than citizens in other states to encounter their legislators at the grocery store, at the mall or at community or school events that have nothing to do with politics. Encounters “on the street” or in the community are a natural part of being elected to office, so don’t be afraid to take advantage of chance encounters to connect with your legislators. Be sure to use common sense – a lawmaker who is trying to buy food for the week with a crying child in the grocery cart seat is not going to be able to focus on your concerns about possible changes in school funding formulas. If handled well, however, legislators may come away from such chance meetings feeling that they have gotten more accurate information and more sincere feelings on an issue than they would have gotten in more formal meetings.
Email:

In communicating with legislators, email can be both a blessing and a curse. Email has the undeniable advantage of speed. It is relatively easy to find a legislator’s email address and to dash off a quick message stating your views. A citizen can read an article in the morning newspaper, see or hear a story on television or on the radio, or receive an Action Alert from an organization and have a message to the legislator’s office within minutes. In everyday life, an email may be as close to real-time conversation as a voter is likely to get with a legislator (Kush, 2004).

That same ease and immediacy has pitfalls, however. Messages written quickly and in the heat of the moment may not be thoughtful or well written. A quick message may clearly state a person’s position (“vote YES on HB-119” or “vote NO on SB-12”) but may do nothing to help the legislator understand why the constituent supports or opposes the measure. The immediacy of an email makes it easy for a constituent to use language that may be heartfelt, but which also is rude or overly emotional. Anyone who has ever scanned reader responses to a blog or to an online newspaper article has seen many messages that actually do more to detract from the respondent’s position than to support it. The ease of writing an email also can encourage a constituent to weigh in on everything, which may make the writer feel highly engaged in participatory democracy but which has the effect of diluting the influence of the messages written about issues the constituent cares most deeply about.

Still, with proper care an email message can be a constituent’s most effective
regular method of communicating with his/her legislators. To make the most of email:

- write each message carefully,
- write concerning only those few issues about which you feel most deeply, and
- follow the same rules as you would for any other method of communicating
  with legislators (see “Content of Contact” below).

**Handwritten or typed letter:**

Handwritten (including typed) letters do not have the immediacy that emails have, but handwritten letters are second only to face-to-face meetings in their ability to convey sincerity and commitment. Handwritten letters take time, and in the minds of legislators the fact that a constituent is willing to take extra time to communicate about an issue indicates that the constituent cares deeply about that issue (Kush, 2004).

Letters also take time to be delivered, however, and this is their major disadvantage. While emails get delivered almost instantly when the writer hits SEND, letters can take days or even weeks to reach their recipients. After several letters laced with Anthrax were sent to congressmen in the aftermath of 9/11, letters to U.S. senators and representatives are now purposely delayed as they are screened for hazardous substances. Later incidents, such as letters containing the poison ricin that were sent to President Obama and to at least one congressman in April of 2013, have ensured that this screening will remain in place far into the future. If you can afford the time – if you are not working against a deadline or if you are not calling for immediate action – a handwritten letter sends a strong message. If you cannot afford
the time – if a bill is moving quickly through the legislature or if an unexpected amendment has been added just before a final vote on a bill – then email is the better option.

**Multiple addressees, copies (cc) and attachments:**

Blasting off a single email to lots of recipients may save time and even give you a certain sense of power (“I know lots of important people.”), but this time savings comes at a cost. We all respond better to communication that is meant just for us, as individuals. The personal connection is lost, or at least weakened, when there are lots of names in the address bar of an email, and personal connection is exactly what you are looking for when contacting a legislator.

If you have a well-crafted message that you want to send to several recipients, take the time to send individually addressed messages to each person. With emails, this can be done simply by copying your message and then pasting it into multiple emails, each addressed to a single individual. This way each recipient sees only his/her name in the address line, and you preserve the feeling of person-to-person communication. With hard copy letters, take the time to hand copy your message for each recipient. If you are writing on a computer and printing out multiple copies, do not take the shortcut of making many copies of the exact same letter. Take the time to change the inside address for each recipient, to make other changes that tailor the message for each recipient (“As Delaware’s senior senator…” in one letter might change to “As Delaware’s junior senator…” in the next), and to hand-sign each copy.
These steps will take more time, but they will increase the likelihood that your message will be read rather than merely counted.

Similarly, avoid claiming that you are speaking for anyone other than yourself (“My neighbors and I all agree…”). Unless you really are the designated spokesperson for an organization (such as your school board or your neighborhood homeowners’ association) you should write your own message stating your own views. If you know others whose views are similar to your own, the best thing you can do is to get those others to write their own letters. This will increase the total number of communications the legislator receives, plus the individual variations that each person puts into his/her letter will increase the value of each communication.

Do not overload the legislator with informational files or attachments. If you make a strong case, the legislator will use staff or other resources to get the necessary information. If that does not work, the legislator or a staff member can contact you later to talk about how to get additional information.

**Form letters and petitions:**

While original emails and letters are among the most effective means for explaining your views to legislators, form letters and petitions will do nothing more than get you counted. When legislators’ staff members see signatures on a petition or they see many communications that all have the same wording, those staff members stop reading and start counting. Some legislators’ offices even use software to scan for identical language in large numbers of emails. Emails with unique wording get
read, while emails with identical wording merely get counted (Kush, 2004).

Sometimes sheer volume of communications is important, and a bill that generates ten thousand letters or signatures gets a different level of attention than one that generates only ten letters or signatures. Generally speaking, however, form letters and petitions are considered to be the lowest-impact form of communication. They indicate that the senders/signers were willing to write their names or to click SEND to forward a pre-addressed email written by someone else. Legislators are well aware of the circumstances under which people sign petitions or forward emails. Often people sign petitions without reading them or without listening carefully to what the person with the petition is saying, simply because signing is the quickest and easiest way to get past the person with the petition. Sometimes emails get forwarded by people who have done nothing more than read the subject line or notice the name of the organization that sent them the form letter. So while form letters and petitions can communicate that there are many people who have at least a passing interest in an issue, many signatures on a petition or a high volume of form letters can be outweighed by a single well composed original message.

Form letters can be made to be more effective if, instead of merely passing them along, you use them as a guide for writing your own original message. To make a form email effective, consider it to be a template rather than a final product. Use the contact information and any technical information contained in the letter, but change the wording to make it your own. Most importantly, add a personal story or share your unique perspective on the issue (National School Boards Action Center, 2012).
If you also follow the guidelines for effective communication with legislators (see “Content of Contact” below), you can benefit from the convenience of form letters while also keeping your message out of the “count only” file.

**Phone:**

Phone calls can have the immediacy of an email, but in most cases your call is more likely to get your position counted than to get your concerns considered in detail. While it is possible to get through to a legislator by phone, it is vastly more likely that you will talk to a staff member. You can expect the staff member to be polite, but you also can expect that your call will be short and that the staff member will want you to state your concerns as quickly and succinctly as possible. Staff members are there to gather information, not to socialize or sympathize. If you simply state your position, your call will be added to the tally sheet for your issue. If you follow the guidelines for effective communication and provide a personal story or a unique perspective, the staff member may put you on a list for a more detailed follow-up contact later on. If you actually do get through to the legislator him/herself, handle the call as you would a face-to-face meeting (Kush, 2004).

**Fax:**

Faxes have fallen out of favor as a means of communication with legislators. Faxes once had the advantage of immediacy, but now emails are even quicker and have the advantage of not generating paper that must be filed or thrown away.
Contact with a legislator’s staff:

While every constituent’s first desire is to speak directly with his/her legislator, contacts with legislators’ staff can be very valuable. In some circumstances, contact with staff can be even more effective than direct contact with the legislator. Because they must deal with such a broad range of issues – from trade agreements with other states and other countries, to the proper limits on the number of students who should be assigned to a single kindergarten class, to what land should be designated as state parks and recreation facilities – legislators often charge staff members with becoming experts on particular issues or groups of issues. Because that staff member’s attention is so sharply focused on an issue or group of issues, the staff member often is both better equipped than the legislator to understand your issue and better able than the constituent to influence the legislator. Rather than resent being “shunted off to an assistant,” value any time you get with that assistant and make the effort to educate that person on your issue. (Jansson, 2008) At worst you will be getting your views across to someone who is well equipped to understand and to act on your issue, and at best you may even find that the assistant begins to contact you for “expert” advice on your issue. Almost always, time spent with a legislator’s staff member is time well spent.

Committee hearings, town hall meetings, community forums:

Town hall meetings, neighborhood meetings and similar sorts of public meetings offer large groups of people the opportunity to be heard and to hear the
thoughts and positions of their legislators. Legislators often schedule such meetings themselves, but local organizations and interest groups also may set up these events. All of these are good to attend, especially if you are certain that your legislator (or a key staff member) will be there and that your issue will come up.

- Follow whatever procedures are established to sign up to speak, and be ready whenever you are called.
- Come prepared with specific things you want to say and refer to your notes if necessary, but try not to read from a prepared statement. You will make a better impression if you show that you know your issue well and you speak naturally about it (Jansson, 2008).
- Know and respect all guidelines for speakers.
- When you are speaking, speak to the officials rather than to the audience. If some of the officials are not paying attention, focus your attention on those who are.
- Follow all of the guidelines for effective communication, and be sure to thank the officials and those who organized the meeting when you are finished delivering your remarks.
- If you are told that your time is up, stop immediately – even if you are in the middle of a sentence – and quickly say “Thank you” and return to your seat.
- Before and after your turn to speak, take notes on the remarks of the other speakers. Paying attention to those who agree with you may give you
additional points that you had not thought of before, and paying attention to those who take the opposite position will help you to have a clear understanding of their views and arguments. After that, whether during your time to speak or afterwards in other communications, you will be better able to support those who agree with you and to counter the arguments of those who disagree with you (Kush, 2004).

- If you are the organizer of the meeting, be careful how you set the tone. Most elected officials will be happy to accept invitations to be the “guest of honor” or the “featured speaker” at meetings to discuss issues and positions with their constituents, but no one wants to be invited to be the target or the victim. Beliefs may be passionately held and emotions may run high, but no matter how great the disagreements, the tone of a meeting should always be civil (Kush, 2004; Connecticut Health Policy Project, n.d.).

**How much contact is enough?**

This is always a judgment call, but the rule of thumb is simple enough. You want enough contact to make sure that your issues and your sense of urgency about them are understood by the legislator, but not so much contact that you come to be seen as overbearing or bothersome.
Content of Contact

All advocacy messages should follow the same basic format:

- **State your name and address.**
  - **Example:** “My name is John Smith, and I live at 102 Main Street in your district.”
  - This establishes your identity, both as an individual and as a constituent.
  - If you are not a constituent, give whatever other information may be necessary to establish why the legislator should spend time with you even though you are not a constituent (“I am the president of the St. Jones School District Board of Education, and approximately 65% of our school district lies within your legislative district.”).

- **Identify the issue.**
  - **Example:** “I would like to speak with you about HB-227 – the Educational Standards Act.”
  - Identify legislation by bill number and name, if possible.
  - If that is not possible, be as specific as you can be in identifying the issue.

- **Specify the action you are asking the legislator to take.**
  - **Example:** “I am asking you to vote in favor of this bill.”
  - There are four general types of positions you can take with respect to a
specific issue or bill:

- **Support** – You want your legislator to vote “Yes.”
- **Oppose** – You want your legislator to vote “No.”
- **Amend** – You support the bill in general, but you want something changed before you can give it full support.
- **Watch** – The issue or bill is important, but there is nothing that needs to be done (or perhaps can be done) for now except to make sure that it does not slip “off your radar.”

- **Back up your request with a personal story, connection, understanding from your expertise.**
  
  - **Example:** “I believe that this bill provides long overdue funding that will enable districts to purchase and support the technology necessary for students to learn the skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century work force. I have strong personal feelings about this issue because my son recently graduated with honors from St. Jones High School, but now he is struggling in college because the high school did not have the equipment to teach him the technology skills that his professors assume that all freshmen will have. HB-227 will help to make sure that future St. Jones graduates do not face the same struggles that my son is now facing.”
  
  - This is the portion of the communication in which you back up your position, and you have three main objectives:
- To make a compelling case for the action you are asking your legislator to take;

- To show that you have a personal interest in or connection to an issue rather than just an opinion (even among constituents, a legislator will pay more attention to constituent who has a personal connection than to a constituent who just has an opinion (Fitch, 2010; Kush, 2004; National School Boards Action Center, 2012; National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

- To do so in a way that makes your message more memorable and more compelling than all of the other communications your legislator will receive on your issue (Fitch, 2010).

  - This part of your message can be expanded or contracted depending on the time or space available for the communication.

  - For an e-mail or letter, either 1-3 short examples or one example with more detail are sufficient. Keep your letter or email to approximately one page in length.

  - For an in-person meeting, you be prepared enough that you can think on your feet. Depending on how the meeting goes, you may be asked to provide additional examples or details, to respond to the legislator’s questions, or to spend additional time discussing the bill and the issues it addresses.
- In face-to-face meetings, always give yourself enough time to end the meeting properly.
  - Use local data to back up your position (Fitch, 2010).
  - Communicate your passion for your issue and position, but do so reasonably. You do not want to appear *laissez-faire*, but neither do you want to come off as irrational (Fitch, 2010).

- **Restate the issue and action.**
  - **Example**: “So we hope that you see why we members of the St. Jones Board of Education feel so strongly about the technology that will be provided to our students by the Education Standards Act, and we ask that you to vote in favor of HB-227.”

- **Thank the legislator.**

At all times when you are in the meeting or when you are composing your letter or email, remember to stay on message and to be succinct. Resist any temptation to ramble or to be distracted by other issues, even if they are important to you and are somewhat related to your main issue.

This is especially important when you are working as part of a group effort, as when you are organizing an email campaign or working together with others who will also hold their own meetings with legislators on the same topic. When you are acting as part of a group, it is still important to give your own personal stories and examples, but it is best if everyone uses the same language when you define the issue and when
you state the action you want your legislators to take.

Finally, quality is important. Always use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Your language should be correct, but natural. If you are not sure whether you are getting your point across, ask someone you trust to read your message for you or to accompany you to your meeting to provide moral support and to help you through any rough spots.

**Timing of contact**

Immediacy is key. There are optimal times to make your contacts:

- **When an issue first arises** – Your communication can help to shape your legislator’s views on an issue. Early communication may help your legislator to determine which side of the issue to take, or even whether the issue is or is not worth considering (Fitch, 2010).

- **When an issue is actively being considered or about to be acted upon** – Committee hearings, open meetings, debates before a vote, all are opportune times for you to make your points when your legislators are primed to pay attention to them. Sending your message a day before a big vote may have a huge impact; sending your message a day after a big vote will have no impact at all.
Paying attention

How do you know when the time is right to communicate with your legislators? You have to pay attention (Kush, 2004).

Organizations such as the National School Boards Association (NSBA) send out Action Alerts and lobbying guides to their members (National School Boards Action Center, 2012), while other organizations like the National Education Association (NEA) have “Take Action” sections on their web sites (National Education Association, n.d.). Action Alerts have the benefits of including information provided by the organizations, many of which have staff offices whose responsibility it is to follow issues that are important to the organization and to monitor the work of the government agencies and legislative committees that act on those issues. State organizations in Delaware, such as the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA), the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) and the Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA) provide information on Delaware legislative actions related to education.

Public news media carry frequent stories about schools and our educational system. Government web sites such as those for the U.S. and Delaware Departments of Education are prime sources of information. State-wide newspapers like the Wilmington News-Journal and the Delaware State News; local papers like the Dover Post and Sussex County’s Cape Gazette; and radio stations like WDEL 1150 AM in Wilmington, WDDE 91.1 FM in Dover and WSDL 90.9 FM in Salisbury, MD follow
Delaware education closely, and the web sites for the *News-Journal*, WDDE and the *Cape Gazette* have special sections for education stories (see the RESOURCES list at the end of this guide). Many organizations, publications and web sites also feature columns or blogs related to education, and many of them allow readers to comment or to participate in online conversation threads.

**Coordinate With Your Allies**

There is strength in numbers, and it always helps your cause if you can identify possible coalition partners who have similar issues and are willing to carry a similar message to policy makers. Working with coalition partners helps at two levels: by giving organization leaders the ability to speak as representatives of multiple organizations, and by helping to mobilize more individual member contacts with legislators (Kush, 2004; Jansson, 2008). More and more, social media such as Twitter and Facebook (National School Boards Action Center, 2012) or web services such as PopVox (Lasica, 2012) can be used effectively to get your message out and to make contact with others who share your position.

**Get To Know Your Legislator**

Research not only your issue, but your legislator as well. In addition to knowing who your senators and representatives are, also keep track of what
committees they serve on, what issues they are particularly concerned about, what
their positions are, and by whom they seem to be most influenced (Kush, 2004).

Strategize

School boards typically are weak here. They know whether they do or do not
like a particular bill, but they seldom have action plans or alternatives to suggest to
legislators. Individual efforts can be effective, but well-planned and well-coordinated
efforts can be even more so.

Finally: Be Clear About Your Role

Always keep in mind that you have two roles – citizen and school board
member – that are related but that must be kept separate at all times.

One of the first roles of good governance is “The board speaks with one voice
or none at all.” (Quinn, 2010) Whenever you are contacting legislators, you must be
clear about which role you are taking. (Quinn & Dawson, 2011)

- Citizen – You have your right to express your personal opinion, but no matter
  how well informed or deeply felt your opinion may be, you may not lead
  people to believe that your opinion is that of the school board. You may use
  your school board experience to back up your views, but you must be clear that
  you are expressing your personal position. Just like any other citizen, you may
refer to things like discussions had and votes taken in an open board meeting, but you may not represent yourself as speaking for the board or for the district. Simply being a school board member does not entitle you to speak “for the board.”

- **School board** – Only when you are a duly delegated spokesperson for the school board and you are expressing a formally adopted position of that board (i.e., a position that was voted on in a properly held public meeting), may you speak for the board. Always keep in mind that school boards are elected bodies that are subject to applicable Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) requirements.

In the vast majority of cases you will be speaking as a private citizen who also happens to be an elected member of your school board.
RESOURCES

Government web sites:

- Delaware Department of Education
  - Home page  [http://www.doe.state.de.us/](http://www.doe.state.de.us/)
  - Interactive maps of school districts  
    [http://gis.doe.k12.de.us/WEBSITE/districtMaps/viewer.htm](http://gis.doe.k12.de.us/WEBSITE/districtMaps/viewer.htm)
  - School Feeder Pattern and Legislative District Map (interactive)
    [http://gis.doe.k12.de.us/WEBSITE/feederleg/viewer.htm](http://gis.doe.k12.de.us/WEBSITE/feederleg/viewer.htm)

- Delaware – State government
  - Know Your Legislators (to identify your legislators or to get a complete list of legislators)
  - Delaware legislative notifications (create an account and select from a menu of Delaware state government actions on which you would like to receive email notifications on a broad range of government; options include notifications when bills are introduced and when any other action is taken on them)  
    [https://de.blackboardconnect.com/](https://de.blackboardconnect.com/)

For information on education issues, nationally:

- National School Boards Association (NSBA) http://www.nsba.org
  - NSBA Legislative Agenda http://www.nsba.org/Advocacy/Key-Issues
- National Education Association (NEA) http://www.nea.org/
  - NEA legislative agenda http://www.nea.org/home/LegislativeActionCenter.html
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
  http://www.ascd.org
  - ASCD legislative agenda http://www.ascd.org/public-policy.aspx

For information on education issues in Delaware:

- Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) http://www.edsba.org/
- Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) http://www.dsea.org/
- Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA)
  http://www.edasa.org/?s=Deb

Public news media:

- Wilmington News-Journal http://www.delawareonline.com/schools
- Delaware State News http://delaware.newszap.com/
- Dover Post http://www.doverpost.com/
- WDDE 91.1 FM / Delaware First Media
http://www.wdde.org/category/2_education/

- WSCL / WSDL (Delmarva Public Radio)
  http://www.publicradiodelmarva.net/news

- Cape Gazette  http://capegazette.villagesoup.com/page/contact-us

- CapeGazette.com
  http://capegazette.villagesoup.com/center/capelife#school_life
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http://www.ncld.org/adults-learning-disabilities/jobs-employment-ld/seven-
tips-to-advocate-for-child-with-learning-disability


http://www.nsba.org/Advocacy-Resources/NSBA-Grassroots-Lobbying-
Guide-for-School-Board-Members-AugustSeptember-2012.pdf

