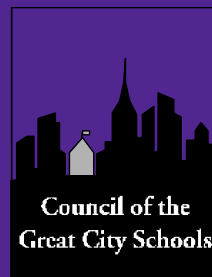


URBAN SCHOOL BOARD SURVEY



Council of the Great City Schools
OCTOBER 2005



INTRODUCTION & SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member districts in the fall of 2004 to determine the characteristics of school boards and board members in our nation's urban schools. This was the first survey of our school boards and this report contains the results of that survey.

Survey forms were mailed, emailed and faxed to board representatives in each member district in September of 2004. Respondents were asked to provide information on a range of topics including board

governance; structure; demographics of board members, including race/ethnicity, age, gender, educational background, and profession. The survey also asked about board member salaries, benefits, elections, and board activities.

Surveys were received from 45 of the 65 member districts, for a response rate of 69.2 percent. All data presented in this report are in summary form.

Highlights

BOARD STRUCTURE

- Some 82.2 percent of Great City School (GCS) boards are elected, 15.6 percent are appointed, and 2.2 percent are comprised of both appointed and elected members.
- The appointed GCS boards include five appointed by the mayor, one by the city council, and another by both the mayor and governor.
- About 52.3 percent of GCS board members hold seats representing geographic districts, 45.6 percent hold citywide seats, and 2.1 percent hold other seats.
- The average number of school board members on a GCS board is 7.6; 95.5 percent of GCS boards have staggered or overlapping terms; and 88.9 percent of GCS boards have four year terms.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Some 57.3 percent are White, 30.0 percent of GCS board members are African American, 8.8 percent are Latino, and 3.9 percent are Asian or from other backgrounds.
- A majority of GCS board members, 52.2 percent, are women. Some 31.3 percent of all board members are White females; 15.0 percent are Black females; 3.8 percent are Latino females; 2.1 percent are Asian females or from other backgrounds.
- About 47.8 percent of GCS board members are men. Some 26.0 percent are White males; 15.0 percent of all board members are Black males; 5.0 percent are Latino males; and 1.8 percent are Asian males or from other backgrounds.

- Approximately 33.9 percent of GCS board members are between the ages of 50 and 59; 33.6 percent are between the ages of 40 and 49; 21.5 percent are age 60 or older; 6.8 percent are between the ages of 30 and 39; and 1.8 percent are between the ages of 20 and 29.
- Approximately 43.7 percent of GCS board members have a Bachelor's degree, 28.3 percent have a Master's degree, 10.3 percent have a Ph.D. or Ed.D, 4.1 percent have an Associate's degree or two years of college, and 7.7 percent hold other degrees.
- Approximately 17.4 percent of GCS board members are homemakers, 18.0 percent are retired, 14.7 percent are business leaders, 14.5 percent are educators, 9.1 percent are attorneys, 8.6 percent are government employees, 6.5 percent are entrepreneurs, 1.2 percent are physicians, and 11.8 percent are in other professions.

TENURE

- The majority of GCS boards, 57.8 percent, have an average tenure that is between five and eight years.¹
- Approximately 31.1 percent of GCS boards have an average tenure that is between one and four years.
- About 8.9 percent of GCS boards have an average tenure that is between nine and twelve years, while 2.2 percent have an average tenure that is twelve years or longer.

ACTIVITY

- The majority of GCS boards, 51.1 percent, meet on a biweekly basis. About 22.2 percent meet monthly, 15.6 percent meet bimonthly, 8.9 percent meet weekly, and 2.2 percent meet on another schedule.
- A majority of GCS board meetings, 51.1 percent, last on average between two and four hours. Approximately 13.3 percent of GCS board meetings last on average between one and two hours, 28.9 percent last between four and six hours, and 6.7 percent last six hours or longer.
- Some 37.8 percent of GCS boards spend an average of between four and eight hours per week on board business. About 35.6 percent of GCS boards spend an average of over twelve hours per week on board business, 15.6 percent spend between eight and twelve hours, and 8.9 percent spend between one and four hours.
- A majority of GCS boards, 48.8 percent, cite board business as one of the top three items the board spends most of its time on, 46.3 percent cite budget and finance, and 39.0 percent cite policy.
- Some 24.4 percent of GCS boards spend the majority of their time on board business, 14.6 percent on student achievement, 12.2 percent on policy, 12.2 percent on budget and finance, 9.8 percent on student achievement, and 7.3 percent on facilities.

¹ Average tenure for school boards is defined here as the average length of service of all the board members.

RESOURCES

- Approximately 77.8 percent of GCS boards have secretaries assigned to work directly under the board, 24.4 percent have attorneys, 15.6 percent have auditors/treasurers, 15.6 percent have researchers, and 2.2 percent have press relations staff. About 31.1 percent of GCS boards have staff serving other functions, most commonly administrative.
- Some 15.6 percent of GCS boards do not have staff. Conversely, 4.4 percent of GCS boards have individual board members with their own staff.
- About 28.9 percent of GCS boards have offices for every board member at district headquarters, 33.3 percent have no district offices, 33.3 percent have offices shared by board members, and 8.9 percent have offices for the board president.
- The average amount spent on GCS board operations in 2003-2004 was \$551,233.

BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION

- Approximately 48.9 percent of GCS board members receive salaries for service on the school board. The average salary for GCS board members is \$14,935; ranging from \$2,000 to \$37,426.
- Some 22.2 percent of GCS board members receive stipends for attendance at school board meetings, ranging from \$25 to \$112 per meeting.
- About 77.8 percent of GCS board members receive compensation for travel, 40.0 percent are reimbursed for local mileage, and 6.7 percent have access to a car or driver.
- Some 13.3 percent of GCS board members have expense accounts with limits ranging from \$350 to \$5,000 annually. About 6.7 percent of GCS board members have credit cards.

COMMITTEES

- Approximately 80.0 percent of GCS boards have standing committees in some content area, while 20.0 percent have no board committees.
- About 46.7 percent of GCS boards have Full Board or a Committee of the Whole, another 44.4 percent have Finance/Budget committees, another 44.4 percent have Legislation/Policy committees. Also, 33.3 percent have an audit committee and another 26.7 percent have a Curriculum/Academic committee.
- Some 84.4 percent of GCS boards have special task forces or ad hoc committees. The focus of these committees includes topics such as student assignment, superintendent searches, special education and nutrition.

TRAINING

- Approximately 80.0 percent of GCS boards received training in the area of board member roles and responsibilities, 71.1 percent in superintendent and board relations, 64.4 percent in policy governance, 60.0 percent in budgeting and finance, and 53.3 percent in legal issues.
- Some 37.8 percent of GCS boards surveyed need additional training in the area of board accountability. Another 40.0 percent reported needing training in the areas of communications and press relations, 35.6 percent in board member roles and responsibilities, 35.6 percent in policy governance, 33.3 percent in leadership skills, and another 33.3 percent in community engagement.

CAMPAIGNS

- Approximately 28.6 percent of GCS board members spend an average of between \$10,000 and \$24,999 on campaigns. About 37.1 percent spent \$25,000 or more; 14.3 percent spent between \$5,000 and \$9,999; 14.3 percent spent between \$1,000 and \$4,999; and another 5.7 percent spent less than \$1,000.
- About 60.5 percent of GCS board members receive a majority of their campaign contributions from family and friends. Additionally, some 44.7 percent receive contributions from the business community, 31.6 percent from employee unions, and 13.2 percent from personal wealth.
- Some 23.7 percent of GCS boards considered school board elections to be extremely competitive in their districts, 39.5 percent very competitive, and 34.2 percent somewhat competitive.
- About 92.1 percent of GCS board elections were actively participated in by teacher unions, 76.3 percent by parent groups, 68.4 percent by community organizations, 68.4 percent by ethnic/racial groups, and another 60.5 percent by businesses.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

- The average tenure of the current GCS superintendent is 3.6 years and the average tenure of the immediate past GCS superintendent was 4.9 years.
- A majority of immediate past GCS superintendents, 60.0 percent, left the district prior to the expiration of their contract. The reasons for superintendents departing most often cited were board non-renewal of contract, retirement, private foundation opportunity, or a job in another district.
- Approximately 44.4 percent of GCS superintendents have a seat (including *ex officio*) on the school board.
- An overwhelming majority of GCS board meeting agendas, 81.8 percent, are set by the both the superintendent and the board. About 13.6 percent of agendas are set by the superintendent, and 4.6 are set by the board.
- Some 55.6 percent of GCS boards operate under a governance model, 35.6 percent do not operate under such a model, and 8.9 percent did not respond.

Figure 1
GCS School Boards by Structure
N=45

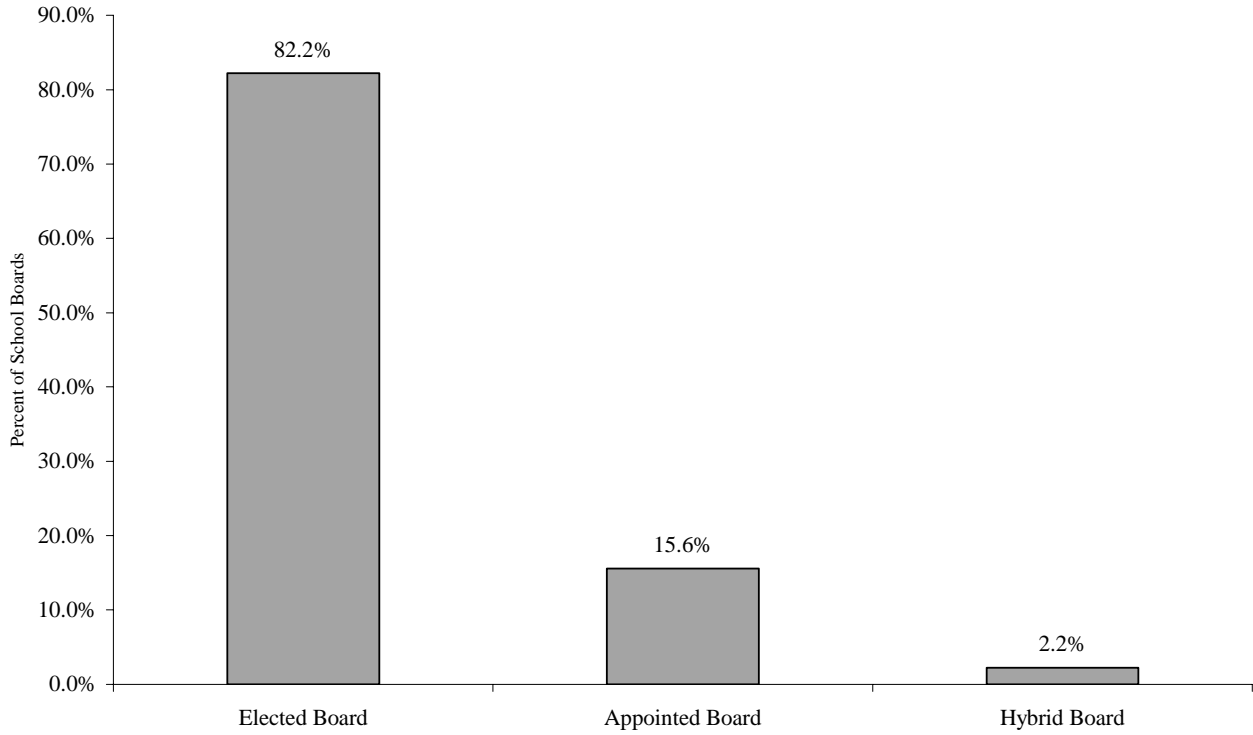


Figure 2
Board Members by Type of Seat
N=342

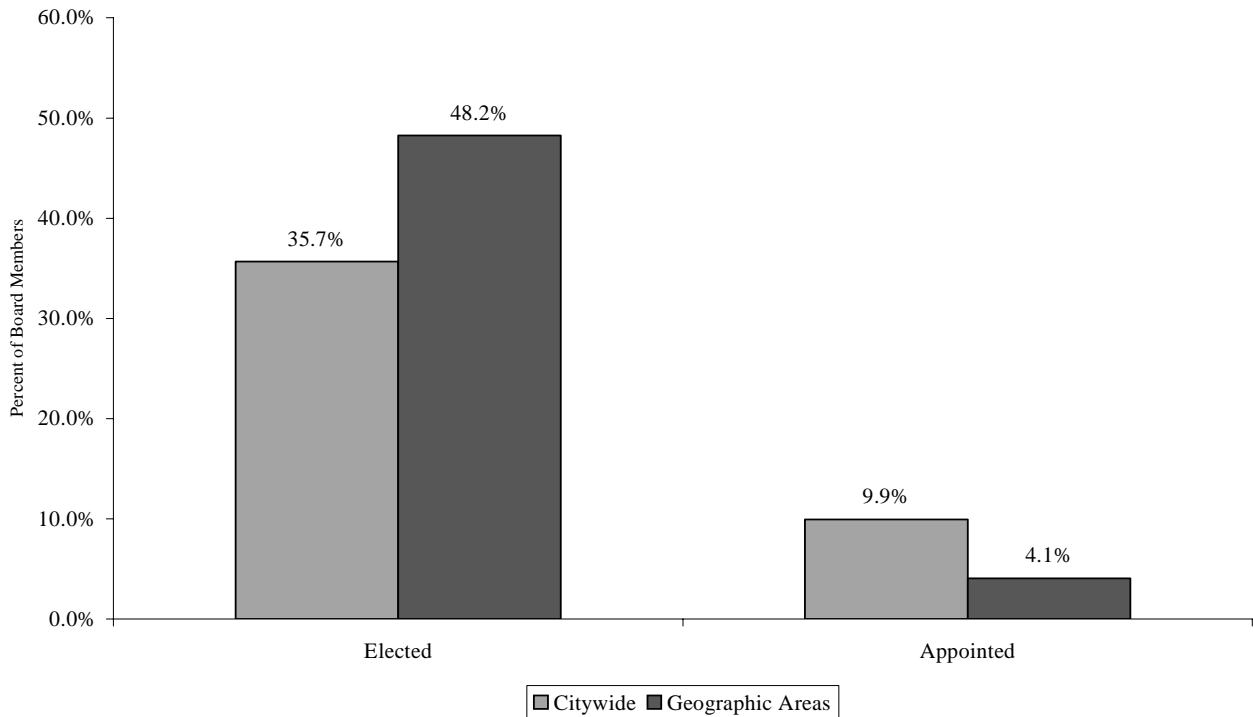


Figure 3
GCS Board Members by Race/Ethnicity and Gender
 N=339

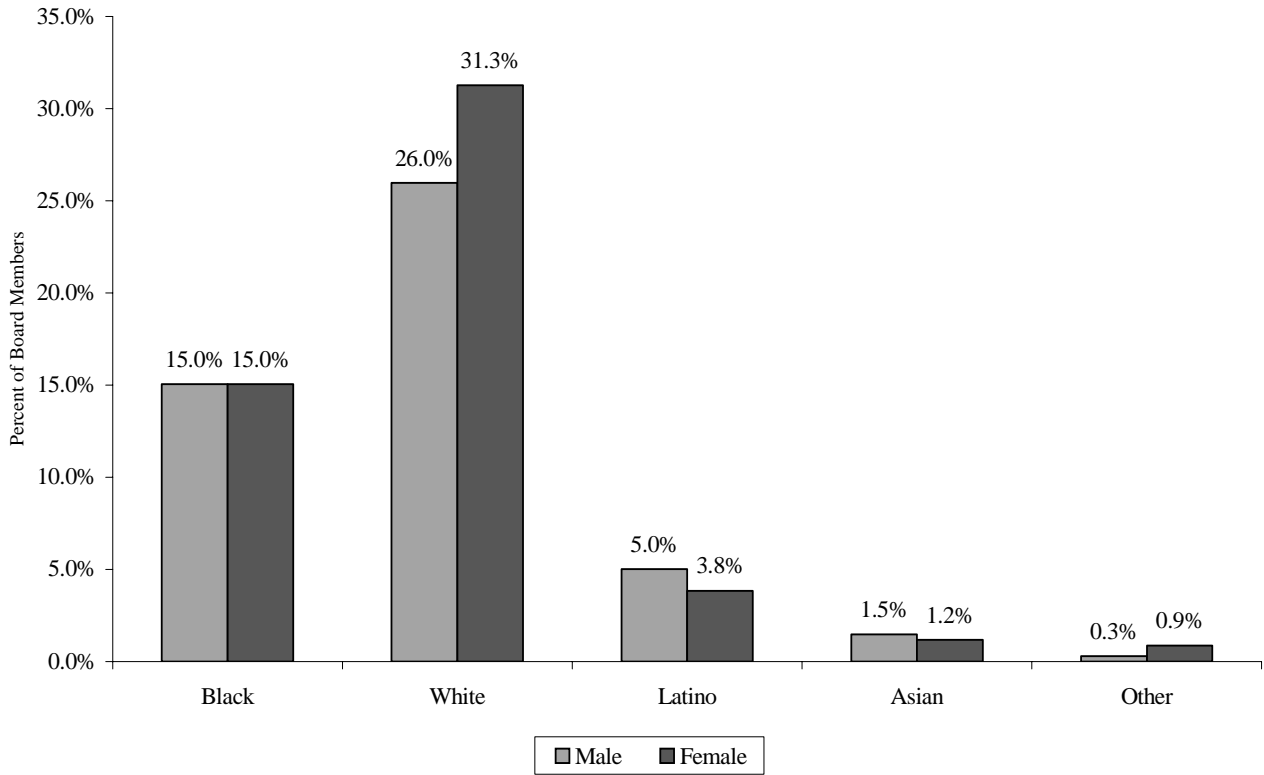


Figure 4
GCS Board Members by Profession
 N=339

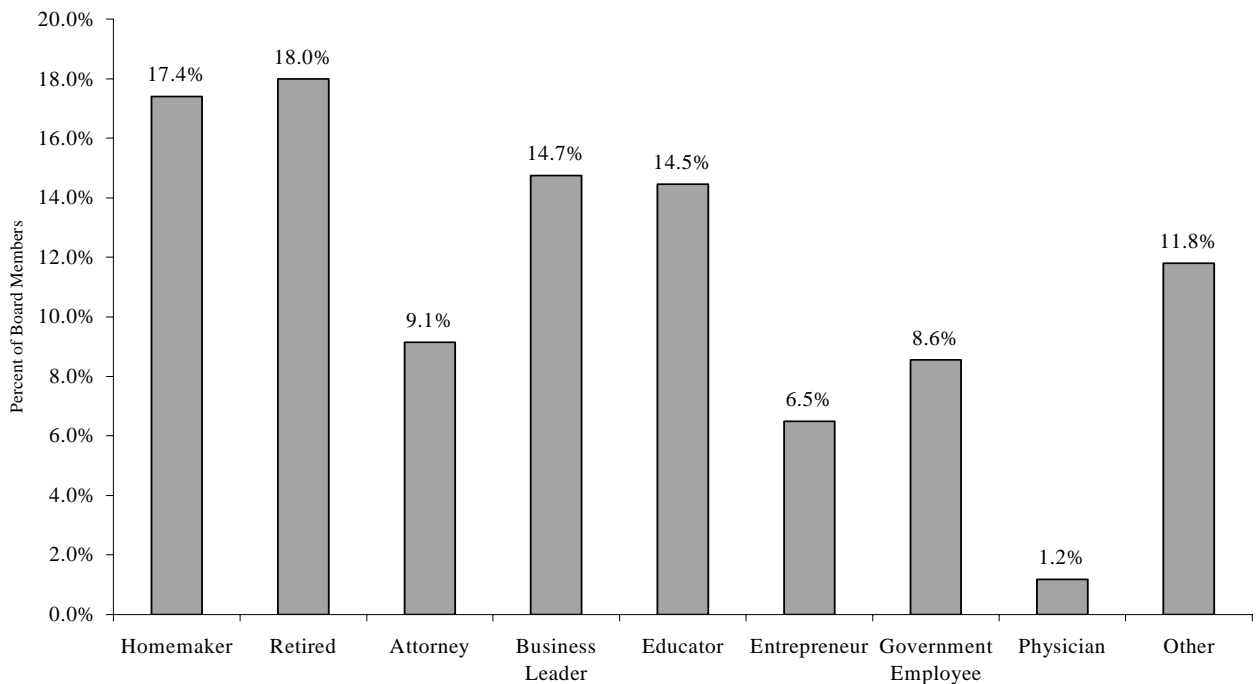


Figure 5
GCS School Boards by Average Length of Service
N=45

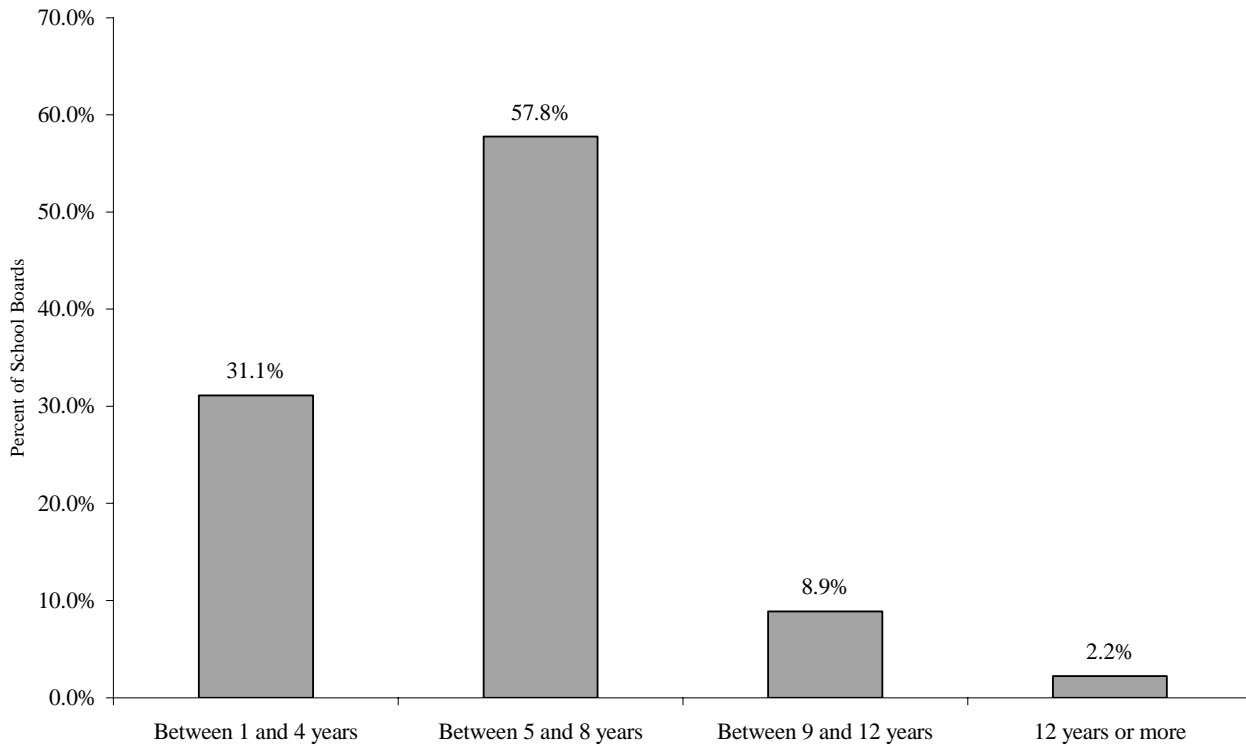


Figure 6
GCS Board Meeting Schedules
N=45

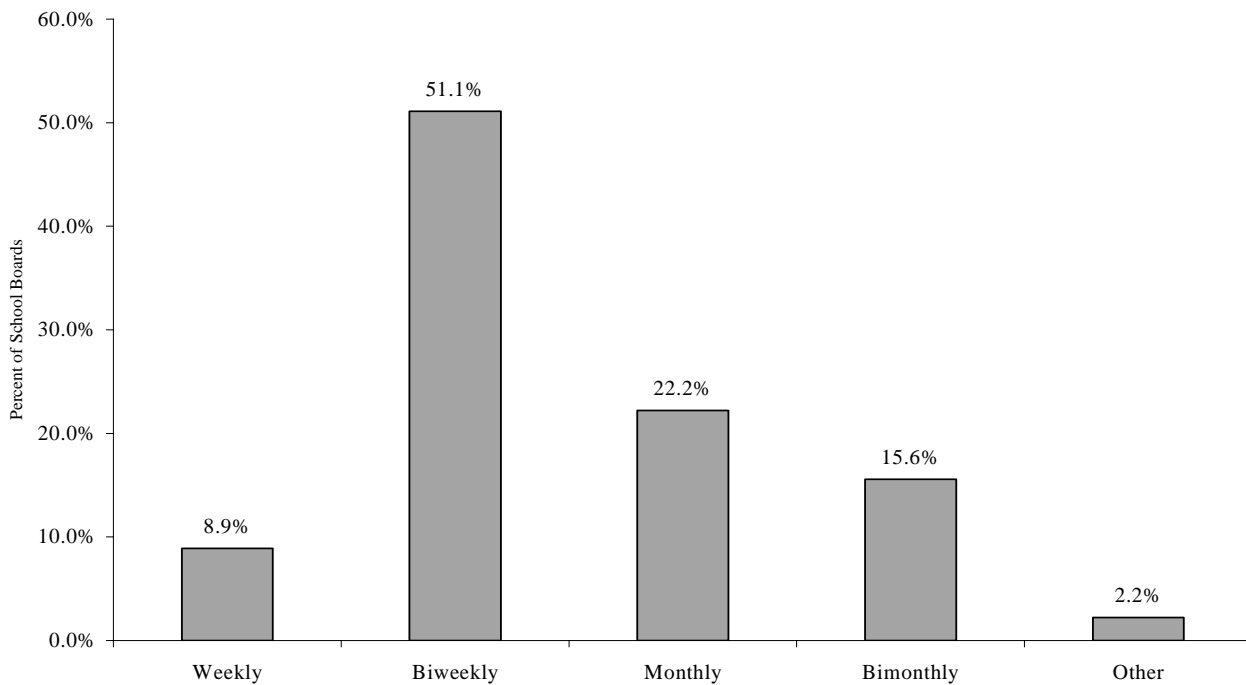


Figure 7
GCS Average Board Meeting Length
N=45

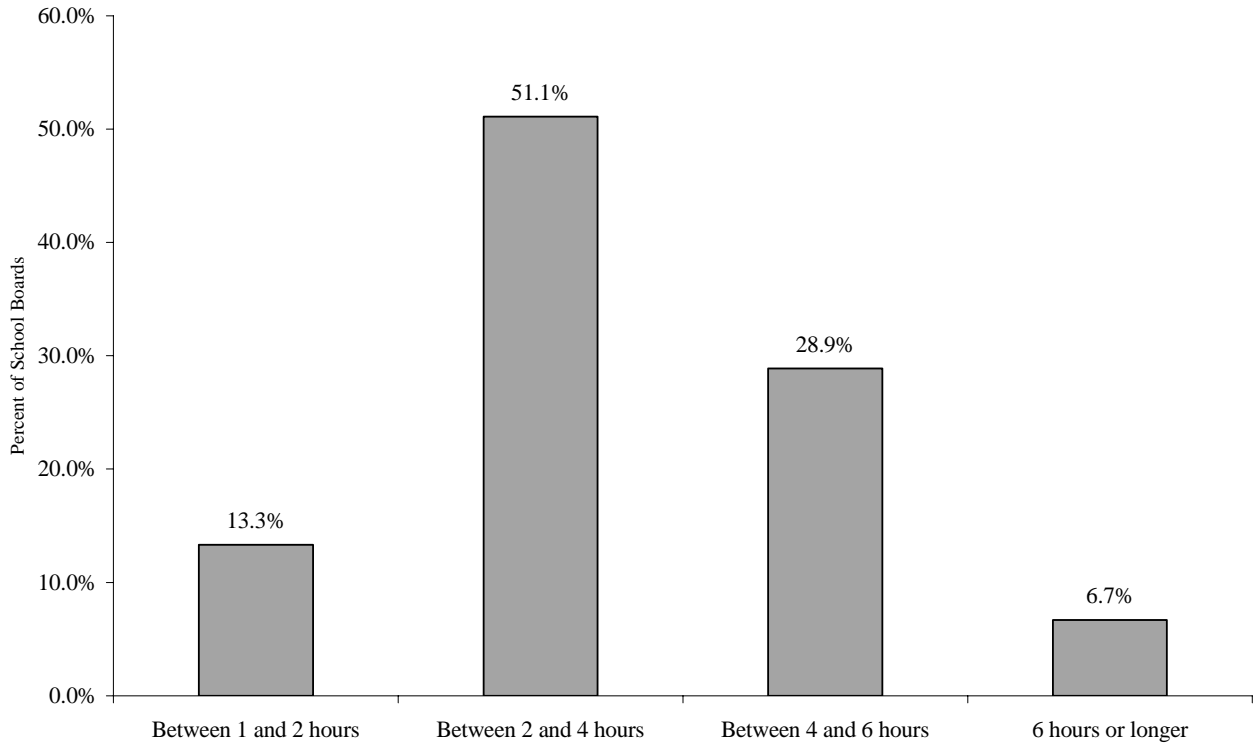


Figure 8
GCS Average Time Spent on Board Business Each Week
N=45

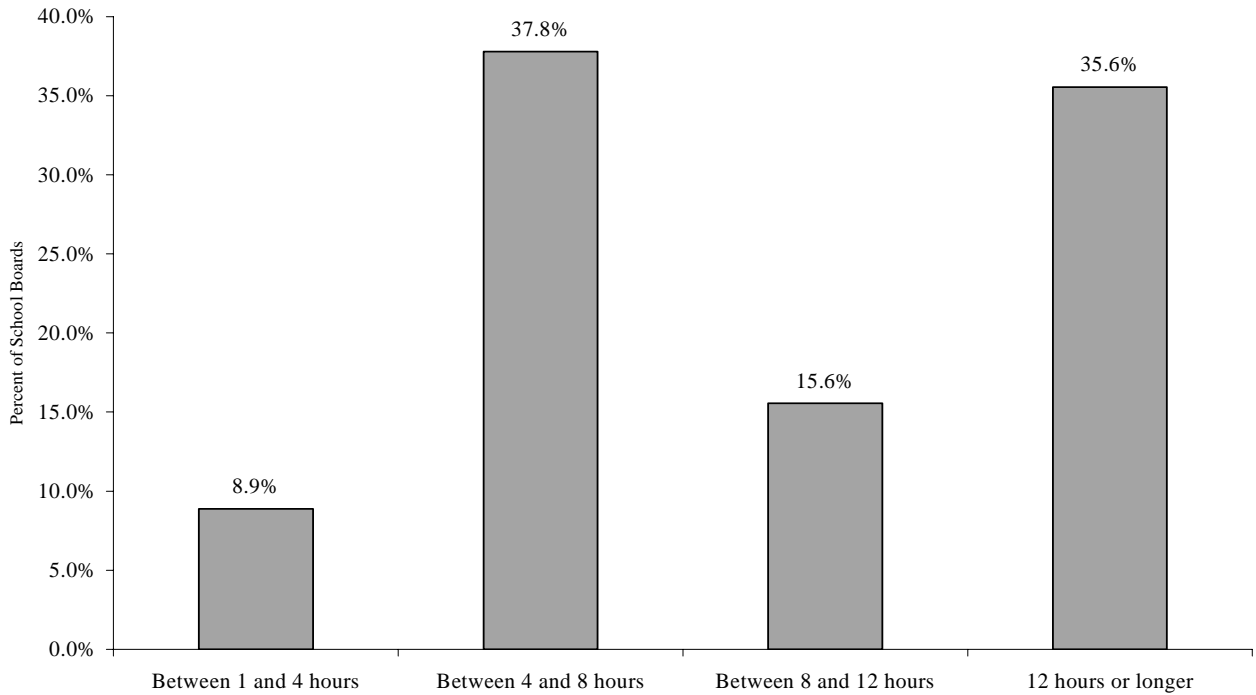


Figure 9
GCS School Board Staffing
N=45

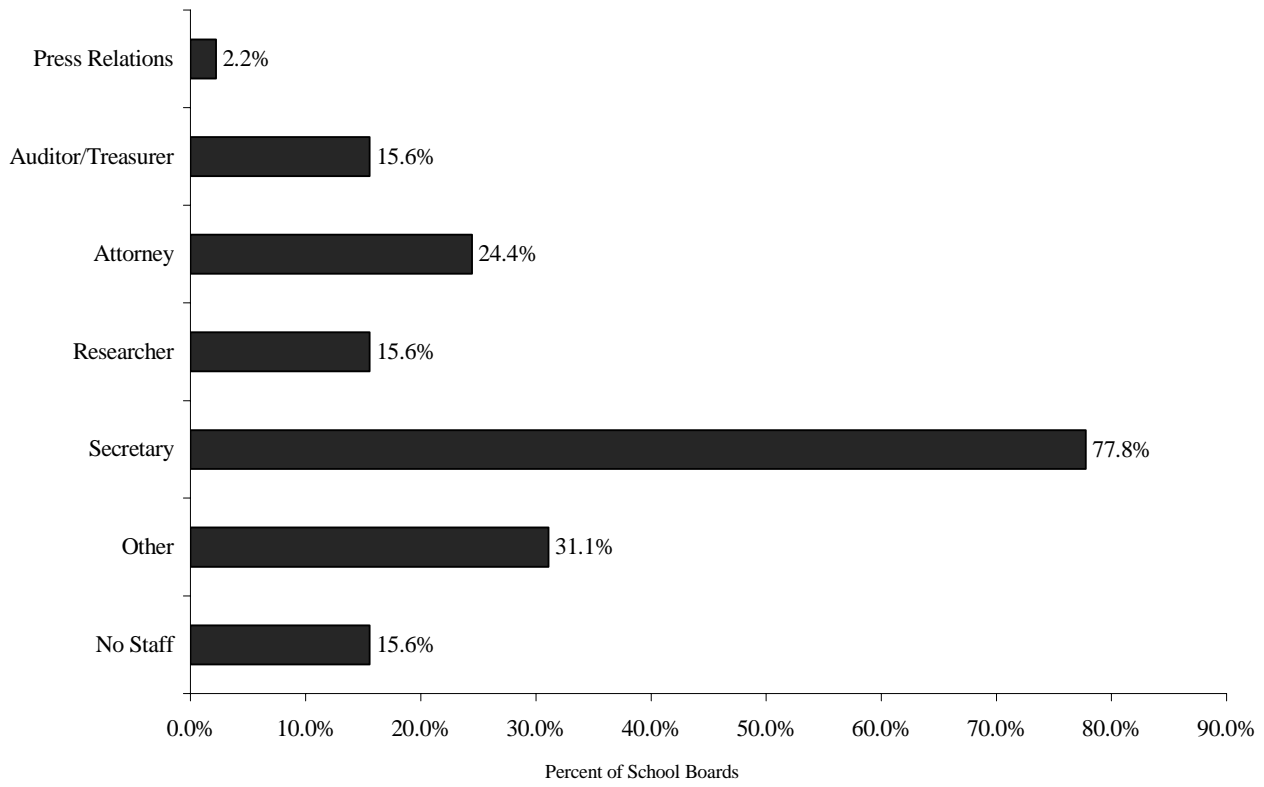


Figure 10
GCS School Board Compensation and Benefits
N=45

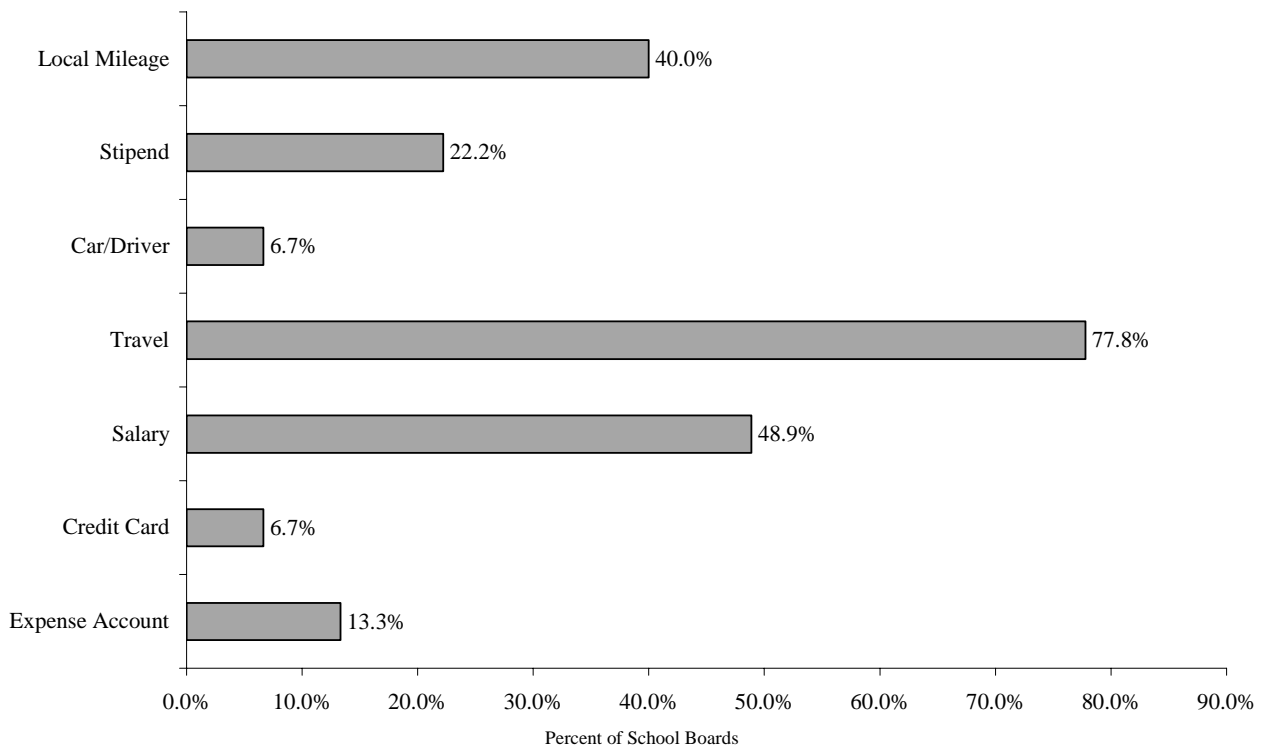


Figure 11
GCS School Board Committees
N=45

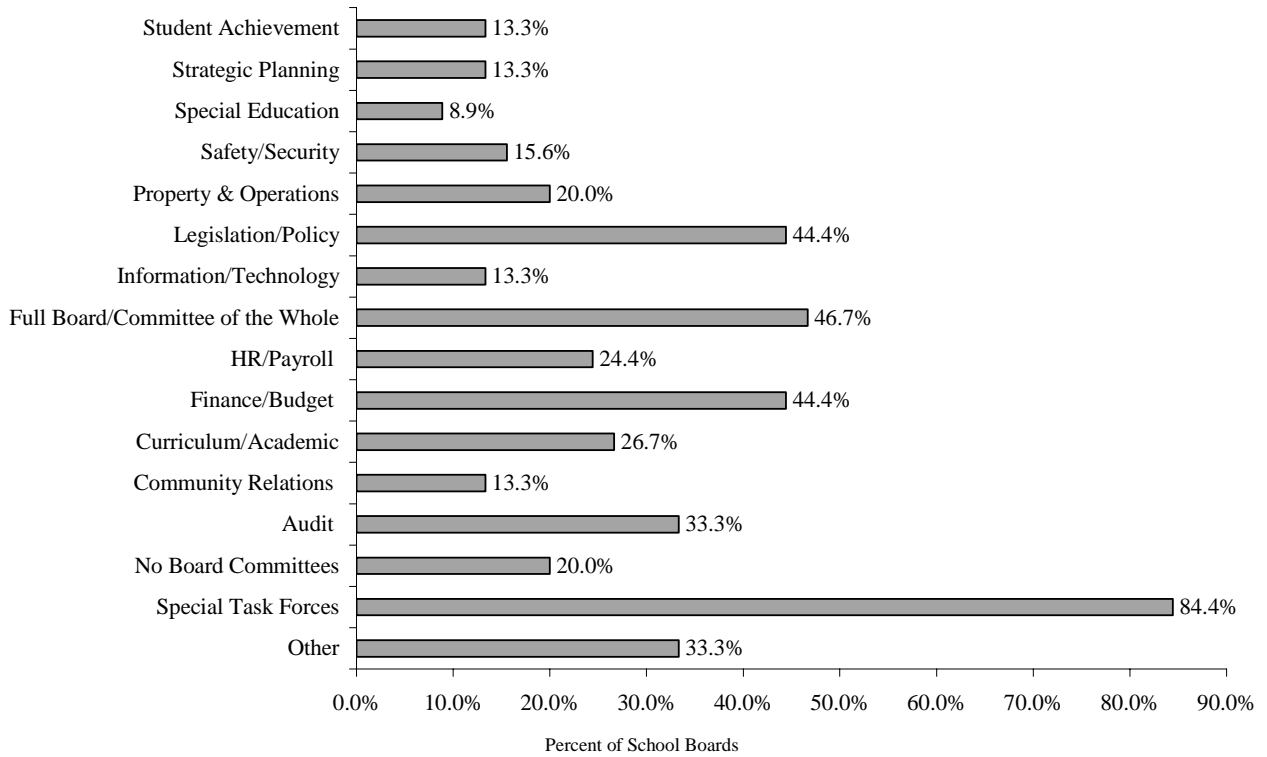


Figure 12
GCS School Board Training
N=45

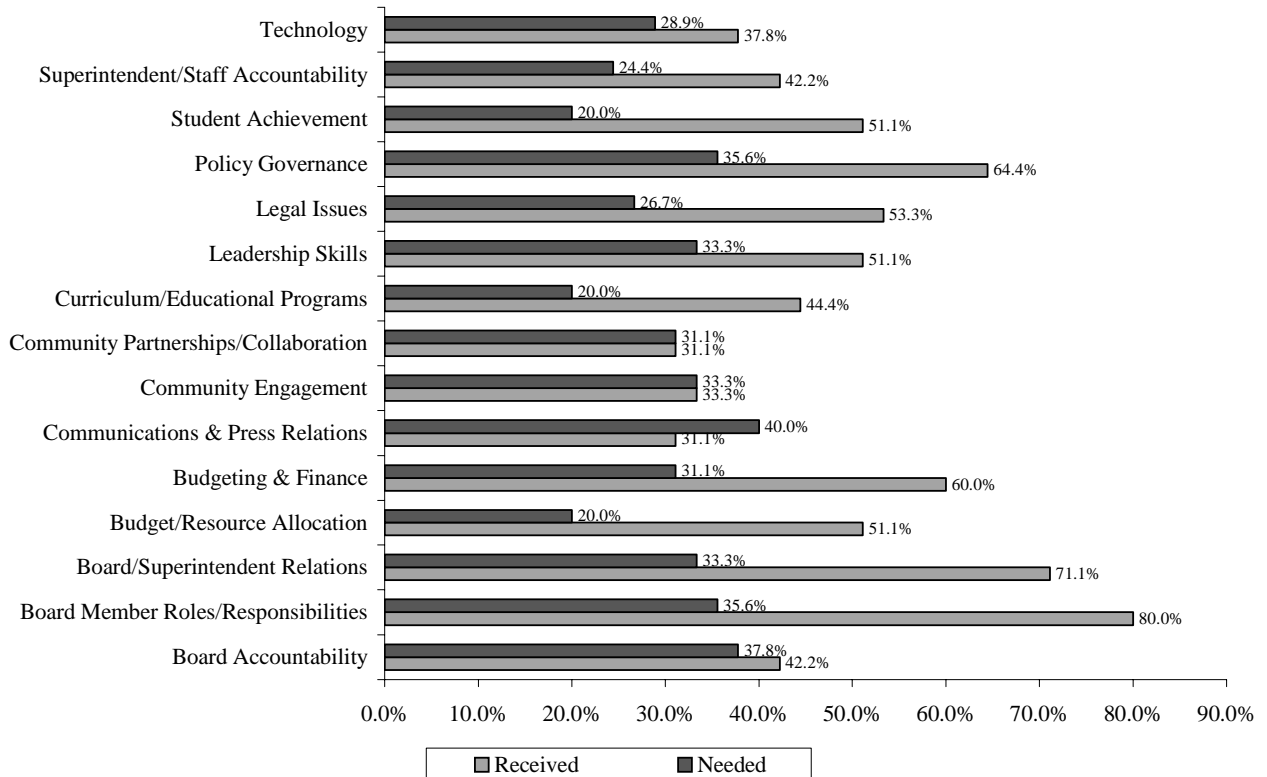


Figure 13

GCS School Board Average Campaign Expenditures

N=35

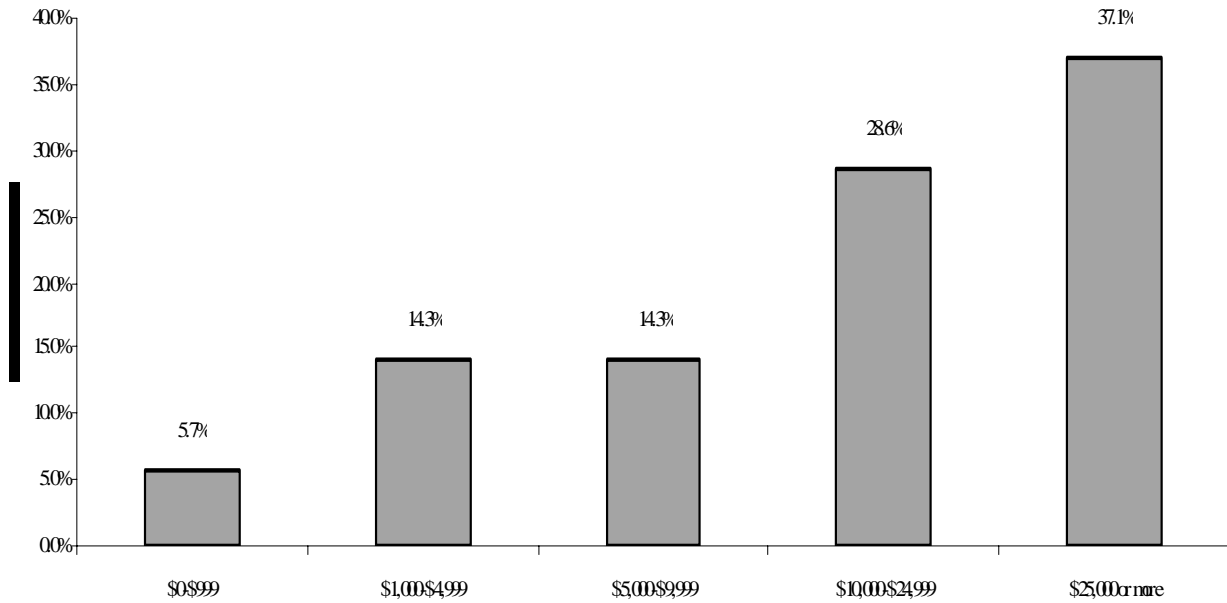


Figure 14

GCS School Board Campaign Contribution Sources

N=38

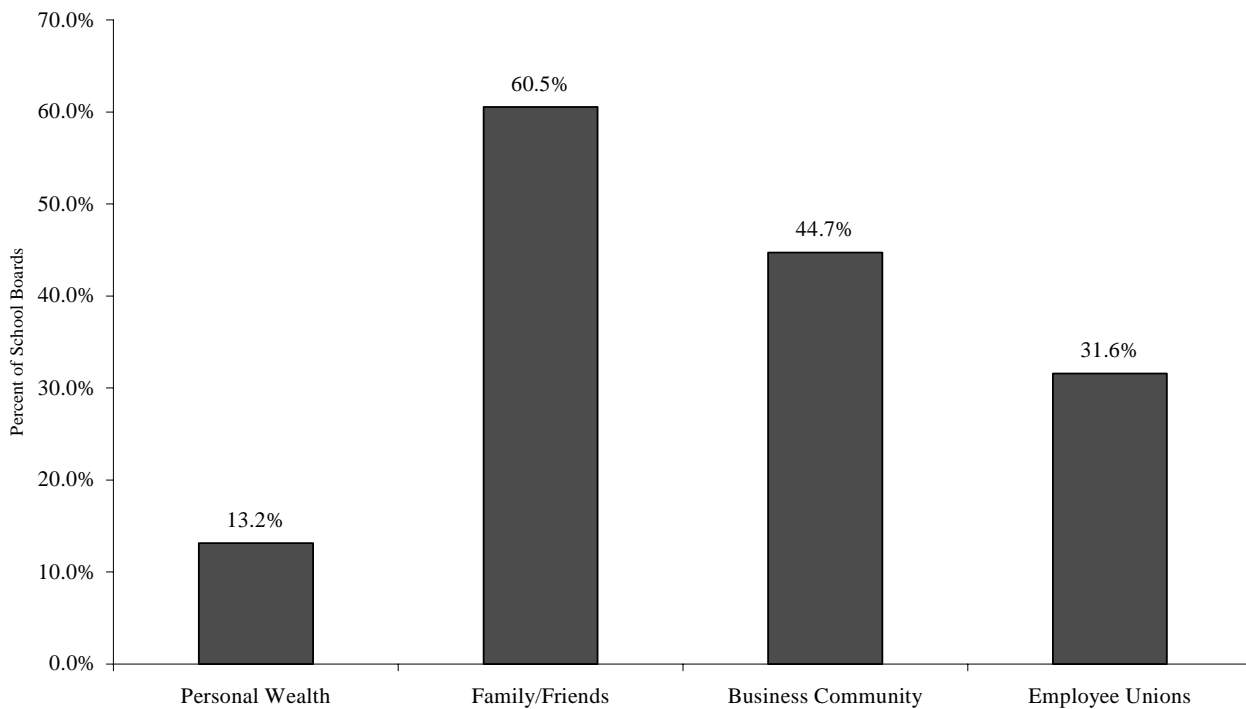


Figure 15
GCS Constituents Active in School Board Elections
N=38

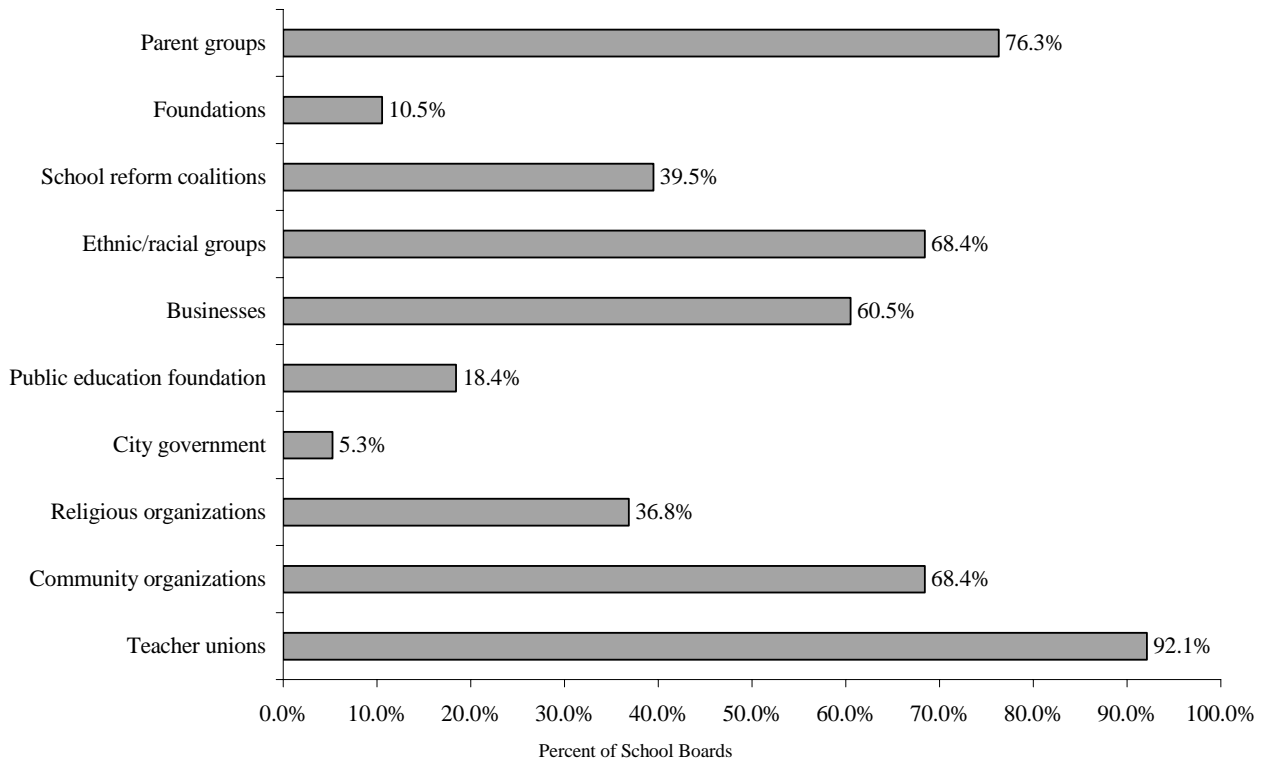


Figure 16
Average Tenure of the Immediate Past and Current GCS Superintendents
N=42, N=44

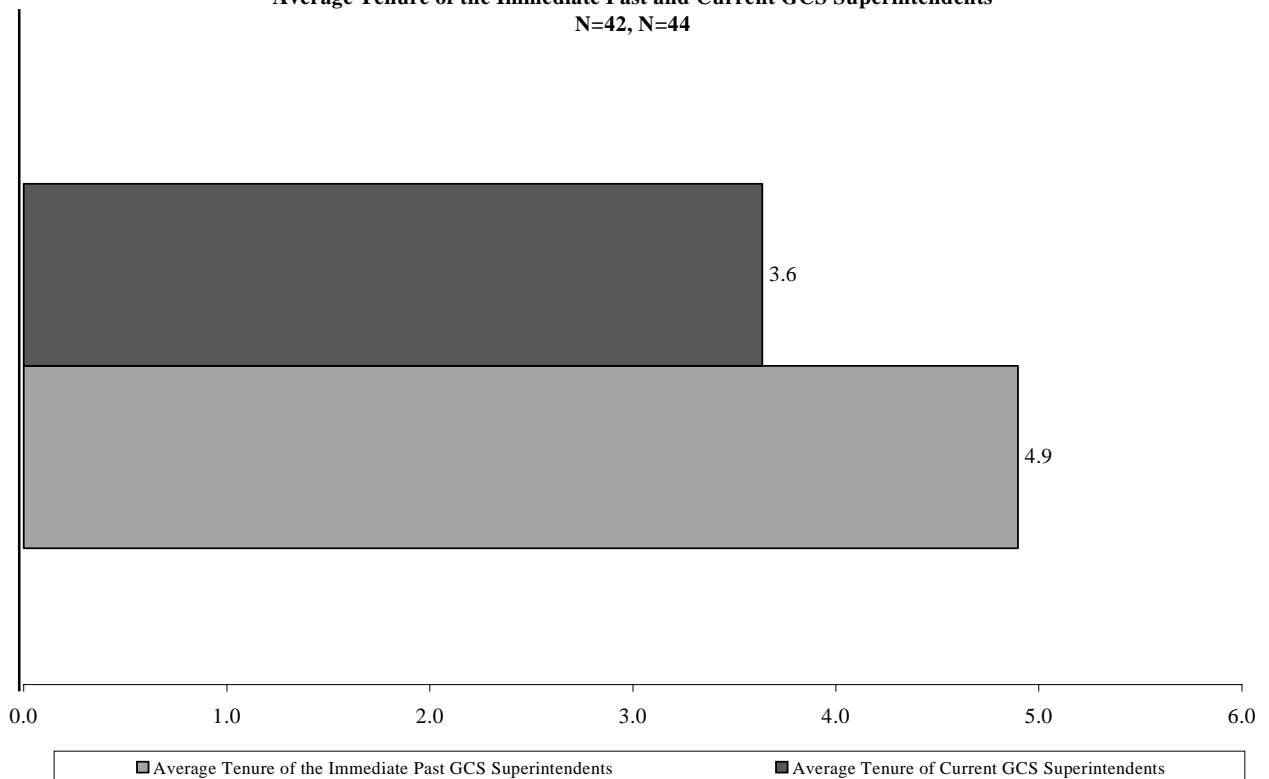
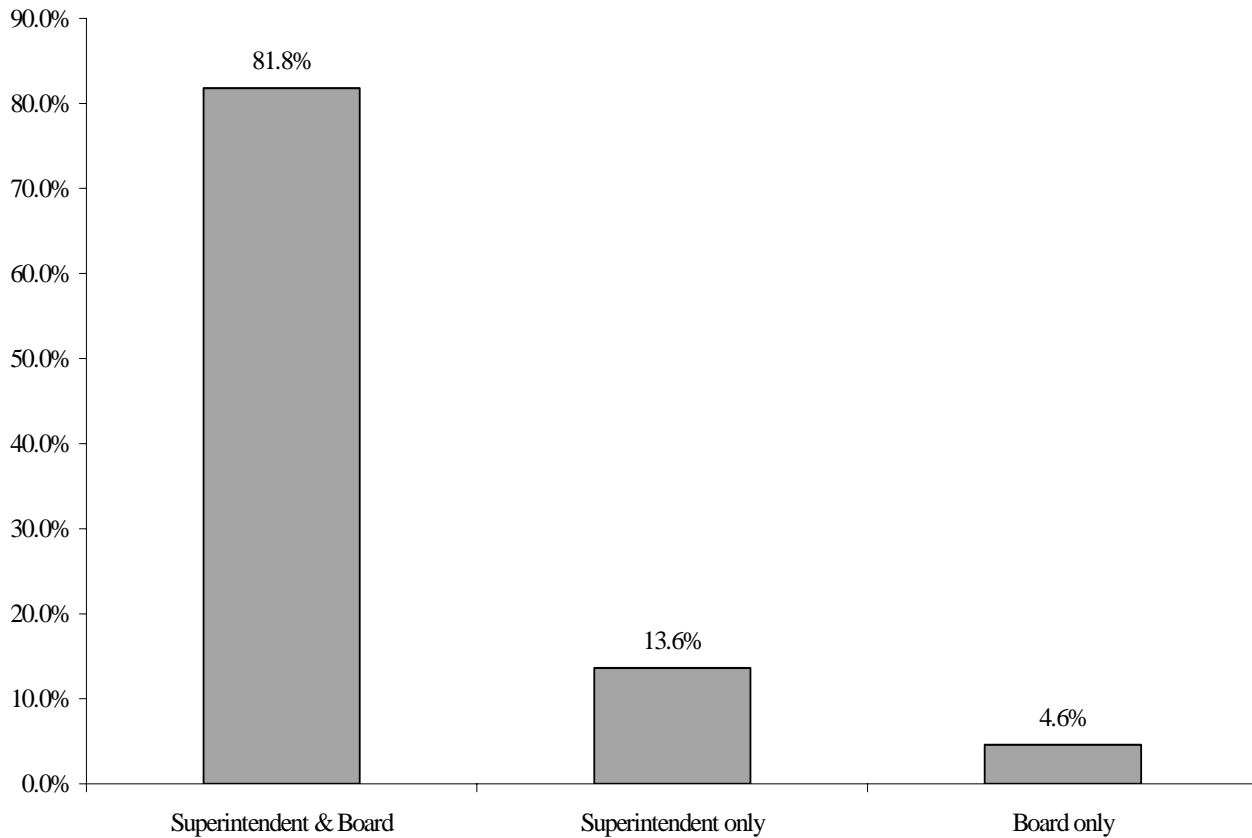


Figure 17
GCS School Board Agenda Setting
N=44



Discussion

Being a school board member in a major urban school district is an extremely difficult job. It demands an exceptional combination of leadership, management, instructional, political and operational skills needed in few other arenas. Turnover is also rather high given the need for stability in leadership to effect reform in urban education.

The data from this survey indicate a high level of diversity among board members in terms of professional background and education. A majority of board members are White females.

This report highlights the wide variation among urban school boards in terms of compensation, structure, and governance approaches.

LIST OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

**ALBUQUERQUE
ANCHORAGE
ATLANTA
AUSTIN
BALTIMORE
BOSTON
BROWARD COUNTY
CADDO PARISH
CHARLESTON
CHARLOTTE
CHICAGO
CHRISTINA
CINCINNATI
CLARK COUNTY
CLEVELAND
COLUMBUS CITY SD
DALLAS ISD
DAYTON CITY SD
DENVER
DETROIT
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DUVAL COUNTY
FORT WORTH
FRESNO UNIFIED
GUILFORD COUNTY
HILLSBOROUGH
HOUSTON ISD
INDIANAPOLIS
JACKSON
JEFFERSON COUNTY
LOS ANGELES
MEMPHIS
MINNEAPOLIS
NORFOLK
OMAHA
ORANGE COUNTY
PITTSBURGH
PORTLAND
ROCHESTER
SACRAMENTO
SALT LAKE CITY
SAN DIEGO
SAN FRANCISCO
ST. PAUL
TUCSON**

MEMBER DISTRICTS 2004-2005

Albuquerque
Anchorage
Atlanta
Austin
Baltimore
Birmingham
Boston
Broward County
Buffalo
Caddo
Charleston
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Chicago
Christina
Cincinnati
Clark County
Cleveland
Columbus
Dallas
Dayton
Denver
Des Moines

Detroit
District of Columbia
Duval County
Fort Worth
Fresno
Guilford County
Hillsborough County
Houston
Indianapolis
Jackson
Jefferson County
Kansas City
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Memphis
Nashville
Miami-Dade County
Milwaukee
Minneapolis
New Orleans
New York City
Newark

Norfolk
Oakland
Oklahoma City
Omaha
Orange County
Palm Beach County
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
Portland
Providence
Richmond
Rochester
Sacramento
Salt Lake City
San Diego
San Francisco
Seattle
St. Louis
St. Paul
Toledo
Tucson
Wichita

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