

No Board Left Behind: Perceptions of Local Board Governance Standards by Superintendents and Chairpersons

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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This nonexperimental survey research investigated whether enrollment, location, expenditures, percentage of free and reduced lunch and percentage of minority students influenced Georgia's superintendent and board chairperson satisfaction. In addition, this study investigated whether respondents' satisfaction could predict student achievement. Finally, this study investigated whether superintendents valued professional standards differently than board chairpersons. Findings revealed a great deal of satisfaction held and agreement between superintendents and board chairpersons, but no significant difference in satisfaction levels based on district enrollment, percentage of minority students, or district location. Board chairpersons of districts with higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch were significantly less satisfied than board chairpersons of districts with lower percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Board chairperson satisfaction significantly predicted student achievement and graduation rate. Finally, results illustrated superintendents ranked the importance of ethics significantly higher than board chairpersons.

Introduction

Since the advent of NCLB, accountability has been the buzzword in education. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators have felt the pressure of increased accountability measures. Yet, the governing bodies of local education enjoyed immunity until 2005 when Georgia's Lanier County Schools became the first school district in 40 years to have their accreditation suspended. Between 2005 and 2011, eight school districts in the country had their accreditation formally downgraded because of school board misconduct (Associated Press, 2011). Notably, six of the eight districts were located in Georgia. The most extreme case was in 2008 when accreditation was revoked from Georgia's Clayton County School District due to school board ethics violations. Although not specific to school boards, the recent State Integrity Investigation released by The Center for Public Integrity and Global Integrity ranked Georgia's politicians and policymakers as 50th of the states in the nation for ethical behavior and policies (Sheinin & Joyner, 2012).

Faced with the brutal fact that more school boards in Georgia had been formally warned than the six that received formal sanctions, the state developed Georgia's local board governance standards (LBGS) accompanied by more stringent professional learning requirements. As school boards familiarized themselves with the standards to which they were to be held accountable, the next step of improvement was for school boards to evaluate their current performance and to set future goals. The possible threat of school board members compromising their standards and jeopardizing student achievement provided the reason for this study. This research investigated the level of satisfaction superintendents and school board chairpersons had with their performance on the LBGS, the values they embraced, and the potential that student achievement could be predicted from their levels of satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

Almost 300 years ago, concerned citizens would gather at informal town hall meetings to discuss education issues before the institution of the first U.S. school board in 1721 founded in Massachusetts (Provenzo, 2008). These initial boards functioned on an as-needed and unpaid basis (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000). However, a shift occurred in the 1900s when the role of school board members shifted from educational philosophers to managers precipitated by the increased presence of business professionals on school boards and with the advent of Frederick Douglas's Scientific Management theory. The focus of schools then shifted from educating to training (Glass et al., 2000).

In the 20th century, a shift in power occurred from local control to an increase in federal influence. Walser (2009) pointed out the average voter turnout for school board elections nationally was a dismal 10% indicating very little accountability to the local public at this time. The school district consolidation movement also diluted local control, as Meier (2009) reported that in her lifetime the number of school board members had declined from 200,000 to 20,000. With 9 out of 10 school boards dismantled since 1940, personal local accountability has declined in favor of federal and state measurable data points such as standardized achievement tests (Lawrence, 2004). With the NCLB act the quantification of education led to a numbers game (Lawrence, 2004; Lee, 2010; Medina & Riconscente, 2006), this quest to manipulate the system had an adverse effect on the school district according to 68% of school board members (Nylander, 2009).

Seeking a resolution for the problems in public schools, several solutions have threatened the very existence of the traditional school board. The current U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, endorsed dismantling the local board and handing over the control of public schools to city mayors (Hechinger & Sataline, 2009). While the alternative mayoral control held true to the value of local accountability, Henig and Hess (2010) and Miller (2008) favored the extinction of local boards in favor of national control. Their rationale included the demand for U.S. schools to compete globally rather than locally, and many nations with higher levels of student achievement have national control of education. Believing in the value of competition, Vail (2007) and Miller (2008) predicted that local boards will play a part in the demise of public education and prophesized that their role will become nothing more than managing the contracts of private or profitable organizations such as the charter schools.

Vail (2007) asserted all school board members were politicians despite their claims to the contrary. Non-partisan did not mean nonpolitical (Martin, 1969). As Garza (2008) explained, it is impossible to take politics out of decisions. Therefore, Farmer (2009) and Stover (2009) encouraged school board members to harness their political power for the benefit of students.

Political power could prove to be beneficial since student achievement has been found to be positively correlated with school board performance (Krueathep, 2008; Strauss, 2011). Supporting that conclusion, a meta-analysis of 4,500 studies established that district level leadership, including school board governance, had a significant impact on student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Ironically, Ward (2004) found staying focused on student achievement was the hardest part of the job.

Though the job of the school board is multifaceted, two components consistently surfaced within the literature as essential to success. Building and maintaining positive relationships, as well as working collaboratively, were found crucial. Kennedy and Barker's (1987) research across 42 states found an essential characteristic for success was for school board chairpersons to value the mastery of relationships. In fact, Kimball (2005) and Hoyle (2007) both agreed the ability to master positive relationships was the singular key to success. During an extensive review of the literature, Grogan (2000) indicated that poor relationships were the most frequently cited reasons for superintendent failure. Superintendents reported to Lamkin (2006) that their biggest challenge was maintaining positive relationships.

Stillman and Hurlburt (2011) concurred that relationships were important, but reported it was teamwork that produced results. Brazer, Rich, and Ross (2010) also found successful superintendents understood the importance of collaboration when making strategic decisions. Furthermore, as boards strived to achieve tactical goals, Arcement (2007) and Marzano and Waters (2009) asserted that collaboration was essential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived boards' performance on Georgia's LBGS and the prediction of student achievement. The research also sought to attain information regarding the value judgments superintendents and school board chairpersons placed on the importance of the domains categorizing the LBGS. Accordingly, we hoped to

provide the State Board of Education information to aide in fulfilling their obligation under the Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.36 (2010) to provide training programs for local school boards on the newly adopted standards.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What levels of satisfaction do superintendents and school board chairpersons hold regarding their perceived performance on the LBGS?
2. Is there a difference between superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS?
3. Is there a significant difference by selected district level characteristics (district enrollment, percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, percentage of minority students, district location, and total expenditures per FTE) on superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with perceived board performance on Georgia's LBGS?
4. Is superintendent or school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS a predictor of student achievement (spring 2012 CRCT results in Reading and Math for Grades 3, 5, 8, district cohort graduation rate)?
5. Is there a difference between the rankings superintendents and school board chairpersons on the domains of the LBGS?

Methodology

The study was a nonexperimental survey research design with between group comparisons. The variables of interest included six independent variables; (a) district enrollment, (b) percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, (c) percentage of minority students, (d) district location, (e) total expenditures per FTE, and (f) the role of respondents. Dependent variables included measures of student achievement and the rank order means of the LBGS domains. Third, fifth and eighth grade reading and math scores from the 2012 spring administration of Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) were utilized as measures of student achievement. The school districts' graduation rate was used to as a measure of high school student achievement. Total scores of superintendent and school board member satisfaction served as both independent and dependent variables.

Participants

Georgia school board chairpersons and superintendents served as the target population for this study. Each of the 180 school districts is governed by a school board generally consisting of five to seven elected officials. According to Georgia's Local School Board Governance Rule # 160-5-1-.36 (2010) each board must have a board chairperson from within to lead and represent the group. The board members appoint a superintendent who serves as a nonvoting member of the board. Georgia's superintendents and school board chairpersons were well represented with an overall response rate of 70% (123 of 180 (68.33%) superintendents and 129 of 180 (71.67%) school board chairpersons).

Superintendents and board chairpersons differed in their levels of experience. Superintendents ($M = 5.85$ years, $Mdn = 5$ years) were less experienced than board chairpersons ($M = 11.26$ years, $Mdn = 9$ years). The range of experience for superintendents was 22 years, while the range of experience for board chairpersons was 31 years.

Instrumentation

The survey administered in this study consisted of three sections. First, respondents were presented with the 17 LBGS and asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their board's performance based on a six point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). Next, participants were asked to rank in order of their importance, 1 (most important) to 8 (least important), the domains of the LBGS: (a) governance structure, (b) strategic planning, (c) board and community relations, (d) policy development, (e) board meetings, (f) personnel, (g) financial governance, and (h) ethics. Finally, the survey asked four demographic type questions.

Content validity was established by an instrument review panel consisting of assistant superintendents and school board members. In addition, the survey was submitted to the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) and Georgia Superintendents Association (GSSA) for review and comments. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was used to assess the reliability of scores. Cronbach's alpha for the 17-item satisfaction scale was .95.

Data Collection

After IRB approval of the study, each superintendent and school board chairperson of the 180 school districts in Georgia were mailed a paper copy of the survey accompanied by a cover letter with a link to the electronic version of the survey and a self-addressed stamped return envelope. Participants were provided multiple avenues to respond in hopes of increasing their response rate (Dillman & Christian, 2005). Follow-up emails were sent to all nonrespondents reminding them of the study and ensuring confidentiality of her of his responses. Attempts were made to conduct phone interviews with all superintendents and school board chairpersons who did not complete the survey by paper or electronically.

In addition to the survey data, Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) databases provided the necessary data for analysis. Data included CRCT scores (percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards) for third, fifth, and eighth grades and graduation rates from high schools. In addition, collected district demographic information included (a) total number of students, (b) percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, (c) percentage of minority students, and (d) total expenditures per FTE. Finally, information from the U.S. Census Bureau helped to determine whether each school district was rural or urban.

Data Analysis

All data were imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for a two-step quantitative process of descriptive then inferential analysis. First, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency and variability were calculated to indicate superintendent and school board chairperson satisfaction with their board's performance on the LBGS. In addition, the percentage of agreement between superintendents and school board chairpersons of the same district were generated. Before inferential statistics were run, statistical considerations and assumptions were assessed. All assumptions were met or accounted for through the use of alternative statistical tests. For example, since equal variances could not be assumed when running the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the Welch's F test was reported rather than the standard F test. The statistical analyses included the one-way ANOVA, independent means t test, multiple regression, and Mann Whitney U. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied in order to maintain the overall alpha level of .05.

Results

Superintendents and board chairpersons rated how satisfied they were with their boards' performance by choosing from a satisfaction scale ranging from a low of 1 (very dissatisfied) to a high of 7 (very satisfied). Table 1 presents the number and percentage of superintendent responses by question, while Table 2 presents the number and percentage of board chairperson responses by question. Both superintendents (99%) and chairpersons (98%) expressed their greatest cumulative satisfaction on the question related to announcing and holding board meetings according to state law. For this question, both superintendents (85%) and board chairpersons (89%) reported the highest percentage of being very satisfied. Alternatively, the superintendents and chairpersons reported the lowest percentage of being very satisfied within the board and community relations' domain. Superintendents (25%) expressed their smallest percentage of being very satisfied regarding how well their board guarantees a process for resolution to stakeholder issues and concerns. The smallest percentage of board chairpersons (30%) reporting being very satisfied was related to the board creating a culture where input is sought and heard.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Superintendent Responses by Question

Item	Level of satisfaction							Mdn	M	SD
	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	6 n (%)	7 n (%)			
Domain I: Governance Structure										
1	0 (0)	3 (2)	8 (7)	0 (0)	12 (10)	38 (31)	62 (50)	7	6.11	1.26
2	0 (0)	4 (3)	7 (6)	1 (1)	10 (8)	41 (33)	60 (49)	6	6.09	1.28
3	0 (0)	5 (4)	7 (6)	2 (2)	19 (15)	45 (37)	45 (37)	6	5.85	1.32
4	2 (2)	8 (7)	8 (7)	1 (1)	11 (9)	45 (37)	48 (39)	6	5.75	1.58
Domain II: Strategic Planning										
5	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	5 (4)	24 (20)	49 (40)	42 (34)	6	5.98	0.99
6	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	9 (7)	21 (17)	53 (43)	38 (31)	6	5.94	0.96
Domain III: Board and Community Relations										
7	0 (0)	1 (1)	9 (7)	4 (3)	15 (12)	57 (46)	37 (30)	6	5.86	1.16
8	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (3)	4 (3)	22 (18)	50 (41)	42 (34)	6	5.97	1.04
9	0 (0)	2 (2)	4 (3)	4 (3)	22 (18)	60 (49)	31 (25)	6	5.85	1.05
Domain IV: Policy Development										
10	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	12 (10)	45 (37)	63 (51)	7	6.36	0.79
Domain V: Board Meetings										
11	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	17 (14)	105 (85)	7	6.85	0.39
Domain VI: Personnel										
12	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (3)	26 (21)	89 (72)	7	6.61	0.78
13	3 (2)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (2)	7 (6)	39 (32)	69 (56)	7	6.27	1.24
14	0 (0)	1 (1)	3 (2)	1 (1)	7 (6)	34 (28)	77 (63)	7	6.45	0.93
Domain VII: Financial Governance										
15	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	26 (21)	94 (76)	7	6.72	0.61
16	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (4)	30 (24)	88 (72)	7	6.67	0.58
Domain VIII: Ethics										
17	4 (3)	5 (4)	4 (3)	3 (2)	15 (12)	29 (24)	63 (51)	7	5.92	1.58

Note. Levels of satisfaction were labeled as 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied), 3 (somewhat dissatisfied), 4 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), 5 (somewhat satisfied), 6 (satisfied), and 7 (very satisfied).

n = 123.

Table 2

Number and Percentage of School Board Chairperson Responses by Question

Item	Level of satisfaction							Mdn	M	SD
	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	6 n (%)	7 n (%)			
Domain I: Governance Structure										
1	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (2)	1 (1)	7 (5)	45 (35)	71 (55)	7	6.34	1.03
2	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	7 (5)	44 (34)	71 (55)	7	6.29	1.16
3	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)	42 (33)	75 (58)	7	6.32	1.19
4	1 (1)	1 (1)	6 (5)	2 (2)	12 (9)	45 (35)	62 (48)	6	6.15	1.17
Domain II: Strategic Planning										
5	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (2)	13 (10)	53 (41)	56 (43)	6	6.17	1.03
6	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (2)	7 (5)	17 (13)	54 (42)	46 (36)	6	5.98	1.11
Domain III: Board and Community Relations										
7	0 (0)	1 (1)	8 (6)	2 (2)	21 (16)	59 (46)	38 (30)	6	5.88	1.09
8	0 (0)	3 (2)	5 (4)	6 (5)	18 (14)	51 (40)	46 (36)	6	5.91	1.17
9	0 (0)	3 (2)	0 (0)	8 (6)	18 (14)	60 (47)	40 (31)	6	5.95	1.04
Domain IV: Policy Development										
10	0 (0)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	6 (5)	41 (32)	78 (61)	7	6.46	0.89
Domain V: Board Meetings										
11	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	10 (8)	115 (89)	7	6.81	0.71
Domain VI: Personnel										
12	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	5 (4)	0 (0)	21 (16)	101 (78)	7	6.69	0.74
13	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	8 (6)	29 (23)	89 (69)	7	6.56	0.82
14	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	5 (4)	34 (26)	86 (67)	7	6.54	0.82
Domain VII: Financial Governance										
15	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	30 (23)	94 (73)	7	6.64	0.75
16	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	30 (23)	95 (74)	7	6.67	0.68
Domain VIII: Ethics										
17	3 (2)	4 (3)	3 (2)	2 (2)	9 (7)	40 (31)	68 (53)	7	6.12	1.39

Note. Levels of satisfaction were labeled as 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied), 3 (somewhat dissatisfied), 4 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), 5 (somewhat satisfied), 6 (satisfied), and 7 (very satisfied).

n = 129.

Superintendents and board chairpersons differed on the question receiving the largest percentage of neutral ratings. Within the strategic planning domain, the question asking participants to rate their satisfaction on how well the governance leadership team monitors the system strategic plan had seven percent of superintendents state they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Six percent of board chairpersons chose the neutral response within the board and community relations' domain when rating their satisfaction on how well the board guaranteed a process for resolution to stakeholder issues and concerns.

When examining the three levels of dissatisfaction together, the largest percentage of superintendents (16%) reported being dissatisfied as related to how well their governance leadership team demonstrated a unified approach in order to ensure effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities. For board chairpersons, three questions shared the claim for the greatest level of cumulative dissatisfaction with each having 7% of chairpersons expressing some level of dissatisfaction. When examining which question had the largest percentage of those saying they were very dissatisfied, the question related to how well board members adhere to ethical standards had the greatest percentage of responses for both superintendents (3%) and board chairpersons (2%).

Superintendent and school board chairperson median values were very similar. A median of seven, the highest possible level of satisfaction was reported for 53% of the questions for superintendents and for 65% of the questions for board chairpersons. The superintendents and board chairpersons rated all of the questions within the domains of strategic planning and board and community relations a median value of six indicating they were simply satisfied. Both groups produced a median of seven on the first question within the governance domain regarding the leadership team adhering to legal roles and responsibilities, and they both gave the last question within this domain a median of six. Board chairpersons rated their satisfaction higher than superintendents on questions related to the board executing its duties according to the law and caring out its policy making duties separate from the superintendent. There was no median below a six for either group of respondents.

The difference between superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS was conducted using percentage of agreement. Perfect agreement was noted when a superintendent and board chairperson from the same district indicated the exact same level of satisfaction for an item, whereas contiguous agreement occurred when there was a one point difference in either direction. Noncontiguous agreement was defined as the superintendent and chairperson from the same district selecting levels of agreement that were two or more points apart on the satisfaction scale.

Overall, superintendents and board chairpersons were in perfect agreement an average of 49% of the time (see Table 3). Scores were within one point of agreement 37% of the time. Seven items had greater than 50% perfect agreement, while three items had greater than 20% noncontiguous agreement. The largest percentage of perfect agreement was on holding board meetings according to legal standards, with 77% of superintendents reporting the exact same level of satisfaction as their corresponding board chairperson. The largest combined percentage agreement with a total of 97% of responses either perfectly matching or within one point of another was the domain related

to the board of education, upon recommendation of the superintendent, adopts a budget that adheres to state law provisions and consistent with its strategic plan.

The lowest level of perfect agreement, 35%, were questions which asked superintendents and board chairpersons to rate their satisfaction on how well their board acts as a policy-making body separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent, asked for the respondents' level of satisfaction with the governance leadership team providing input to and adopting the system strategic plan, and whether the board developed policies to ensure effective communication and engagement of all stakeholders.

Table 3

Number and Percentage of Agreement between Superintendents and Board Chairpersons from the Same District

Item	Perfect Agreement n (%)	Contiguous Agreement n (%)	Noncontiguous Agreement n (%)
Domain I: Governance Structure			
1	41 (39)	45 (43)	18 (17)
2	47 (45)	38 (37)	19 (18)
3	36 (35)	47 (45)	21 (20)
4	43 (41)	43 (41)	18 (17)
Domain II: Strategic Planning			
5	36 (35)	50 (48)	18 (17)
6	40 (39)	44 (42)	20 (19)
Domain III: Board and Community Relations			
7	38 (37)	46 (44)	20 (19)
8	36 (35)	47 (45)	21 (20)
9	39 (38)	50 (48)	15 (15)
Domain IV: Policy Development			
10	56 (54)	38 (37)	10 (10)
Domain V: Board Meetings			
11	80 (77)	19 (18)	5 (5)
Domain V Personnel			
12	69 (66)	27 (26)	8 (8)
13	57 (55)	34 (33)	13 (13)
14	60 (58)	31 (30)	13 (13)
Domain VII: Financial Governance			
15	65 (63)	35 (34)	4 (4)
16	70 (67)	29 (28)	5 (5)
Domain VIII: Ethics			
17	45 (43)	32 (31)	27 (26)

Note. n = 104.

Regarding satisfaction on their board's ethical performance, five districts had their officials respond on polar opposite ends of the scale meaning that one was extremely satisfied while the other was extremely dissatisfied. The only other areas with

this kind of drastic disagreement were related to the board adopting personnel policies and adopting and monitoring the budget.

The t test for independent means and one-way ANOVA were utilized to determine if district level characteristics impacted the level of satisfaction among superintendents and board chairpersons. There was no significant difference by district location on superintendent satisfaction, $t(121) = -0.68$, $p = .50$, $d = 0.12$. In addition, there was no significant difference by district location on board chairperson satisfaction, $t(127) = -0.73$, $p = .94$, $d = 0.01$. Respondents from urban locales did not express significantly different levels of satisfaction from respondents in rural areas.

One-way ANOVA results indicated that the selected demographic characteristics did not have a significant effect on satisfaction for superintendents or chairpersons (see Table 4). However, Welch's F test used due to a violation of assumptions, indicated a significant difference between the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch by quartile on board chairpersons' satisfaction with their school board's performance, $F(3,65.12) = 65.12$, $p < .001$. The Games-Howell post hoc test indicated a significant difference between districts with a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch ($M = 103.47$, $SD = 12.19$) and those districts with the lowest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch ($M = 113.83$, $SD = 6.64$) on board chairperson total scores.

Table 4

ANOVA Results for Superintendent and Chairperson Total Scores by Independent Variable

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Enrollment						
Superintendent	1267.03	3	422.34	2.82	.042	.07
Chairperson	162.40	3	54.14	0.45	.718	.01
Free/reduced lunch						
Superintendent	1236.03	3	412.01	2.75	.046	.07
Chairperson	1937.72	3	645.91	6.08	.001	.13
Minority						
Superintendent	1008.89	3	336.30	2.21	.090	.05
Chairperson	706.89	3	235.63	2.03	.113	.05
Expenditures per FTE						
Superintendent	915.37	3	305.12	2.00	.118	.05
Chairperson	812.91	3	270.97	2.35	.076	.05

Note. Superintendent, $n = 123$; Chairperson, $n = 129$.

Results from standard multiple regression indicated that superintendent satisfaction did not significantly predict student achievement as measured by the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards on the reading and math CRCT

in grades 3, 5, and 8, and graduation rate (see Table 5). However, the satisfaction levels of school board chairpersons did predict, with both statistical and practical significance, student achievement as measured by third grade reading and math, fifth grade reading, and graduation rates.

For third grade reading CRCT scores, board chairpersons' satisfaction accounted for 16% of the variance. Their total scores had a medium practical effect, and superintendent total scores had a small practical effect. Similarly, overall regression results were significant for third grade math CRCT scores. The satisfaction of board chairpersons accounted for 13% of the variance in third grade math CRCT scores and had a medium practical effect while superintendent total scores had little to no practical effect. Board chairpersons also made a significant contribution to the prediction of fifth grade reading scores and accounted for 11% of the variance. Both board chairperson and superintendent total scores had a medium practical effect on fifth grade reading. Furthermore, the overall regression results were significant for graduation rates. The satisfaction of board chairpersons accounted for 9% of the variance in graduation rates. Board chairperson total scores had a medium practical effect, yet superintendents had a small to medium practical effect.

Table 5

Regression Model Summary for Student Achievement Variables

Variable						Superintendent				Chairperson			
	R	R2	R2 Adj	F	p	B	β	T	p	B	β	t	P
Grade 3 reading	.40	.16	.14	9.44	.000	.01	.02	0.23	.823	.17	.39	3.90	.000
Grade 3 math	.37	.13	.12	7.71	.001	-.05	-.07	-0.68	.500	.28	.39	3.81	.000
Grade 5 reading	.33	.11	.09	5.96	.004	.07	.17	1.65	.102	.10	.22	2.14	.040
Grade 5 math	.26	.07	.05	3.77	.026	.09	.13	1.26	.210	.14	.18	1.74	.084
Grade 8 reading	.19	.04	.02	1.85	.162	-.01	-.03	-0.27	.789	.05	.20	1.86	.066
Grade 8 math	.25	.06	.05	3.45	.036	.171	.20	1.83	.07	.11	.11	1.01	.314
Graduation Rate	.30	.09	.07	5.01	.008	.12	.14	1.35	.180	.20	.22	2.10	.038

Note. Grades 3, 5, and 8 reading and math scores were the percentage of students in the school district meeting and exceeding on Georgia's CRCT. N= 104.

When comparing superintendent and board chairperson rankings several similarities and differences should be noted. Superintendents and board chairpersons' median rankings were in agreement for five of the eight domains: (a) strategic planning, (b) board and community relations, (c) policy, (d) board meetings, and (e) personnel. However, superintendents (Mdn = 2) ranked the governance domain higher than board chairpersons (Mdn = 3). Superintendents (Mdn = 4) ranked financial governance as less important than board chairpersons (Mdn = 3). The median ranking of ethics domain also was higher for superintendents (1) than for board chairpersons (2).

Although the ethics domain had different median values between superintendents and board chairpersons, both superintendents (52%) and board chairpersons (33%) had the highest percentage of respondents choose ethics as the most important domain. Conversely, seven percent of superintendents ranked ethics as least important while 12% of board chairpersons ranked ethics as least important. No superintendents ranked the financial governance as most important; however, 14% of board chairpersons ranked financial governance as most important for the success of their school board. The

personnel domain also had notable differences between the percentage of superintendents (26%) selecting it as the least important and board chairpersons (19%) choosing personnel as least important domain.

The Mann-Whitney U was performed to compare the rankings superintendents and school board chairpersons placed on the domains of the Local Board Governance Standards. After the Bonferroni adjustment was applied to adjust for multiple statistical procedures within one analysis, the ethics domain was the only one where there was a statistically significant difference ($U = 6272.00$, $p = .003$, $r = .189$) between the rankings of superintendents ($Mdn = 1$) and board chairpersons ($Mdn = 2$). When looking at practical significance, all but two domains had little to no effect and the domains of financial governance and ethics had a small effect.

Discussion

The last few years of multiple school board drama have produced an often unfair stereotype of meddling unethical school board members across Georgia and other states in the public eye. An internet search for “Georgia school board problems” yields over 37 million results. Grillo (2009) interviewed the president and chief executive officer of SACS who stated about 20% of Georgia’s school boards had a problem. The results of this study suggest those numbers in Georgia may be declining. This study’s findings point out superintendents, often represented as being at odds with their board in the media, were overwhelmingly satisfied with their school boards’ performance. Also, an interesting outcome of this research was the tremendous amount of agreement in satisfaction shared by superintendents and school board chairpersons. An intense effort to present the pervasiveness of positivity among Georgia school boards collectively may be necessary to overcome the sensationalism of a few high profile ethical breaches.

Superintendents and school board chairpersons were similarly satisfied within districts and across the state despite the significantly wide range of demographics from where respondents hailed. Although the number of students enrolled, expenditures per pupil, minority enrollment, and district locations were grossly different across districts, superintendent and board chairperson satisfaction appeared to be immune to these factors. However, the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch had a significant impact on board chairperson satisfaction. Chairpersons with the lowest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch reported significantly higher satisfaction than those chairpersons reporting from districts with a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. However, superintendent satisfaction was not impacted. A possible explanation could be the intense focus on effective strategies to combat poverty that is part of educational leadership and professional learning programs. Board chairpersons might not have been afforded numerous and intense learning opportunities related to overcoming poverty.

Citizens and educators may ask why it matters if superintendents and board chairpersons are satisfied with their board’s performance. Despite superintendent satisfaction not meaningfully predicting student achievement in this study, board chairperson satisfaction did significantly forecast student achievement. Several notable quantitative studies corroborated the results of this research study. Zeigler and Johnson

(1972) analyzed over 1,200 politicians' interviews, voting records, and corresponding jurisdictions' student achievement scores. A significant correlation existed between politicians having a positive attitude toward education and high student achievement. Marzano and Waters (2009) also found district leadership, including the school board, had a positive relationship with student achievement after conducting a comprehensive review of 4,500 research studies published over a 35-year period. Dervarics and O'Brien (2011) clearly asserted local school boards with high achieving students demonstrated distinctly unique behaviors and beliefs from their low achieving counterparts. Even more noteworthy and relative to this study, was when districts with similar poverty levels but dramatically different student achievement levels were compared and results indicated school board factors had a significant effect on the students' success.

Former superintendents Björk and Bond (2006) agreed that school board culture set the tone for the district from the boardroom to the classroom. However, staying focused on student achievement was the hardest part of the job even though that was why the board existed, asserted former board member Ward (2004). He believed being a school board member was the most challenging job in America, but worth it when students are put first. Every action, thought, and word spoken by a superintendent or board member should be preceded and filtered by the question of how it benefits the students.

Based on the evidence in the literature and the results of this study, a clear link exists between school boards and student achievement, which leads to the question of which factors have the greatest impact on satisfaction. Not surprisingly when looking at anecdotal evidence in Georgia, the LBGS concerning ethics carried the most significant quantitative findings in this study.

Eadie (2009) found school board members who were politically dissatisfied were less effective and sometimes sought satisfaction in negative ways to fulfill their egos. As it was in Georgia, Alfen and Schmidt (2007) conducted a descriptive study on rural school boards in Utah by utilizing school board minutes from a period of 20 years and 5,250 voting decisions and identified micromanagement commonly at the heart of the turmoil. Castor (2007) maintained board micromanagement of superintendents and administrators occurred for several reasons such as lack of honest information, distrust, or desire for power. Grady and Bryant's (1991) interviews with 31 superintendents found the majority of superintendent conflicts with school board members were caused from board members asking for exceptions for family members and friends. Board members often impeded success when they pursued their personal interests and goals, in opposition to and distracting from, district goals (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Despite the threat of losing accreditation and enduring negative publicity, ethical issues persist for several reasons. Björk and Blasé (2009) asserted it was difficult for superintendents to take "corrective action" on school board members when needed, due to the fact that the board held the power to hire and fire the superintendent. Not recognizing, and definitely not publicizing, a need for change was also advantageous for sitting board members who may run for reelection (Rothstein, Jacobson, & Wilder, 2009). Helterbran's (2008) research of superintendents, board members, principals, and aspiring leaders found that the school board rarely analyzed ethics issues. In addition, his research indicated superintendents often found themselves in a conflict between the

ethics of duty, implementation of the board's decision, and their personal code of ethics. Superintendents often had to choose between the politics of pleasing the board or what they believed was the right thing to do (Helterbran, 2008). Georgia's current structure of an elected board that appoints the superintendent is not likely to change in the near future, and from the results of this study, there is little impetus for that change to occur. However, superintendents and board members should work together to form relationships where holding each other accountable to the highest standards is accepted and respected.

Limitations

An earnest attempt was made to eliminate and minimize limitations. Readers should consider several factors related to the participants. First, participants may have varying definitions of and degrees of what they deemed satisfaction along with their individual interpretations of the LBGS. Another consideration to reflect upon is the degree of honest reporting of satisfaction levels. The survey asked superintendents and school board chairpersons to self-report their satisfaction related to their perceptions of their school board's performance. Including participants who are not members of the school board could minimize the shortcomings of self-reporting. Finally, causality may not be established or inferred. Since this research was not experimental, a conclusion that one variable caused another was not possible; however, the current research design identified differences and determined predictability.

Conclusion

There was a great deal of agreement between superintendents and board chairpersons in the state of Georgia regarding satisfaction with board performance on the LBGS. Superintendent satisfaction did not appear to be a product of district demographic variables; however, school board chairperson satisfaction was susceptible to the poverty level of their community as measured by the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

Concerning student achievement, superintendent satisfaction was not a significant predictor; however, school board chairperson satisfaction yielded significant results. Student achievement as measured by third grade reading and math, fifth grade reading CRCT, and cohort graduation rate could be predicted based on chairperson satisfaction scores. Each of these variables had a medium to large effect size indicating practical significance.

Outcomes of this study revealed superintendents and board chairpersons have the least satisfaction with and lowest levels of agreement within the LBGS domain of ethics. These results indicate superintendent and school board chairperson professional learning in the state should be focused on, as Carver (2000) described, creating the necessary yet delicate balance between micromanagement and rubber stamping that school board members must achieve for maximum effectiveness.

Although superintendents and board chairpersons were least satisfied with and had the lowest levels of agreement within the ethics domain, both groups ranked ethics as the most important domain to the successful operation of the school board. Conversely, they ranked school board meetings as the least important domain while both superintendents and board chairpersons reported their greatest satisfaction and most

agreement within the board meetings domain. Moving forward, superintendents and board chairpersons must work as a team to focus on their priorities. If, as they reported, they believe ethics is the most important determinant of their success then more attention, dedication, and collaboration should be taken to ensure better ethical performance, which, in turn, will lead to a greater level of satisfaction and improved student achievement.

An exhaustive review of the literature by Dervarics and O'Brien (2011) noted the majority of research on school boards and student achievement was qualitative. Therefore, this research contributes to the limited quantitative based literature on student achievement as related to superintendents and school board chairpersons. The results of this study emphasized the need to replicate this study in other states across the nation that could indicate regional and state differences. Also, future research is indicated to expand the participants beyond the superintendent and school board chairperson to other school board members, assistant superintendents, and possibly the superintendent/school board administrative assistant.

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Local Board Governance Standards Performance Satisfaction Survey

ISENT: The purpose of the study is to examine superintendent and school board chairperson satisfaction with their school board's performance on Georgia's Local Governance Standards (LBGS) as a predictor of student achievement and explore the values placed on the domains of the LBGS. All responses will be kept strictly confidential, and level results will be reported. Your submission of this survey indicates your consent for participation.

Please circle the number that most closely corresponds to your level of satisfaction with your board's performance.							
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied or Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
governance Structure							
governance leadership team is comprised of the local board of education and the superintendent and adheres to appropriate roles and responsibilities, as defined in the state constitution and state law, local act and board policy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
governance leadership team executes its duties as defined in the state constitution, state law, local act and board policy, accreditation standards, and accreditation procedures and ethical standards, which govern its conduct.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
governance leadership team demonstrates a unified approach to governing the school system in order to assure effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strategic Planning							
strategic leadership team provides input to and adopts the system strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strategic leadership team monitors and reports progress on performance measures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
board and Community Relations							
board leadership team develops a process for creating a culture where input is valued and shared.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
board leadership team ensures effective communication and engagement of all stakeholders which support the strategic plan, desired culture and continuous improvement of the school system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
board leadership team ensures processes that develop, communicate and implement policies for communications by stakeholders which result in resolution of issues supporting the strategic plan, desired culture and continuous improvement of the school system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
policy Development							
policy leadership team develops, revises, and follows written policies that are clear, up-to-date, and in compliance with the school system's strategic plan, state constitution, state law, and state board rules.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
board Meetings							
board leadership team announces and holds meetings in accordance with local board policy and state law (O.C.G.A. §50-14-1).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied or Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
I: Personnel							
Board of education employs a superintendent who acts as the Executive Officer of the system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Board of education evaluates the professional performance of the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Board of education adopts personnel policy that is implemented by the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
II: Financial Governance							
Board of education upon recommendation of the superintendent adopts a budget consistent with State law provisions and consistent with its strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Board of education adopts policy for sound fiscal management and monitors the execution of the budget in accordance with state laws and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
III: Ethics							
Board of education adheres to, adopts and practices a Code of Ethics, avoids conflicts of interest, and annually reviews ethical standards to ensure and enhance the structure and organizational effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rank each of the domains (1) most important to (8) least important according to their necessity for a successful school board.

- ___ Governance Structure Board
- ___ Strategic Planning Maintenance
- ___ Board & Community Relations Personnel
- ___ Policy Development Financial Governance
- ___ Ethics Ethics

Circle the response that most closely matches your level of familiarity with Georgia's Local Board Governance Standards?

- Unfamiliar Slightly Familiar Moderately Familiar Very Familiar

Write in the name of your school district: _____

Circle the response that indicates your role within the school district: Superintendent or School Board Chairperson

Write in how many years you have served as the superintendent or a board member for your current school district: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration.