

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE BEHAVIORS  
OF MONTANA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:  
A DELPHI STUDY

by

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## DEDICATION

To my family; first to my husband, Dan, whose love, patience, assistance, and understanding has allowed me to complete this journey. To my sons, Gunnar and Tait, daughter-in-law Rachel, and granddaughter, Liv. You have been my motivation to persist in my pursuit of this chapter of my own personal learning journey. To my parents, Carolea and George Beaumont, you have given me a love of learning and inspired me with your own continuous learning adventures.

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## ABSTRACT

School board governance matters. Past research has demonstrated that effective school boards are associated with higher student achievement. However, this research has been less clear about what those agreed upon effective practices are. The current study set out to identify effective school board governance practices and to determine the extent expert panelists agreed with these practices. Obstacles to effective governance were also identified and agreed upon. Differences in responses from panelists in five sizes of school districts were also explored.

Using a Delphi methodology, expert panelists in Montana provided information in the form of narratives and lists about their perceptions of effective school board practices as well as their encountered obstacles during round one. Qualitative analysis techniques were used to create a set of effective practices and a set of encountered obstacles. Further refinement was accomplished by using two additional rounds in which panelists provided feedback, reconsidered their responses and provided additional comments. A set of 17 highly agreed upon effective practices and a set of two highly agree upon obstacles resulted.

From this data, a model of effective school board governance was developed. This model aligns well with past research that was conducted based upon outside sources of judgment, such as high test scores.

However, some important deviations from past recommendations are also noted. Data from the current study places an increased emphasis on the actual operations of school boards, such as on the types of discussions that are held, as well as the mechanics of productive and collaborative school board meetings.

The power of school boards occurs when acting collectively as a group in a school board meeting and this study supports focusing improvement efforts in making that time more effective. School board members many gain knowledge and experience individually, but it is only through working together that they shape and guide the cultures that are needed to improve our public schools for the future.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Background in School Governance and Accountability

Public education is under fire (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land & Stringfield, 2005; Shober & Hartney, 2014). Increasingly, American public schools are becoming targets of a political tug-of-war at both the state and national levels (DeHart & Ganley, 2008; Hunter, 2010; Ravitch, Marchant & David, 2014). Graduating students are not meeting employers' expectations (Hart Research Associates, 2015). College freshman are enrolled in remedial math and English courses at concerning rates (Sparks & Malkus, 2013). "More than 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges and nearly 20 percent of those entering four-year universities are placed in remedial classes" (Complete College America, 2012, p. 2). American public-school students are not measuring up to their international peers (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovick, Rathbun, Wang & Zhang, 2013; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016). Schools are under pressure to meet high standards and state and federal systems of accountability are in place to measure student academic achievement based upon student test scores.

Whether public outcry against mediocrity has resulted in this political battle, or whether political and economic dissatisfaction with public school results has caused the public outcry; there is a growing dissatisfaction with our public-school systems. However, many educators disagree with this opinion of our schools (Berliner & Biddle,

1995; Berliner & Glass, 2014; Ravitch, 2014), claiming that the criteria for measuring student success have been misrepresented:

Here we are the greatest most powerful nation in the world and we've been sold a bill of goods that our public education system has failed. It doesn't make any sense. Who are the liars? The people being paid huge amounts of money to go around the country saying we're failing when it happens to not even be true" (Ravitch, Marchant, & David, 2014, p. 173).

Amid this controversy, now more than ever, our public-school systems are being held accountable for producing students that are ready for college, ready to meet employers' entry level expectations, and ready to compete in the global marketplace (National Conference of State Legislators [NCSL], 2016).

The era of educational accountability received a jump start with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983). This report highlighted a perceived decline in the achievement of public school students in the United States as compared to students internationally. Since then, our schools have been working to improve student academic achievement in order to remain competitive globally. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) applied additional focus and pressure to schools nationally to close achievement gaps for minority groups with the goal of all students demonstrating proficient academic skills in reading, math, and science by the year 2014. This pressure came in the form of punitive sanctions applied to school districts that were unable to demonstrate adequate yearly progress toward the goal of proficiency for all, including minority subgroups. However, school improvement efforts during the NCLB decade, have not significantly improved student outcomes (NCSL, 2016; OECD, 2014). More recently, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted by 46 states with hopes to create schools that will better prepare students for

college, career, and life (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). State testing was also modified to measure attainment of the CCSS and is being used to measure public school effectiveness.

Consequently, in the past decade and a half public school districts in the United States have been examining current educational practices, setting school and district improvement goals, and measuring progress toward those goals in order to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and avoid punitive sanctions. National databases, such as the *What Works Clearinghouse* (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2015) have been created to showcase educational programs and strategies that have been demonstrated through research to improve student achievement. Specific educational programs and interventions have been highly researched and promoted.

Teacher and administrator qualities and characteristics have also been scrutinized. Publications like Marzano and Pickering's *Classroom Instruction that Works* (2001), Marzano and Water's *School Leadership that Works* (2005), *District Leadership that Works* (2009), and John Hattie's *Visible Learning for Teachers* (2012) have summarized results of the educational practices of teachers and school administrators that have been associated with high student achievement. School systems that are aligned – students, teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards- are those most likely to show successful student outcomes.

### School Board Effects on Student Outcomes

Less well understood are the effective practices and processes employed at the district governance level on student outcomes. Our nation's school boards are responsible for the governance of our public schools, yet they are the groups that we know the least about from a research perspective. Especially, we know little about the board's role in school and school district improvement efforts aimed at improving student outcomes. Recent educational research has been conducted in order to determine whether a relationship exists between specific school board practices and behaviors and student achievement (Ford & Ihrke, 2015; Foust, 2009; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Iowa Association of School Boards [IASB], 2000; IASB, 2007; Land, 2002; Lorentzen, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Shoer & Hartney, 2014; Timm, 2012). These studies have shown that school board practices do influence student outcomes, albeit indirectly. If school boards matter, then school boards must better understand what effective governance looks like and what they can do to contribute to the success of their districts in support of improved student outcomes.

School board governance practices can influence student outcomes in both positive and negative ways (Delegardelle, 2008; Lee & Eden's, 2014; Lorentzen, 2013; Lorentzen & McCaw, 2015). Ineffective school boards that govern districts with low student achievement are reported to display a lack of trust, commitment, and patience with each other; be less orderly; spend less time on student achievement; show a lack respectful and attentive engagement across speakers; harbor personal agendas; micro-manage or rubber stamp administrative recommendations, and focus on the wrong issues

(Lee & Eadens, 2014; Lorentzen, 2013). On the positive side, effective school boards that govern high achieving districts are described in a variety of ways.

As Land (2002) noted in her landmark meta-analysis of two decades of research about school board effectiveness, “Though boards may be judged effective by measures other than student achievement, such as their ability to balance budgets, comply with legislation, and respond to local concerns, student achievement is the predominate measure of interest here” (p.1). Her study examined “opinion based academic and professional writings on the role and effectiveness of local school boards, ...combined with an examination of the limited number of data-driven studies” (Land, 2002, p.1) in order to detect what role school boards ought to play in the system wide attempt to raise student achievement. Her conclusions yielded the identification of school board behaviors determined to demonstrate effectiveness: appropriate overarching foci (students’ academic achievement and policy); good relations with the superintendent and other stakeholders; effective policymaking; leadership and budgeting; adequate evaluation and preparation (including self-evaluation); evaluation of student, school, and district outcomes; and training/development. She also concluded that solid research linking these characteristics to more effective governance and, more specifically, positive academic outcomes is notably absent in the literature.

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) offers guidance to local school boards attempting to improve board functioning. In 2011, the NSBA adopted eight characteristics of effective school boards (Center for Public Education, 2011). 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.
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, 2011).

Recently revised, the NSBA currently promotes five characteristics of effective school boards. Effective boards:

1. Establish a clear vision with high expectations for quality teaching and learning that supports strong student outcomes. They establish clear and specific goals to move districts forward.
2. Have high academic standards, transparency, and accountability which undergird a world-class education. True accountability depends on open decision making, community engagement and support, and receptivity to new ideas and constructive criticism.
3. Establish a set of cohesive guidelines able to transform vision into reality. Policy is how a board sustainably exercises power to serve students.
4. Share their concerns and actions with the public. Community leadership that builds public support is vital to implement the board's vision.

5. Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust (NSBA, 2015).

Ward and Griffin (2005) suggested the following five indicators of an effective school board. Effective boards focus on student achievement; allocate resources to needs; watch the return on investment; use data; and engage the communities they serve. Additionally, Ford and Ihrke (2015) found that boards can positively impact student achievement by:

1. Keeping its strategic plan up-to-date,
2. Adjusting academic standards and assessment policies in response to student needs,
3. Being open and honest with one another,
4. Governing in partnership with their superintendent,
5. Proactively and regularly engaging with the public, and
6. Engaging in formal board development.

Although research has demonstrated a connection between school board practices and student outcomes, there is little agreement about the specific practices and behaviors that define school board effectiveness.

#### Balanced Governance Model

Alsbury (2015) calls for a balanced approach to school board governance. School boards are unique to the organization they serve and range from rubber-stamping hands-off governance styles to micromanaging detailed-obsessed styles. The Balanced Governance Model is characterized by practices that fall between these two extremes.

Balanced Governance is not a single prescribed model or program, but describes a school governance approach that supports and promotes “balance”- discouraging micromanaging on one the end of the governance continuum and a disengaged, rubber-stamping board on the other (Figure 1). If effective school boards govern best when

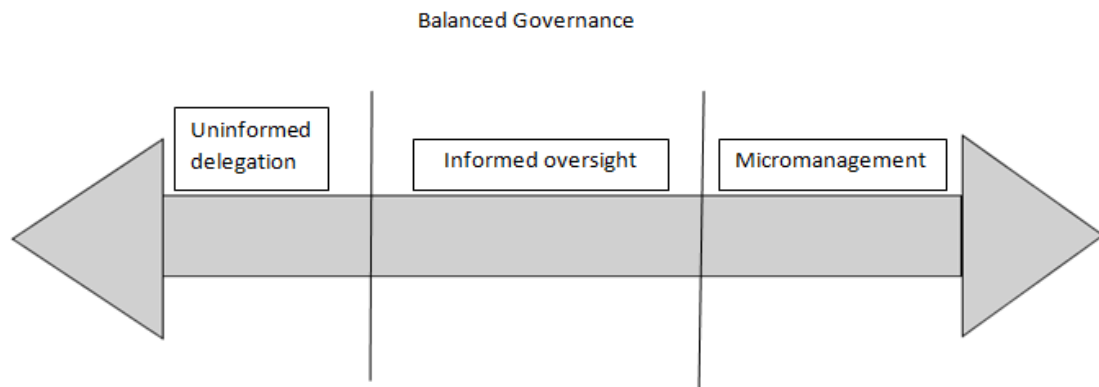


Figure 1. Balanced governance model (Alsbury, 2015, p.9)

practicing a balanced governance approach, then it is important to identify which specific practices and behaviors school boards should adopt in order to assist in improving student outcomes.

This descriptive study builds upon previous studies by investigating effective school board behaviors and practices that are identified and agreed upon by active school board members themselves. Using a Delphi methodology, this study surveyed experienced school board members in the state of Montana by asking them to describe the behaviors and practices that they considered crucial for effective school board governance. Resulting data formed a framework within which effective school board behaviors can be understood and shared. School board members themselves are the

individuals who are experiencing the results of effective or ineffective school board practices, but they are rarely directly consulted about how they are experiencing that role.

### Problem Statement

School board effectiveness and effective school board governance have been defined in the literature in many ways. Most often, the criteria for effectiveness has been based upon identifying school districts with an academically high achieving student population (based upon state test scores). Landmark research has compared these high achieving districts and identified common practices and themes (Delagardelle, 2008). Meta-analyses also identified common practices of effective school boards (Land, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009). While efforts to improve school board effectiveness are supported by recent research, the description of effective governance practices varies widely. School boards themselves often use a self-evaluation instrument to determine how effectively they operate according to predetermined criteria typically developed by state school boards associations. However, these criteria are usually derived from legally identified duties of school boards and the direct connection between fulfilling legal roles and providing effective governance is not necessarily equivalent.

What is noticeably lacking in the literature is data gathered from the individuals who are actually engaged in the work of school boards, school board trustees themselves. In addition to the lack of the practitioner's perspective, there are few studies that examine the effectiveness of contemporary school boards during this increased accountability era of No Child Left Behind and now the Common Core State Standards.

Many previous studies have investigated effective school board functioning from school superintendents' perspectives, by conducting board self-evaluations, or by identifying districts in which students excel academically and then looking for common practices leading to increased student achievement (Foust, 2009; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; IASB, 2000; IASB, 2008; Land, 2002; Lorentzen, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Shober & Hartney, 2014; Timm, 2012).

Few studies report data gathered directly from active school district trustees. In one past study, Smoley (1999) went to the experts themselves, current school board members, to ask them about the practices that contributed to effective school board functioning using the Critical Incident Technique (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005; Chell, 2004; Flanagan, 1954). Delegardelle (2006), using a mixed methods approach, included interviews of school board members "to understand the perceptions of the board members about their roles and responsibility for student learning and the factors that might be influencing their beliefs" (p. 120).

School board members are in the best position to determine the key practices that contribute to effective governance based upon their personal experiences. This study fills this gap in the literature by surveying experienced contemporary school board members in Montana about the practices and processes they believe contribute most to effective school district governance. Responses by district size were examined to determine if effective practices differed depending upon district size. Obstacles to effective governance were also explored.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the practices and processes that contemporary school board experts agree are necessary to the development of an effectively governing school board in the state of Montana. Identifying these specific practices and processes adds a personal and concrete dimension to the description of effective school boards and provides an opportunity to give guidance to school boards that are striving to improve their governance practices in support of improved outcomes for students.

### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What processes and practices do expert school board members in Montana identify as components of effective school board governance?
2. To what extent do board members agree on these identified practices and processes of effective governance?
3. Do experts' perceptions of effective school board practices differ by district size?
4. What challenges do expert school board members in Montana identify as obstacles to effective school board governance?
5. To what extent do board members agree on these identified obstacles to effective governance?
6. Do experts' perceptions of identified obstacles differ by district size?

### Theoretical Framework

A theory of effective school board governance is not apparent in the literature. Several landmark studies (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; IASB, 2000; Land, 2002; Smoley, 1999) have been conducted resulting in various sets of practices that describe an effective school board but there is little agreement between the studies. As school boards and superintendents adjust and adapt to operating within the environment of educational accountability, the set of skills and practices needed may be very different. The present study produced a set of practices and processes that are aligned with previous research and contribute to an emerging theory of contemporary school board effectiveness. A new model of effective school board governance resulted from the data.

### Conceptual Framework

Aligned school districts are those in which the efforts and activities of those involved are complementary to and aligned with each other. Teachers directly affect student outcomes through effective teaching (proximal factors). Principals and superintendents provide instructional leadership, which in turn affects student outcomes. At the district level, superintendents and school boards work together to provide effective school district governance which creates the climate and conditions necessary to improve teaching and learning (distal factors) (Delegardelle, 2008).

The Conceptual Framework for Effective School Board Governance (Figure 2) illustrates the relationships between the various actors in school systems (students, teachers, principals, superintendents) and outcomes. The present study focused on the role of school boards, and the contributions they make to student outcomes through

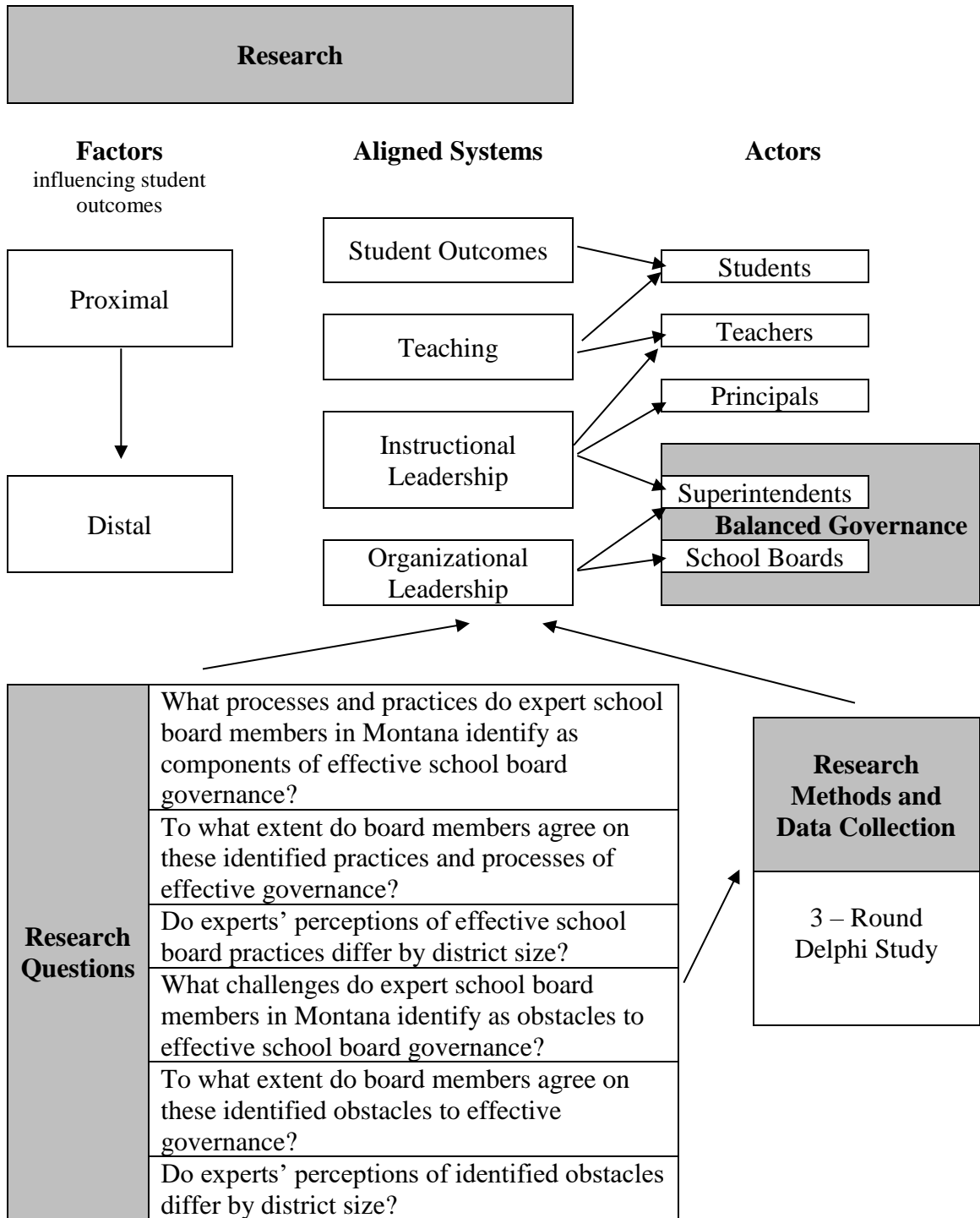


Figure 2. Conceptual framework for effective school board governance study

effective governance practices. Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between research, the research questions, and the research methodology.

### Research Design

This descriptive study builds on previous studies by investigating effective school board behaviors and practices that are identified by active school board members themselves. Using a Delphi methodology, this study surveyed expert school board members in the state of Montana by asking them to describe the behaviors and practices that they considered crucial for effective school board governance. Resulting data formed a framework within which effective school board behaviors can be understood and shared. School board members themselves are the individuals experiencing the results of effective or ineffective school board practices, and are in the best position to discuss effective practices and the obstacles they encounter.

A three-round online and email-based Delphi Study (Fish & Busby, 2005; Gordon, 2015; Hsu & Sandford, 2007) was used to gather data from 23 current expert school board members in Montana. Data was used to construct a description of effective school board governance and to verify levels of agreement between respondents. This objective is aligned with an identified objective of the Delphi technique, “to seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1). This study maintained a participation rate of over 91% while the typical participation rate for a Delphi study ranges between 45% to 75% (Gordon, 2015).

The first round of the Delphi study began with an open-ended questionnaire. The responses to this questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis

techniques and then used to construct a survey instrument for the second round. In the second round, respondents were asked to review the statements generated from the first-round questionnaire and then rank the statements according to levels of agreement using a seven-point Likert scale. Statements were then analyzed quantitatively to detect areas of agreement and disagreement (Hsu & Sanford, 2007). In the third round, Delphi panelists had an opportunity to review their own and other panelists' responses and modify their own responses if desired. The number of rounds necessary was determined by the amount of consensus present after the third round. A pilot study was conducted prior to round one in order to determine the content of the first round questions, the clarity of instructions, and the effectiveness of the survey format.

#### Assumptions

For this study, several assumptions were made about the respondents. The first assumption was that respondents would answer truthfully and accurately. The Delphi technique assures anonymity by the panelists thus preventing panelist status or personal relationships from influencing responses. Anonymity should encourage honest and open responses. Also assumed is that respondents were capable of recognizing and reporting effective school board practices and processes. As expert practitioners, it was expected that panelists were able to draw from their own experiences and to communicate them effectively.

Another assumption was that respondents were motivated to improve their own behavior as individual school board members and to contribute to the collective functioning of the board as a whole. Panelists achieved expert status by participating in

training and other professional activities above and beyond basic participation in local board meetings demonstrating a desire to improve. Also, board members are public servants, and as volunteers they share a concern for contributing their time and attention to their local public schools.

Additionally, it was assumed that the open-ended survey questions triggered thoughtful and reflective behavior of the respondents. Panelists participated voluntarily, and were able to proceed through the survey at their own pace.

### Limitations

Limitations are “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Creswell, 2005, p. 198) that are not within the researcher’s control. This study was limited by certain factors that were primarily due to the study’s purpose, population sample, instrumentation, and data analysis.

This study focused on the self-identifying and reporting of effective governance behaviors by school board members. This purpose may have been limited by an individual’s familiarity with the possible universe of effective school board behaviors and his or her ability to identify and articulate these practices.

The population and sampling technique also imposed some limitations. A purposive sampling technique was appropriate with the Delphi technique as experts in the field are identified and selected based upon selection criteria. For this study, panelists were chosen from the current school board members in the state of Montana who have received the gold or silver level of certification from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA). This award is given annually to current trustees who have

participated in a qualifying number of training sessions or MTSBA sponsored activities. It was possible that the factors that caused respondents to agree to participate created a response pool that did not reflect the total population of expert trustees.

There are both conceptual and mechanical limitations to the online and email based data collection instruments that were used. Conceptually, the survey assumed that the open-ended survey questions would trigger thoughtful and reflective behavior from the respondents. The open-ended nature of the questions caused panelists to apply their own personal definitions of effective governance. This definition would have varied from individual to individual. Mechanically, the responses may have been limited due to constrictions in the amount of text allowed in the online response fields. Also, it was not known whether the email addresses provided by the panelists were frequently monitored by the school board members. Response rates to online surveys can also be low. Gordon (2015) indicated that a response rate for a Delphi study of 40 to 75 percent of the participants can be expected. The response rate for round one was about 26% of the eligible trustees, but continued participation rates between rounds one, two, and three were 91% and 95%.

As data analysis procedures for a qualitative study employ human judgment, human error was a possible limitation. The thematic coding process, using open, axial, and selective coding techniques, required the researcher to make some decisions that could differ from those another researcher might make. This is an acceptable limitation, as qualitative research presumes differing researcher perspectives and opinions and the perspective of the researcher is part of the data analysis.

Gordon (2015) points out weaknesses specific to the Delphi Method. He states that Delphi studies are difficult to perform well because a great deal of attention must be given to the choice of panel participants, the questionnaires must be meticulously prepared; the method requires a great deal of time, and participants with extreme viewpoints must work harder than others (p. 10-11).

### Delimitations

Delimitations refer to boundaries established by the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In this study, participation was delimited to current school board members who achieved gold or silver certification status by the MTSBA. Potentially, responses from non-qualifying board members may differ, affecting generalizability to that population.

As the purpose in using a Delphi technique is to reach consensus while retaining anonymity, the size and sample selection is very important. A Delphi technique sample size is limited, usually ranging between 15 and 35 participants (Gordon, 2015). This study included 23 panelists, or about 26% of the eligible participants. It is possible that the panel members selected may not represent the entire population of expert board members in Montana, thus potentially affecting the generalizability of findings within Montana and to other states.

### Positionality of the Researcher

The author of this study has been a locally elected school board member for one school district in Montana for 24 years covering a span of 30 years. The author is currently serving as board chair and has served as chair for the past 10 years. The author

also serves as a regional delegate to the MTSBA delegate assembly from District 1 and is a gold level member of the Montana School Boards Academy (Marvin Heintz Award).

Additionally, the author served as a special education teacher, an elementary principal and a district level administrator for 29 years, working for 4 different school districts in Missouri and Montana.

### Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of key terms were used:

- Local school board/School board/Board of Trustees- the governmental entity established by the state of Montana and constitutionally charged with the supervision and control of all aspects of the (school) District's operations (Montana Code Annotated, 2015).
- School board member/board member/trustee- one member of a team who governs a school district who is subject to public election and serves a 3-year term (Montana Code Annotated, 2015).
- Expert school board member- a school board member in the state of Montana who has received the gold or silver level of certification from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA).
- Superintendent- the District's executive officer who is responsible for the administration and management of a district school, in accordance with Board policies and directives and state and federal law (MTSBA, 2015).

- Student achievement- a measurement of the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time, typically reported as a score on a standardized test.
- School board/Board effectiveness- the ability of a local school board to work as a cohesive group to positively and effectively lead the district in school governance (Smoley, 1999; Eadie, 2005).
- Governance- the board's legal authority to exercise power and authority over an organization on behalf of the community it serves. The board is authorized to establish policies and make decisions that will affect the life and work of the organization...Governance is a group action. Individual board members do not govern the organization. Rather, meeting as a group confers governing status to the board as a whole (Boardsource, 2010, p. 15).
- Balanced Governance- a model of local governance that balances the authority of a superintendent to lead a school district, with the necessary oversight of a locally engaged and knowledgeable board (Alsbury, 2015, p. 9).
- Delphi method/technique- the Delphi technique is a widely used and accepted method for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise. The technique is designed as a group communication process which aims to achieve a convergence of opinion of a specific real-world issue (Fish and Busby, 2005; Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p.1).

### Significance of the Study

This study resulted in an identification of processes and practices that contemporary school boards in Montana exhibit when they are acting effectively in performing their school district governance duties. This study included data from selected school board members who have received gold or silver levels of certification from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) and can help school boards better understand how to become a more effective board. Study results contribute to an emerging theory of effective school board governance within an environment of public accountability. Additionally, data provides guidance to boards seeking improvement and to organizations that provide training to school board members. It expands the concept of school board effectiveness to include data from practicing school board members themselves, separate from the recommendations and advice of professional educators and legal experts, and is drawn from personal experiences. A new model of effective school board governance has resulted from the data.

### Chapter Summary

Local school boards are charged with one of the most important human endeavors, to govern our schools and educate our children to become successful members of society. During the past two decades, federal and state laws have applied pressure to our schools to improve the quality of education provided and to equip our students with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in our emerging global economy. This study assists local school boards in understanding their roles in improving educational

outcomes, gives guidance to boards seeking to improve, and provides data to support an emerging contemporary theory of school board effectiveness. Effective school board practices and processes were identified using a three round Delphi technique for data collection. The data from this descriptive study provides a rich understanding of how effective school boards function in real-world contexts.

## CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review contains three sections. Section one focuses on the history, authority, and roles of school board governance. Section two examines the characteristics of effective school boards. Section three focuses on measuring school board effectiveness and improvement.

The Political Authority of School Boards

The American school board governance structure has its beginnings in the early 1880's in New England (Kirst, 2008). At that time, citizens governed their community schools through town meetings and later through a school committee structure. "By the late 1800's, hundreds of thousands of local board members were controlling our mostly rural schools" (p. 38).

Elections for school board members actually predate elections for state legislators and governors (Cistone & Iannacone, 1980). Consequently, through the decades, our system of educational governance has developed mostly separately from the partisan political system. Cistone and Iannacone (1980) note "that it was held that education is and ought to be a unique, autonomous, and nonpolitical function of government, and that it should therefore have its own separate and autonomous geographic and administrative structures" (p. 410). They further recognize the belief that schools should not only be

controlled at the local level, but that education should actually be protected from the control of or influence from other governmental officials. “Among the most important structural manifestations of the conceptual separation of politics and education was the system of choosing school board members through nonpartisan, at-large elections held separate from other elections” (Cistone & Iannocone, 1980, p. 410). Enduring through the decades, locally elected non-partisan at-large elections for school board members continue to dominate governance structures of our public schools to date.

As our new nation formed, the United States Constitution did not specifically address educational authority. The Tenth Amendment thus “reserves to the states and to the people those powers not expressly or implicitly conferred on the federal government” (Cistone & Iannaccone, 1980, p. 414). Therefore, education is a responsibility of the states. The states, in turn, typically delegate operational powers to local school boards who are charged with explicit roles and responsibilities.

In Montana, the state constitution describes the state’s responsibility in providing public education in Article X:

**Section 1. EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND DUTIES.**

(1) It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.

(2) The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.

(3) The legislature shall provide a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools. The legislature may provide such other educational institutions, public libraries, and educational programs as it deems desirable. It shall fund and distribute in an equitable manner to the

school districts the state's share of the cost of the basic elementary and secondary school system (The Constitution of the State of Montana, 1972).

The Montana Code Annotated (2015) lists the powers and duties of school district trustees. It details 21 distinct requirements. Additionally, Chapter 55 of the Montana Standards and Procedures Manual (Administrative Rules of Montana, 2013) specifies numerous roles and duties of school board members in Montana including:

Public education in Montana is accomplished by the formation of school districts governed by boards of trustees, who make policy, establish elections, propose levies, and approve expenditures, and who serve at the will of the electorate according to the Montana Constitution, the laws of Montana, and the Administrative Rules of Montana of the Board of Public Education and other pertinent state agencies.

#### 10.55.701 Board of Trustees

- (1) The local board of trustees shall ensure that the school district complies with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- (2) Each school district shall make available to the staff and public:
  - (a) goals that reflect the district's strategic plan of education;
  - (b) sequential curriculum for each program area that aligns to the content standards, specific grade-level learning progressions, and program area standards;
  - (c) – (p) (several specific policies are outlined)
- (3) The local board of trustees shall have valid, written contracts with all regularly employed licensed administrative, supervisory, and teaching personnel.
- (4) The local board of trustees shall have written policies and procedures for regular and periodic evaluation of all regularly employed personnel....
- (5) The local board of trustees shall:
  - (a) establish conditions that contribute to a positive school climate which:
    - (i) keep parents/guardians up to date on students' progress;
    - (ii) engage in a continuous school improvement process; and
  - (b) establish mentoring and induction programs to assist licensed staff in meeting teaching standards as defined in ARM 10.55.701(4)(a) and (b) (p. 18).

However, the federal government does retain some educational powers from the “general welfare” clause of the Constitution of the United States. The Supreme Court has interpreted this to mean that the federal government may “tax and spend for broad social purposes, including, by implication, education” (Cistone & Iannaccone, 1980, p. 415). Today, federal control comes in the form of funds authorized by various acts including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and is provided to the states for allocation based upon federal spending guidelines. Therefore, the American educational system is comprised of three levels of interests: federal, state, and local. While these three levels of governance maintain legal autonomy in their separate powers, duties, and roles they do in fact overlap and occasionally intrude thus putting political pressure on a system that was developed to be primarily independent of politics.

Today, pressure is also mounting from individuals and organizations to privatize public education. What is at stake is the very ideology upon which our public education system has been formed, namely that our schools should be controlled locally with the purpose of providing an education to the community as a whole “that should prevail over competing, partial (and usually private) interests” (Cistone & Iannaccone, 1980, p. 408) and with the purpose of serving the public interest.

Today, the nation’s 14,000 school boards oversee the education of 52 million children, manage over \$660 billion per year, and supervise six million employees (Hess & Meeks, 2010). However, modern public education has been frequently criticized, especially since the *A Nation at Risk Report* (Gardner, 1983). American student achievement has not kept pace internationally (National Conference of State Legislatures,

2016; OECD, 2014) and colleges and businesses are finding our high school graduates to be ill prepared for post-secondary education or for the workplace” (Complete College America, 2012, p. 2). School boards have come under attack as being unable to affect the kinds of changes needed to prepare students for their futures. School boards must operate effectively if they are to survive (Danzberger, 2002; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Shober & Hartney, 2014).

### Political Theories of School Board Governance

Several political theories of school governance have been used to help describe the role of school boards within a democratic structure. The Continuous Participation Theory (Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974) is based upon the idea that higher levels of public participation indicate a more democratic system. As school board elections do not typically have high public participation, “democratic control of school policy is more illusion than reality” (Lutz & Iannaccone. 1978 p. 75).

The Decision-Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 1992) is another theoretical framework used to understand the school board governance structure. This theory examines inputs of a school system (demands and resources) and outputs (programs and policies) of that system. Within this framework, citizens influence school governance through school board elections. In order for this framework to support the concept of a democratic school system, the policy outputs should be highly congruent to the demands of the people (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994).

The Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008) views school boards as important to the democratic process as voters

have opportunities to exercise control over their schools by voting for school board members with like views.

When voters succeed in ousting enough board members, the new board appoints a new superintendent, and policy changes. The two foci of this theory are the replacement of incumbent school board members and superintendent turnover. Thus, it is called the “Dissatisfaction Theory” (Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008, p. 4).

This political theory seems to fit best in describing current school board governance as school elections typically have low voter turnout, with citizens getting involved during times of controversy and dissatisfaction with the current administration or school policies. Satisfied citizens are more likely to be content with the status quo and stay home on voting day. Low turnover of school board members and longevity of the superintendent are two traits that are associated with higher achieving school districts and more effective school boards (Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008).

Although not a governance theory per se, the Balanced Governance model (Alsbury, 2015) describes a type of school board governance that is practiced by contemporary effective school boards.

Balanced Governance is not a single prescribed model or program, but describes a school governance approach that supports and promotes “balance”- discouraging micromanaging on one end of the governance continuum and a disengaged, rubber-stamping board on the other (p. 9).

A disengaged board takes a “hands off” approach, leaving the planning and operation of the district to the superintendent. “Specifically, the board members and superintendent believe that the board is most effective when it avoids meddling in the processes or means of the district and delegates all responsibility to the superintendent” (Alsbury, 2015, p. 10). Conversely, a micromanaging board entangles themselves with

the day-to-day district operations and “believes that its members have the right or obligation to direct every aspect of the school district...” (p. 10). Alsbury asserts that the truly effective school board operates from a position of informed oversight, specifically:

1. Setting and monitoring high end goals for student learning and understanding the means necessary to reach those goals.
2. Using detailed knowledge of learning and teaching to better interact with community stakeholders, and
3. Crafting targeted policy language that intelligently oversees formative progress on adopted processes and program (p. 10).

Each individual board may look different, but will find the balance that is most effective for their own community, providing support and leadership through a Balanced Governance approach.

### Characteristics of an Effective School Board

What constitutes school board effectiveness has changed considerably from early colonial days to the present. Early school boards were largely supervisory in nature, but contemporary school boards are now charged with effective managerial oversight as well as improving student outcomes defined mostly in terms of academic achievement.

Thirty years ago, most school boards did not pay much attention to student achievement, and it was not really expected that they would. Performance of students was the responsibility of the superintendent and staff, and students were routinely tested and placed in programs (sometimes called tracks) that would enable them to be successful. School boards were oversight bodies whose role was to hire the superintendent and ensure that the management of the school district was efficient and effective (Gimbaling, Smith, & Villani, 2000, p. 5).

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has provided information about school board effectiveness for many years. In 2011, the NSBA’s Center for Public

Education reported that high achieving districts behave differently than do low achieving districts. They described eight characteristics of school boards in these high performing districts:

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.
2. Effective school boards 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. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
4. Effective school boards are 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. Effective school boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.
7. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts (NSBA, 2011).

These eight characteristics were the result of a compilation of research findings, although admittedly relatively “few studies focused on the practices and effectiveness of elected or appointed school boards” (NSBA, 2011, p. 1). Most research was qualitative. “Cited practices and approaches were taken from interviews, surveys, observations and

qualitative measures rather than from quantitative studies” (p. 2). In general, their findings came from meta-analyses of educational research focused on school board practices along with those of other district leaders; case studies of high achieving districts and the school board leadership in these districts; and studies in which comparable districts differed significantly on measurable student outcomes like annual state assessments. “In the last 20 years, increasingly rigorous graduation requirements and performance standards have turned the spotlight on accountability and those who lead” (Gemberling et al., 2000, p. 6).

Recently revised, the NSBA revised their framework and currently promotes five characteristics of effective school boards. Effective boards attend to:

1. Vision - Establish a clear vision with high expectations for quality teaching and learning that supports strong student outcomes. They establish clear and specific goals to move districts forward.
2. Accountability- High academic standards, transparency, and accountability undergird a world-class education. True accountability depends on open decision making, community engagement and support, and receptivity to new ideas and constructive criticism.
3. Policy - Policy is how a board sustainably exercises power to serve students. Through policy, school boards establish a set of cohesive guidelines to transform vision into reality.
4. Community Leadership - Through public advocacy and community engagement, school boards share their concerns and actions with the public.
5. Board/Superintendent Relationships - Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust (NSBA, 2015).

In one of the most comprehensive studies of school board effectiveness, Smoley (1999) interviewed 45 school board members in Delaware using a critical incident

technique methodology. These interviews were reviewed and analyzed for common themes. Smoley (1999) identified these six areas in his model of school board effectiveness:

1. Board decisions are rational, informed by data, and full discussion.
2. Boards exhibit the characteristics of well-functioning groups: a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values.
3. Board members exercise their authority discreetly and stand firm when they must.
4. Boards connect with the community informally, as well as by an established formal process.
5. Boards work toward self-improvement, assist new members, reflect on their responsibilities and seek assistance when they need it.
6. Board actions are strategic, matching long-term plans with immediate actions, focusing on results and adjusting to new situations.

More now than ever, school boards are being held accountable for student achievement in their districts. It is difficult to ascertain, however, how school boards can best improve student learning outcomes. “Isolating what makes an effective board – that is, one that impacts student achievement- involves evaluating virtually all functions of a board, from internal governance and policy formation to communication with teachers, building administrators, and the public”, (NSBA, 2001, p.1).

NSBA reported three types of studies used to describe effective school boards:

1. Meta-analyses of education research, with a focus on the practices of boards, superintendents, and other school leaders;
2. Case studies of high-achieving districts, with a focus on the evolving role of school boards; and

3. Studies that compare school board practices in districts with similar demographics but substantially different student outcomes as reflected by annual assessments and other factors (NSBA, 2011, p. 2).

#### Meta-analyses Related to School Board Effectiveness

Marzano and Waters (2009) conducted a thorough meta-analysis of research conducted in the United States between 1970 and 2005 in which they found a small yet significant relationship between school district leadership and student achievement. Altogether, 4,500 non-repeating titles were retrieved from four major data bases. About 200 met the research parameters, and of those, 27 met the specific criteria. Those 27 studies involved 2,714 school districts, 4,500 ratings of superintendent leadership, and 3.4 million student achievement scores. Of their two major findings, a significant correlation ( $p < .05$ ) of .24 was found between district leadership and student achievement. The specific leadership behaviors that were associated with student achievement were:

1. Ensuring collaborative goal setting,
2. Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction,
3. Creating board alignment with and support of district goals,
4. Monitoring achievement and instructional goals, and
5. Allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction (p. 6).

Two additional findings included a significant relationship between average student achievement and building autonomy, and between superintendent tenure and student academic achievement.

From these findings, Marzano and Waters (2009) recommended two courses of action for school districts. First, nonnegotiable district goals should be established for

student achievement and for effective instruction, which is a necessary condition for student achievement. Second, the nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction should be established through a collaborative goal-setting process that involves key stake-holders. “The board should be fully behind the nonnegotiable goals, and all available resources in the district should be used to support these nonnegotiable goals” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 22). Thus, these findings support a school board connection to student achievement in so much as school boards should collaboratively establish nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and effective instruction as well as allocate resources to support those goals and hold district administrators accountable for progress toward the goals.

#### Case Studies of High Achieving Districts

Landmark research was conducted by the Learning First Alliance (*Beyond Islands of Excellence*) that focused on five school districts that were successful in achieving high student test scores despite moderate to high poverty (Togneri & Anderson, 2006).

Researchers conducted over 200 individual interviews, 15 school visits, and 60 focus groups and found seven strategies that emerged as essential to school improvement:

1. Districts had the courage to acknowledge poor performance and the will to seek solutions.
2. Districts put in place a system wide approach to improving instruction- one that articulated curricular content and provided instructional supports.
3. Districts instilled visions that focused on student learning and guided instructional improvement.
4. Districts made decisions based on data, not instinct.

5. Districts adopted new approaches to professional development that involved a coherent and district-organized set of strategies to improve instruction.
6. Districts redefined leadership roles.
7. Districts committed to sustaining reform over the long haul (p. 4-5).

School boards were studied to discern commonalities in their policies and practices that promoted district-wide school improvement.

In many districts, it was the courage of the school board that jump-started reform efforts. Yet the boards did not simply galvanize change; they followed through by promulgating policies that supported instructional improvement...In most districts, the boards held the superintendent and staff accountable for progress but did not engage in the daily administration of the reform effort (p. 7).

Findings specific to school board practices included:

1. School boards were policy and accountability driven.
2. School boards were driven by the goal to improve student achievement.
3. Boards placed importance on speaking publicly with one voice.
4. Boards strove for consensus and collegiality.
5. Boards held a solution-seeking orientation that set a tone that permeated their districts (p. 33).

In these five districts, school boards were significant forces in setting policy to improve district instructional practices and consequently student achievement.

Another major multiple case study of ten districts in five states examined the effect of quality governance on student achievement and reported results in *Getting There from Here* (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997). Researchers sought to identify the relationship between the school board and superintendent as well as the characteristics of effective board leadership. The goal of the research was to “identify

outstanding examples of school board-superintendent teamwork and, from them, develop recommendations that could help every school board and superintendent in America become an effective team working together for higher student achievement” (p. 2).

Researchers conducted individual interviews with more than 130 educators, parents, and community members in ten districts in the states of Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and Texas. Findings included 41 recommendations divided among six major strategies. The six major strategies were:

1. Build a foundation for teamwork,
2. Get the best and most capable team players,
3. Ensure that the team players know their roles and responsibilities,
4. Get into team training,
5. Adopt good team strategies,
6. Convince others to support the team (p. 4-8).

Additionally, several of the 41 recommendations specifically addressed the practices and characteristics of effective school boards. Effective boards:

1. Establish a long-term vision and direction for the district.
2. Hold the superintendent accountable for effective administration.
3. Focus school board meetings on policy, action required by law and recognition of outstanding students, staff, and citizens.
4. Recognize that individual board members have no authority outside the board meeting.
5. Adopt a budget that supports the district’s goals: delegate budget development and complete administration of the budget to the superintendent.

6. Delegate all personnel matters to the superintendent- recruitment, supervision, development, evaluation, promotion and when needed, dismissal.
7. Are strong advocates for children, based on knowledge of student achievement and needs (p. 6).

### Comparative Studies

The third method used to investigate effective school board practices include studies in which districts that are demographically similar display marked differences in student outcomes (student achievement). The most notable studies using this method are the Lighthouse Studies conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) (Delagardelle, 2008). The IASB participated in the development and funding of three Lighthouse studies known collectively as the Lighthouse Inquiry (figure 3). Lighthouse I compared matched school districts in Georgia in order to examine the role of boards and how they related to student achievement and to contrast the knowledge, beliefs, and actions of school board members from high- and low-performing districts (IASB, 2000). The Lighthouse II study expanded the project using an action research approach and further tested this concept in selected pilot districts in the state of Iowa. The Lighthouse III study is a multi-state project that hopes to test the materials and strategies used to improve district and student achievement in selected states (Caruso, Logee, & Sessler, 2015).

The first Lighthouse study was conducted from 1998 to 2000 in the state of Georgia. Three high achieving school districts were matched with three low achieving districts based upon similar demographics. This project studied the differences between

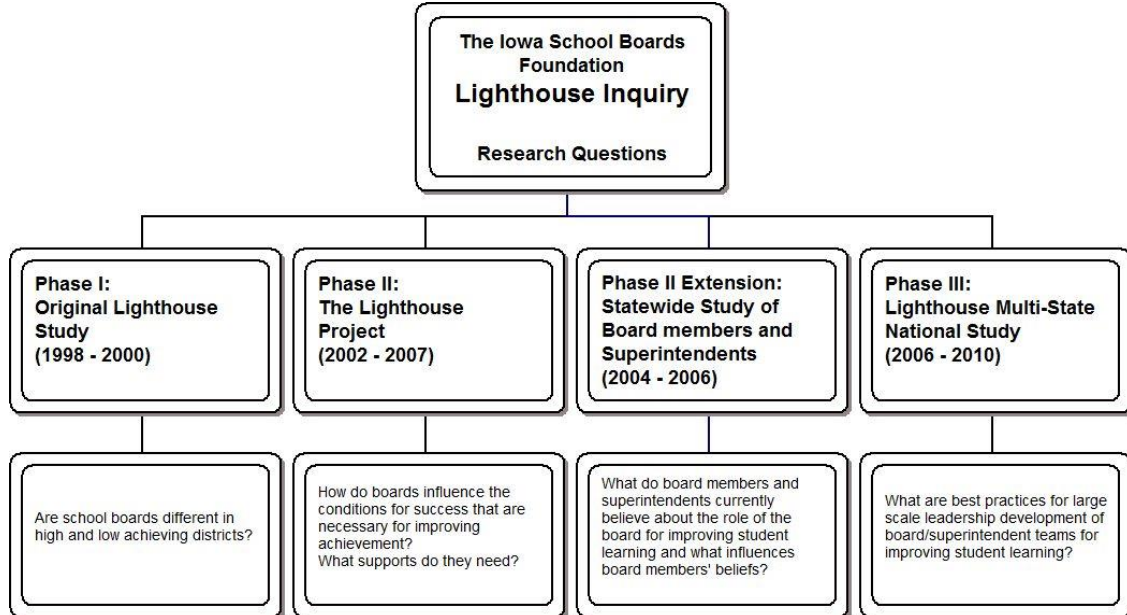


Figure 3. Lighthouse Inquiry research phases and questions (IASB, 2008)

the districts that were consistently described by board members, superintendents, and teachers. The differences fell into two categories: the districts' working culture and what adults in the system believed could be expected in terms of student learning. Seven conditions for school renewal were revealed:

1. Emphasis on building a human organizational system,
2. Ability to create and sustain initiatives,
3. Supportive workplace for staff,
4. Staff development,
5. Support for school sites through data and information,
6. Community involvement, and
7. Integrated leadership (Rice, Delagardelle, Buckton, Jons, Lueders, Vens, Joyce, Wolf, and Weathersby, 2001, p. 7).

In the Lighthouse II project, the researchers worked with boards and superintendents to strengthen their relationships and then measured whether that produced significant positive changes in beliefs, conditions, and ultimately student learning. Boards in these districts consistently played five roles. They set clear expectations; created conditions for success; held themselves and the district staff accountable for meeting the expectations; built collective will of the staff and community to improve student learning; and learned together as a team (LaMonte & Delagardelle, 2009).

The third Lighthouse project is ongoing. This multistate project is testing the identified materials and strategies discovered in the previous two studies with the goal of developing a well-tested approach to board leadership. Caruso, Logee, and Sessler, (2015) shared the Lighthouse III work that is taking place in Connecticut and Oregon in the recent book, *Improving School Board Governance* (Alsbury & Gore, 2015).

In a 2002 study, the Council of Great City Schools investigated characteristics of “fast-moving” urban districts and compared them with similar “slower-moving” districts. These fast-moving districts raised student achievement faster than state averages and narrowed achievement gaps for minorities. Some of their findings pointed to differences in school board actions: school boards focused on policy level decisions that supported improved student achievement and school boards and superintendents held a shared vision regarding the goals and strategies for reform (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002).

As a result of information taken from these meta-analyses, case studies, and comparison of similar districts with differing student outcomes, the NSBA concluded that

school boards behave differently in districts with higher student outcomes. These school board actions, strategies, and processes have been described and board self-evaluation questionnaires have been developed to help boards compare their own behaviors with those of high achieving districts. Boards can then develop plans to improve their own practices in ways that will positively impact student achievement.

### Quantitative Studies

Two studies examined the relationship between board member survey responses and student achievement data. Ford and Ihrke (2015) surveyed school board members in Wisconsin about their adherence to the NSBA's Eight Key Works concepts and then compared results to state student achievement scores. They found that boards can positively impact student achievement by:

1. Keeping its strategic plan up-to-date,
2. Adjusting academic standards and assessment policies in response to student needs,
3. Being open and honest with one another,
4. Governing in partnership with their superintendent,
5. Proactively and regularly engaging with the public, and
6. Engaging in formal board development.

Lorentzen (2013) similarly compared survey responses of school board trustees in Montana on the Washington Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) to state student achievement scores. His results detailed seven elements of effective boardmanship. An effective board:

1. Holds the school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations by evaluating the superintendent on clear and focused expectations.
2. Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations.
3. Commits to a continuous improvement plan regarding student achievement at each school and throughout the district.
4. Provides responsible school district governance by conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.
5. Engages the local community and represents the values and expectations the community holds for its schools.
6. Models responsible school district governance by working as an effective and collaborative team.
7. Creates districtwide conditions for student and staff success (Lorentzen & McCaw, 2015, p. 56-57).

The variety and scope of the characteristics of effective school boards is depicted in Table 2.1. Although some themes are evident, it is clear that agreement about specific effective school board characteristics and practices is lacking.

### Measuring School Board Effectiveness

Public school boards that operate in an environment of continuous improvement conduct annual board self-assessments (NSBA, 2015). These self-assessments can take a variety of formats, ranging from annual informal discussions to the use of research validated questionnaires. The most widely used survey instrument, until recently, has been Eugene Smoley's Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire based upon his "School

Table 2.1. Components of effective school board governance.

	Iowa Lighthouse (2003)	Marzano (2009)	Smoley (1999)	WSSDA (2010)	Land (2002)	Goodman & Zimmerman (1997)	NSBA Center for Public Education (2011)	Eadie (2005)	Ware & Griffin (2009)	Texas Association of School Boards (2011)	Togneri & Anderson (2006)	Snipes et al. (2002)	Ford & Ihrke (2005)	Lorentzen, (2013)
Focus on student achievement	X	X			X	X			X		X	X		
Allocate resources to needs		X							X					
Monitor return on investments									X					
Use data							X		X					
Engage communities				X					X	X			X	X
Have strong shared beliefs and values							X							
Accountability driven	X			X	X		X				X			
Collaborates with staff and community							X	X						
Align and sustain resources to district goals		X				X	X					X		
Lead as a united team with superintendent					X		X	X					X	X
Take part in team development and training	X				X		X	X					X	
Commit to a vision of high expectations	X			X			X							X
Creating a vision						X				X				
Setting goals		X								X				
Strives for consensus											X			
Solution seeking orientation											X			
Monitoring progress and taking corrective action		X			X									
Ensure conditions for success are present	X			X										X
Effective policymaking					X	X								
Leadership and budgeting					X									

Table 1 continued

	Iowa Lighthouse (2003)	Marzano (2009)	Smoley (1999)	WSSDA (2010)	Land (2002)	Goodman & Zimmerman (1997)	NSBA Center for Public Education (2011)	Eadie (2005)	Ware & Griffin (2009)	Texas Association of School Boards (2011)	Togneri & Anderson (2006)	Snipes et al, (2002)	Ford & Ihrke (2005)	Lorentzen, (2013)
Focus on governance			X	X										X
Lead innovation and change			X											
Make rational decisions			X											
Function as a group/ Open communications			X			X					X		X	
Exercise authority			X											
Act strategically/ Strategic Planning			X										X	X
Follows clearly defined procedures and schedules										X				
Creates policies to support instructional reform											X		X	
Speak publicly with one voice														
Hold Superintendent accountable						X								X
Delegate personnel matters to the superintendent						X								

Board Effectiveness Model” (Smoley, 1999). This model was promoted by the National School Boards Association for many years. It was replaced by NSBA’s Eight Characteristics model in 2011 and has since been revised to include five major components rather than eight (NSBA, 2015). Smoley refined and adapted a survey developed by Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1996) for the purpose of improving the performance of college, university and other non-profit organization boards of trustees. Other surveys and questionnaires are available for school board use that have been developed and adapted from fields outside of education.

Smoley’s questionnaire was developed using a critical incident method, “which asked school board members to describe and discuss in detail situations in which they were effective as school board members and as a school board...These interview notes were reviewed in detail” (p. 124). Six common themes were identified and a model of school board effectiveness was constructed. In the past fifteen years, this instrument has been available and accepted as the school board self-evaluation instrument of choice. However, this model and questionnaire was developed before *No Child Left Behind* was enacted and before the urgent demands of constantly improving student achievement in order to meet the requirements of adequate yearly progress. Most certainly, adoption of the *Common Core State Standards* by a majority of the states continues to put pressure on schools, districts, and school boards to ensure that our graduates are ready for college, career and citizenship. Smoley’s School Board Effectiveness Model (Smoley, 1999) and coordinating self-assessment instrument has been recently joined by a handful of new self-assessment tools.

The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) published *Effective Board Practices: An Inventory for School Boards* in 2011. School boards, in conjunction with their superintendents, complete the inventory and compare their responses with desired board behaviors. Survey items are organized into the categories of planning and governance, oversight of management, and advocacy. These three areas are further defined by ten subcategories. Boards and the superintendent are instructed to complete the inventory independently, then meet to analyze and discuss the results and to determine common areas identified for improvement. Improvement plans can then be developed monitored and evaluated for progress.

The Washington State School Directors' Association has developed the *Board Self-Assessment Survey* and made it available for use by school boards in Washington State in an online format. "The online tool offers a straightforward way for each board member to assess his or her board's performance based on governance standards and best practices" (Washington State School Directors' Association, 2015). The five standards for governance included in the tool are:

Standard 1: Provide responsible school district governance

Standard 2: Set and communicate high expectation for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations.

Standard 3: Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success.

Standard 4: Hold the school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations.

Standard 5: Engage local community and represent the values and expectation they hold for their schools. (WSSDA, 2015)

These standards were adopted by the WSSDA Board of Directors in 2009 and were developed by the WSSDA Board Standards Task Force with input solicited from internal and external stakeholders, school directors (board members), superintendents, training consultants and other education groups.

### Summary

School boards have governed our American public schools for hundreds of years, although their responsibilities and roles have changed to reflect the times. New pressures for improved performance of our students in the past few decades have caused school boards to examine their own effectiveness and their role in a continuous school improvement environment. Although research shows that school board practices and behaviors matter, what has been viewed as effective has been defined largely by scores on tests of student achievement. The number of studies conducted demonstrates efforts to describe effective school boards in order to optimally impact student outcomes. However, consensus among the studies is lacking.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Chapter three describes the research design used in this descriptive Delphi study investigating effective school board practices and processes through a series of structured communications with a panel of experts until consensus is reached. This chapter includes the following sections: purpose statement, research questions, research design, a description of the population and sample, selection of the panel of experts, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and the limitations of the study.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify and describe the practices and processes that school board experts agree are necessary to the operation of an effectively governing school board in the state of Montana. Identifying these specific practices and processes adds a personal and concrete dimension to the description of effective school boards and provides an opportunity to give guidance to school boards that are striving to improve their governance practices in support of improved outcomes for students.

### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What processes and practices do expert school board members in Montana identify as components of effective school board governance?
2. To what extent do board members agree on these identified practices and processes of effective governance?
3. Do experts' perceptions of effective school board practices differ by district size?
4. What challenges do expert school board members in Montana identify as obstacles to effective school board governance?
5. To what extent do board members agree on these identified obstacles to effective governance?
6. Do experts' perceptions of identified obstacles differ by district size?

### Research Design

This descriptive study builds on previous studies by investigating effective school board behaviors and practices that were identified by active school board members themselves. Using a Delphi methodology, this study surveyed experienced school board members in the state of Montana by asking them to describe effective school board behaviors and practices that are components of effective school board governance. Resulting data formed a framework within which effective school board behaviors can be understood and shared. Additionally, panelists were asked to identify the obstacles to

effective governance that they had encountered. Response differences from different sized school districts were also explored. School board members themselves are the individuals experiencing the results of effective or ineffective school board practices, but they are rarely directly consulted about how they are experiencing that role.

### Delphi Study

A three-round online and email-based Delphi study (Fish & Busby, 2005; Gordon, 2015; Hsu & Sandford, 2007) was used to gather data from expert current school board members in Montana. Resulting data was used to construct a description of effective school board governance and to verify levels of agreement between respondents. This objective is aligned with an identified objective of the Delphi technique, “to seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1).

The three-round Delphi study began with a pilot study of the Round 1 survey instrument. Eleven participants provided feedback about the survey presentation format using SurveyMonkey and the clarity of the questions asked. After the pilot study, rounds 1, 2, and 3 were administered to the expert panelists over an 11-week period. Table 3.1 displays the timeline used for this three-round study.

The first round of the Delphi study began with a questionnaire consisting of a subject consent form (Appendix A), two open-ended research questions, and nine demographic questions. The general procedure for qualitative data analysis described by Creswell was used to analyze and interpret data collected during the first round.

Table 3.1. Timeline of Delphi study data collection

	Pilot Study	Round 1	Round2	Round3
Start Date	12/15/2016	1/9/2017	2/6/2017	3/9/2017
End Date	12/20/2016	1/26/2017	2/21/2017	3/23/2017
Number of Participants	16 sent 11 returned	27 invited 23 participated	23 sent 21 returned	21 sent 20 returned
Instrument	Round 1 test on SurveyMonkey	Round 1 survey on SurveyMonkey	Round 2 survey on SurveyMonkey	Round 3 survey through email
Response Rate	8 completed 3 partial 69%	23 completed 85%	21 completed 91%	20 completed 95%
Data Collected	2 open-ended research questions; 9 demographic questions	2 open-ended research questions; 9 demographic questions	7-point Likert scale scoring of 95 statements	36 consensus statements from Round 2; panelists presented with descriptive statistics by individual and group; 7 panelists revised ratings; panelists made comments.
Data Analysis	Review of response contents and comments of participants for clarity of format and questions	Qualitative coding of narrative responses; 95 statements resulted; and statistical analysis of demographic items	Descriptive statistics of 95 statements; 36 met consensus criteria	Descriptive statistics on Round 3 revisions; 19 statements met highly agreed with criteria, comments were compiled

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
2. Read through all the data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on the overall meaning.
3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process using open, axial, and selective coding.
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. These themes often appear as the major findings.
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.
6. Make an interpretation or meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 194-200).

Using this process, expert responses from the open-ended comments were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques. Results from this analysis were then used to construct statements that represented experts' perceptions of effective school board practices. Similar statements were grouped together and labeled with category names. Twelve categories, or themes, resulted for effective practice statements and 12 themes resulted for statements of obstacles. After analysis of 21 panelists' comments, no new categories emerged and statements derived from additional panelists were repetitions of the comments of other panelists. This indicated that a point of saturation had been reached and that adding more panelists to the study would not be likely to produce new responses. Data were also analyzed by district size to determine if any data differences between larger and smaller school districts existed.

For the second round of the Delphi study, respondents were asked to review the statements created by the researcher from the first-round survey and then asked to rate those statements by levels of agreement using a seven-point Likert scale. Statements

were analyzed quantitatively to detect areas of agreement and disagreement (Hsu & Sanford, 2007). In the third round, Delphi panelists had an opportunity to review their own and other panelists' responses and to modify their own responses if desired. The number of rounds necessary was determined by the amount of consensus present.

### Population and Sample

“The population includes all those of interest to the sponsor – the group from whom a sample will be selected” (Alreck and Settle, 2004, p. 42). In this study, the population of interest consisted of all expert school board members in the state of Montana. In 2016, there were about 1,400 total school board members in Montana, of which a subset could be considered experts (Montana Public Education Center, 2016). “In a research study, a sample is a group of individuals, items, or events that represent the characteristics of the larger group from which the sample is drawn” (Gay, Mills, & Arasian, 2009, p. 124). The purposive sample for this study was selected from a pool of experienced school board members who have received the gold or silver level of recognition from the Montana State School Boards Association (MTSBA) in their School Board Academy program.

Hours are accrued in the School Board Academy through attendance in MTSBA sponsored training sessions, conference attendance, attendance in the MTSBA Delegate Assembly, or participation in policy review, strategic planning or designated webinars. Credits may also be obtained for attendance at other approved educational professional activities. After receiving initial certification gained with the first 12 hours of training, three career benchmark training levels are recognized:

Bronze Level – earned for two consecutive years as a certified trustee or 24 hours attained in less than two years, whichever occurs first.

Silver Level – earned for four consecutive years as a certified trustee or 48 hours attained in less than four years, whichever occurs first.

Gold Level (at which point the trustee is provided the Marvin Heintz Award) – earned for eight consecutive years as a certified trustee or 96 hours attained in less than eight years, whichever occurs first.

At the Montana Conference of Educational Leadership (MCEL) each year, MTSBA recognizes and celebrates the leadership of locally-elected, volunteer school board trustees. MTSBA awards the Marvin Heintz Award annually to those trustees who have reached the pinnacle of trustee training and leadership by amassing 96 hours in the School Board Academy trustee certification program. Trustees must maintain their certification with a minimum of 12 hours of training each year (MTSBA, 2015 (a)).

During 2015, twelve school board members received the Marvin Heintz award, joining all other trustees who have previously received the award. In 2016, nineteen trustees were added to the group.

### Selection of the Panel of Experts

#### Criteria for Selection

The criteria used for selection of the Delphi panel experts are one of the most important elements of a Delphi study. “Panel selection is a critical element in the Delphi method...panelists are chosen for their expertise rather than through a random process” (Fish and Busby, 2005, p. 242). Gordon (2015) reports that “the results of a Delphi depend on the knowledge and cooperation of the panelists (and) it is essential to include persons who are likely to contribute valuable ideas” (p. 7).

Also, the criteria used for determination of expert status are an important component of a Delphi study (Baker & Lovell, 2006; Hsu and Sandford, 2009). In the

current study, interested and qualified panelists responded to an invitational email sent from the MTSBA to all 102 trustees who had achieved the gold and silver certification levels in the Montana School Board Academy (Appendices B and C). The researcher then sent information about the Delphi study to 27 interested trustees (Appendix D) and a link to the Round 1 survey was sent directly to these participants from the researcher using the SurveyMonkey platform (Appendix E).

An equal representation from five district size classifications was sought. There are four class sizes of school districts that are grouped by high school district size: AA, A, B, and C. A fifth category of Independent Elementary districts includes elementary school districts without high schools. A representation from each of the five classes provided expertise from a broad representation of districts, thus reflecting the varied composition of the expert trustee pool. Differences in survey responses from the five class sizes were analyzed.

### Size of Sample

The sample size of a Delphi study is variable and based upon the unique characteristics of the population represented (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). The number of experts used in a Delphi Study is “generally determined by the number required to constitute a representative pooling of judgments and the information processing capability of the research team” (Ludwig, 1994, p. 52). If the population is homogeneous, Delbecq, Van de Ven and Gustafson (1975) suggest that ten to fifteen subjects could be sufficient. Hsu and Sandford (2007) report that most Delphi studies have used between 15 and 20 expert respondents while Gordon (1994) suggests most

panels consist of 15 to 35 people. For purposes of this study, all 102 trustees who had earned the gold or silver levels of recognition were invited to participate. Positive responses were received from 27 trustees with 23 actually participating. This number falls within the desirable range and typical size of Delphi expert panels.

### Data Collection Procedures

The Delphi technique is one of the most extensively used research methods reported in the literature (Gordon, 2015; Thompson, 2009). Although several variations exist, key features are held in common. Rowe and Wright (1999) identify four key features: anonymity of participants, iteration, controlled feedback, and statistical aggregation of group responses. The term ‘Classical Delphi’ is used to describe the method that adheres to the characteristics of the original Delphi developed by the RAND Corporation in the 1950’s and summarized by Rowe and Wright in 1999 (Skulmonski, Hartman, Krahn, 2007, p. 3). The Classical Delphi process consists of the following steps:

1. Develop the research question
2. Design the research
3. Select the research sample
4. Develop Delphi round one questionnaire
5. Conduct Delphi pilot study if necessary
6. Release and analyze round one questionnaire
7. Develop round two questionnaire
8. Release and analyze round two questionnaire

9. Develop round three questionnaire
10. Release and analyze round three questionnaire
11. Verify, generalize, and document research results. (Skulmonski, Hartman, and Krahn, 2007, p. 3-5)

This study used a three-round Classical Delphi process using an online platform on the SurveyMonkey website (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>) for rounds 1 and 2. Round 3 was emailed based. Hsu and Sandford (2007) pointed out that in the first round, the Delphi technique typically begins with an open-ended question. In the current study, the round 1 questionnaire contained nine questions to obtain demographic data from the panelists as well two open-ended questions developed by the researcher and a subject consent form (Appendix F).

A pilot study was conducted before the round 1 survey was distributed to the expert panelists. Eleven school board members participated in the round 1 pilot and their responses and comments were used to refine the content of the research questions, the survey directions, and the online process used in the final round 1 survey. Participants in the pilot study were known to the researcher and were conveniently accessible. All were trustees currently serving on school boards in two Class A school districts in Montana. They had various levels of experience and training.

The two open-ended questions contained in the round 1 survey were: What practices or processes do you believe school boards should use to provide effective school district governance? and; What are the obstacles that interfere with a school board's ability to govern effectively. Both reminder and thank-you emails were sent to

the 23 expert panelists who participated in the Round 1 survey from the researcher through the SurveyMonkey platform (Appendices G and H).

After receipt of the round 1 responses, the data were analyzed using an inductive open coding process. Responses were summarized and similar statements were grouped together. Then, labels were created for like statements using axial coding (Saldana, 2009, P. 159). New responses were either added to existing categories or new categories were created when existing labels did not adequately fit the new response. There were 50 effective practice statements in all that were grouped into 12 categories, or themes. Twelve additional categories were developed for the obstacles statements which contained 45 total statements. In this manner, a list of effective school board practices was constructed to be used as the content for the round 2 survey. A second list was created for the obstacles statements. The researcher sent an individualized email to all Round 1 panelists introducing them to the round 2 survey process and content (Appendix I).

Hsu and Sandford (2007) reviewed the process for second round questionnaires. “In the second round, each Delphi participant receives a second questionnaire and is asked to review the items summarized by the investigators based on the information provided in the first round” (p. 2). In the current study, the round 2 questionnaire was constructed using the statements and categories developed from round 1 (Appendix J). Respondents were asked to rate the items in terms of agreement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). An example of a round 2 question is provided in Table

3.2. Again, reminder and thank-you emails were sent to the 21 panelists from the researcher through the SurveyMonkey platform (Appendices K and L).

Table 3.2. Example of a round two question

In Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to how effective you believe each practice/process is. Similar statements are presented together.

You will rate each item on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 = Highly Effective and 1 = Highly Ineffective; 7= highly effective; 6= effective; 5= slightly effective; 4= neither effective nor ineffective; 3=slightly ineffective; 2=ineffective; 1= highly ineffective

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations							
Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated							
Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism							

Round three of this Delphi study shared round 2 results with panelists using a personalized email format. The researcher sent each panelist an individualized email introducing round 3 which provided directions for completion (Appendix M). In round 3, panelists were presented with the descriptive statistics for round 2 in a format that compared their own ratings with those of the whole group (Appendix N). Panelists were then asked to consider the results and to modify their responses if desired. They were also asked to make additional comments in order to explain any extreme responses or reasons for keeping or changing a previous rating. Hsu and Sandford (2007) described the process by reporting that “in the third round, each Delphi panelist receives a questionnaire that includes the items and ratings summarized by the investigator in the

previous round and are asked to revise his/her judgments...” (p. 3). An example of a round 3 question is provided in Table 3.3. Reminder and thank-you emails were sent to panelists during round 3 directly from the researcher through individualized emails (Appendices O and P).

Table 3.3. Example of a round 3 question

For this Delphi Round 3 questionnaire, please reconsider your responses to each item on the Delphi Round 2 Questionnaire in light of the new information presented.

The new information summarizes the responses of all the other panelists to each item and also includes the median rating and the interquartile range.

The median is the point below which 50 percent of the responses fell  
 The interquartile range contains the middle 50 percent of the responses. Its size gives an indication of how much the responses differed from each other.

<b>Statements meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	<b>Your Score</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Low score</b>	<b>High score</b>	<b>IQR</b>	<b>% Agree 6 or 7</b>	<b>Your New Score</b>
1.1 Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations	6	6	6.33	0.58	5	7	1	95.24	
1.2 Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated	6	6	6.24	0.94	3	7	1	90.48	
1.3 Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism	5	6	6.10	1.00	3	7	1	85.72	

Hsu and Sandford (2007) relay that “the number of Delphi iterations depends largely on the degree on consensus sought by the investigators” (p. 3). The current study

saw very few changes in responses or the descriptive statistics derived from rounds 2 and 3 indicating that there was no need for any additional rounds. Consensus statements were compiled after panelists made any changes in round 3.

### Data Analysis

In the Delphi data collection process, data analysis can involve both qualitative and quantitative data (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). In this study, qualitative coding methods were used during round 1 and quantitative descriptive statistics were conducted on the rounds 2 and 3 data.

Investigators need to deal with qualitative data if classic Delphi studies, which use open-ended question to solicit subjects' opinions, are conducted in the initial iteration. Subsequent iterations are to identify and hopefully achieve the desired level on consensus as well as any changes of judgments among panelists. The major statistics used in Delphi studies are measures of central tendency (means, median, and mode) and level of dispersion (standard deviation and inter-quartile range) in order to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents. (Hsu and Sandford, 2007, p. 4)

Round one data analysis included open coding as well as axial and selective coding and memoing of the panelists' narrative responses.

In open coding, the researcher forms categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information. Within each category, the investigator finds several properties or subcategories, and looks for data to dimensionalize...In axial coding...the researcher identifies a central phenomenon or category about the phenomenon.... In selective coding, propositions or hypotheses may be specified that state predicted relationships. ...the theory emerges with help from the process of memoing, a process in which the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory... (p. 67)

The categories developed during open and axial coding of round 1 responses were used in the round 2 questionnaire and the specific statements in each category formed the

content of the round 2 survey. Descriptive statistics calculated from the round 2 data were presented to the panelists in the round 3 survey for reconsideration.

For rounds 2 and 3, the Delphi data were analyzed using medians, means, standard deviations, score ranges, and interquartile ranges. Hsu and Sanford (2007) favor the use of median scores over mean and mode scores when a Likert-type scale is used.

Median and interquartile ranges are calculated to identify the rates of group agreement and consensus of each item that a panelist makes as a statement. Medians provide information on the central tendency of responses, indicating where most items fall on the disagreement-agreement scale. A median is a measure that divides the distribution into two equal parts in the distribution in a normal bell curve. (Fish and Busby, 2005, p. 476)

The use of interquartile ranges indicates the degree of consensus reached by the panelists. High agreement is indicated by a small interquartile range.

Interquartile ranges provide information about the variability in the data without being affected by extreme scores. Interquartile ranges are calculated by taking half the difference between the upper quartile, or the point in the distribution below which 75% of the cases lie (the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile), and the lower quartile, the point below which 25% of the cases lie (the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) .... The interquartile range is calculated by subtracting the upper quartile from the lower quartile. (p. 476-477)

Results from round 3 data after panelists made any desired changes in ratings indicated that consensus had been reached about 30 effective practice statements and 6 obstacles statements.

#### Positionality of the Researcher

The author of this study has been a professional educator for 29 years filling the roles of teacher, principal, and district curriculum director. In addition, the author has been a school board member for 24 years, including 10 years as board chair, serving also

as a regional delegate to the Delegate Assembly of the Montana School Boards Association for many years. The author has also received the Marvin Heintz award, given to Montana trustees who have participated in qualifying board training over several years. As a participant of many types of training for school boards, the author conducts this study in order to give voice to fellow school board members, those individuals who have worked diligently without pay to improve their local schools and help create cultures of success.

### Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of study findings (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009, p.375; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Shenton, 2004).

### Credibility

Credibility refers to “the researcher’s ability to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained” (p. 376). Shenton (2004) states that credibility in qualitative research addresses how congruent the findings are with reality. Further, he outlines several methods that can help ensure credibility in qualitative research:

1. the adoption of research methods well established both in qualitative investigation in general and in information science in particular;
2. the development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations before the first data collection dialogues take place;
3. random sampling of individuals to serve as informants;

4. triangulation;
5. tactics to help ensure honesty in informants when contributing data;
6. iterative questioning;
7. negative case analysis;
8. frequent debriefing sessions;
9. peer scrutiny of the research project;
10. the researcher's "reflective commentary";
11. background, qualifications and experience of the investigator;
12. member checks, which Guba and Lincoln consider the single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility;
13. thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny; and
14. examination of previous research findings. (p. 64-69)

In this study, the researcher addressed credibility by using a well-established research method, the Delphi technique. Additionally, the researcher was highly familiar with the culture of the group being studied as a member of a local school board for over 24 years. One foundation of the Delphi method is anonymity of the participants. Although, the panelists identified themselves to the researcher, they did not know each other and thus peer pressure to respond in certain ways was removed. The researcher also pursued and welcomed scrutiny of the project by colleagues and peers. Additionally, the researcher presented information about the researcher's background, qualifications and experience to potential participants and was known by several panelists through participation in school board trainings. The researcher also used journaling processes to record perceptions and possible interpretations of panelists' responses. Lastly, the

current study includes an examination and comparison of current study findings with previous research findings to determine areas of congruence and divergence.

### Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the extent that the findings have applicability to other contexts. Shenton (2004) states that,

Since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations...A contrasting view is offered...although each case may be unique, it is also an example within a broad group and, as a result the prospect of transferability should not be immediately rejected. (p. 69)

Transferability between contexts can be made by the reader who is able to evaluate to what extent the current study context is similar to the reader's context of interest. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide rich and detailed descriptions so that this evaluation can be made. In this study, transferability is addressed by providing a detailed description of the demographics of the current study panelists which allows a reader to evaluate transferability.

### Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which findings are consistent and could be repeated. Shenton (2004) reports that,

In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work ...Such in-depth coverage also allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed... the text should include sections devoted to:

1. the research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level;

2. the operational detail of data gathering, addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field;
3. reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken. (p. 71-72)

In the current study, the researcher has strived to fully describe the research design and methodology, the data gathering process, and reflectively evaluate current study findings with previous research. Also, the effectiveness of the Delphi study process to accomplish the purpose of this study has been evaluated by the researcher.

### Confirmability

Lastly, confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are shaped by the ideas and experiences of the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). This will be addressed by practicing reflexivity which is “intentionally revealing underlying assumptions or biases that may cause you to formulate a set of questions or present findings in a particular way” (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009, p. 377). Additionally, the researcher used in vivo coding to maintain the voice of the panelists whenever possible. The survey statements used in rounds 2 and 3 were largely the words of the panelists themselves. Shenton (2004) supports use of two types of audit trails to allow the reader to trace the course of the research in a step-by-step manner. The first is a data-oriented trail that is represented diagrammatically. The second type of audit trail is theoretical in nature and “should be understood in terms of the whole of the duration of the project” (p. 72). The current study details the data collection process in a manner that allows for replication of the process by other researchers.

Additionally, this study uses a Delphi methodology which is both qualitative and quantitative. Traditional types of reliability and validity are difficult to obtain or are not applicable to the Delphi approach (Fish and Busby, 2005). An estimation of reliability can be made between the first and second rounds of the Delphi questionnaires by examining the consensus rate of the respondents. Fish and Busby (2005) posit that the issue of validity is directly related to the selection of the expert panel participants. This study will use an outside source of determination of expert status, the receipt of gold or silver levels of certification in the MTSBA School Board Academy, thus reducing any influence of researcher bias in determination of expert status. Fish and Busby (2005) also report that the use of open-ended questions can pose a challenge to validity. This threat can be reduced by tightly defining the areas of interest (p. 480).

### Limitations

Limitations are “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Creswell, 2005, p. 198) that are not within the researcher’s control. This study was limited by certain factors that were primarily due to the study’s purpose, population sample, instrumentation, and data analysis.

This study focused on the self-identifying and reporting of effective governance behaviors by school board members. This purpose may have been limited by an individual’s familiarity with the possible universe of effective school board behaviors and his or her ability to identify and articulate these practices.

The population and sampling technique also imposed some limitations. A purposive sampling technique was appropriate with the Delphi technique as experts in the

field are identified and selected based upon selection criteria. For this study, panelists were chosen from the current school board members in the state of Montana who have received the gold or silver level of certification from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA). This award is given annually to current trustees who have participated in a qualifying number of training sessions or MTSBA sponsored activities. It was possible that the factors that caused respondents to agree to participate created a response pool that did not reflect the total population of expert trustees.

There are both conceptual and mechanical limitations to the online and email-based data collection instruments that were used. Conceptually, the survey assumed that the open-ended survey questions would trigger thoughtful and reflective behavior from the respondents. The open-ended nature of the questions caused each panelist to apply their own personal definition of effective governance. This definition would have varied from individual to individual. Mechanically, the responses may have been limited due to constrictions in the amount of text allowed in the online response fields. Also, it was not known whether the email addresses provided by the panelists were frequently monitored by the school board members. Response rates to online surveys can also be low. Gordon (2015) indicated that a response rate for a Delphi study of 40 to 75 percent of the participants can be expected. The response rate for round one was about 26% of the eligible trustees, but continued participation rates between rounds one, two, and three were 91% and 95%.

As data analysis procedures for a qualitative study employ human judgment, human error was a possible limitation. The thematic coding process, using open, axial,

and selective coding techniques, required the researcher to make some decisions that could differ from those another researcher might make. This is an acceptable limitation, as qualitative research presumes differing researcher perspectives and opinions and the perspective of the researcher is part of the data analysis.

Gordon (2015) points out weaknesses specific to the Delphi Method. He states that Delphi studies are difficult to perform well because a great deal of attention must be given to the choice of panel participants, the questionnaires must be meticulously prepared; the method requires a great deal of time, and participants with extreme viewpoints must work harder than others (p. 10-11). Indeed, in this study data was gathered over a 3-month time period and panelist fatigue may have caused participants to be less engaged in later Delphi rounds.

### Summary

This descriptive study builds on previous studies by investigating effective school board behaviors and practices that were identified by active school board members themselves. Using a three round Delphi methodology, this study surveyed experienced school board members in the state of Montana by asking them to describe the behaviors and practices that they considered crucial for effective school board governance. Resulting data formed a framework within which effective school board behaviors can be understood and shared. School board members themselves are the individuals experiencing the results of effective or ineffective school board practices, but they are rarely directly consulted about how they experience that role.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the findings from the data collected during this Delphi study. This chapter includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, details of the data collection process, a description of the sample population and its selection, and a presentation of the data collected.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to identify agreed upon effective school board governance practices in Montana from the perspectives of currently seated school board members. Additionally, the study sought to identify agreed upon obstacles to effective school board governance. The results of this study form a set of best practices for effective school board governance to be used by new and experienced school board members for self-evaluation and to improve the effectiveness of the school board as a governing body. Results can also be used to develop educational training sessions about effective governance practices for school board members.

#### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What processes and practices do expert school board members in Montana identify as components of effective school board governance?

2. To what extent do board members agree on these identified practices and processes of effective governance?
3. Do experts' perceptions of effective school board practices differ by district size?
4. What challenges do expert school board members in Montana identify as obstacles to effective school board governance?
5. To what extent do board members agree on these identified obstacles to effective governance?
6. Do experts' perceptions of identified obstacles differ by district size?

### Research Design

This descriptive study builds on previous studies by investigating effective school board behaviors and practices that were identified by active school board members themselves. Using a Delphi methodology, this study surveyed experienced school board members in the state of Montana by asking them to describe the behaviors and practices that they believed contribute to effective school board governance as well as the obstacles to effective governance. Resulting data formed a framework within which effective school board behaviors can be understood and shared.

A three-round online and email-based Delphi study process (Fish & Busby, 2005; Gordon, 2015; Hsu & Sandford, 2007) was used to gather data from expert currently serving school board members in Montana. The data collected formed a description of the effective school board governance practices most highly agreed upon and also the mostly frequently identified obstacles to board effectiveness. This objective aligns with

an identified objective of the Delphi technique, “to seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1).

A pilot study was conducted before the round 1 survey was distributed to participants. Eleven board members participated in the round 1 pilot and their responses and comments were used to refine the content of the research questions and the survey directions and process used in the final round 1 survey. Participants in the pilot study were known to the researcher and were conveniently accessible. All were trustees currently serving on school boards in two Class A school districts in Montana. They had various levels of experience and training.

Round 1 of the Delphi study began with the presentation of a questionnaire that used open-ended and multiple-choice items on the online SurveyMonkey platform. The round 1 survey consisted of 13 questions. Question 1 was a review of the Subject Consent Form for Participation in Human Subjects Research at Montana State University that required a selection of agree or disagree to participate in this research. Questions 2 & 3 were the two open-ended research questions. Questions 4 through 13 requested demographic information such as age, gender, and school district class size.

Round 1 data was used to develop a round 2 survey containing two parts. Part 1 included statements of effective school board practices provided by the panelists and Part 2 included their statements of obstacles to board effectiveness. These statements were analyzed qualitatively using open and axial coding and memoing techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). There were 117 effective practices statements and 84 obstacles to effectiveness identified by using qualitative analysis coding techniques. These

statements were then grouped into 12 categories in Parts 1 and 12 additional categories in Part 2 based upon similar themes that emerged from coding panelists' responses. This list was then reduced by eliminating duplicate responses and combining similar statements which resulted in a list of 50 unique statements of effective school board governance practices and 45 unique statements of obstacles to board effectiveness.

In round 2, respondents were asked to review the items constructed by the researcher from the first-round questionnaire and then rate the items according to their judgments about levels of effectiveness and agreement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Statements were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine levels of effectiveness, ineffectiveness, agreement, and disagreement (Fish & Busby, 2005; Hsu & Sanford, 2007). In the third round, Delphi panelists were given an opportunity to review their own ratings along with other panelists' responses and to modify their own responses in light of the new information provided.

The round 3 survey presented panelists with the 36 statements that were highly agreed upon by participants in round 2. The remaining statements were not re-rated as the goal of this study was to identify areas of agreement and the eliminated statements were not highly agreed upon by panelists. Statements were determined to be highly agreed upon if at least 80% of the participants rated the statement as either a 6 or 7. Of the 50 statements of effective practices, 30 were highly agreed upon by the panelists. Of the 45 identified obstacles, only 6 were highly agreed upon as obstacles to effective governance. The remaining statements that received less than 80% agreement were also shared with the panelists in the round 3 survey as information only items. Descriptive

statistics were included for all 95 statements. In round 3, participants were also asked to provide comments about reasons for keeping or changing their scores as well as any other general comments. Descriptive statistics between rounds 2 and 3 showed few shifts in panelists' ratings and indicated that a fourth round was not needed (Fish & Busby, 2005; Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

### Expert Participants

#### Selection Process

An expert panel of participants for this Delphi study was selected by using an existing database of experienced school board members maintained by the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA). By using this pre-existing database, reliance on the researcher's judgment of expertise was reduced. The definition of expert status was defined as membership in either the certified gold or silver level trustee groups by the MTSBA. MTSBA recognizes trustee experience and training through certification through the Montana School Board Academy. Three levels of expertise are recognized after initial certification for members who have accrued 12 hours of training:

Bronze Level – earned for two consecutive years as a certified trustee or 24 hours attained in less than two years, whichever occurs first.

Silver Level – earned for four consecutive years as a certified trustee or 48 hours attained in less than four years, whichever occurs first.

Gold Level (at which point the trustee is provided the Marvin Heintz Award) – earned for eight consecutive years as a certified trustee or 96 hours attained in less than eight years, whichever occurs first. (MTSBA, 2015b).

Solicitation for voluntary participation occurred initially by MTSBA staff sending a personally addressed email to all trustees who had achieved either silver or gold certification status. This email was sent to 102 trustees out of a total of 1,245 trustees in the MTSBA database, or about 8% of the total Montana trustee population. Return emails expressing interest from those qualifying to participate in the study were sent directly to the researcher. Responses were received from 27 trustees, or about 26 % of the eligible trustee population. The initial round 1 survey was sent to these 27 people of whom 23 completed the round 1 survey representing an 85.2% response rate. Of the 23 round 1 participants, 91% of the panelists continued participation from round 1 to round 2 and 95% continued from round 2 to round 3. Hsu & Sandford (2007) report that the majority of Delphi studies have used between 15 and 20 respondents (p. 4). This study included 23 participants which allowed for a small attrition rate in order to remain within these parameters.

#### Gender and Age

Twenty-three participants returned the round 1 survey. Of those, nine were male and 14 were female (Table 4.1). Their ages ranged from 31 years of age to over 60. No participants were between 18 to 30 years of age; one person was between 31 to 40; four people were between 41 to 50; 11 were between 51 to 60; and seven were over 60 years old. Overall, 78.2% of the participants were over 51 years of age (Table 4.2).

Table 4.1. Gender of panelists

Gender	Response percentage	Response count
Male	39.1	9
Female	60.9	14
Total	100	23

Table 4.2. Age of panelists

Age	Response percentage	Response count
18-30	0	0
31-40	4.3	1
41-50	17.4	4
51-60	47.8	11
Over 60	30.4	7
Total	100	23

### Education Levels

Most participants had completed at least four years of college; 78.2 % had received bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees. Additionally, 13% had attended college and 8.7% had completed high school (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Education level of panelists

Education level	Response percent	Response count
GED or equivalent	0	0
High School graduate	8.7	2
Some college	13	3
2-year degree	0	0
4-year degree	52.2	12
Master's degree	13	3
Professional degree (MD, J.D, etc.)	0	0
Doctoral degree	13	3
Technical degree or certification	0	0
Total	100	23

### Experience Levels

Over half of the participants had more than nine years of experience, or four terms on their local school boards. In Montana, school board members serve three-year terms. Only 8.7% were in their first three-year term; 30.4% were serving their second term; and 13% were in their third term. Over a fourth had served longer than four terms (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Panelists' years of experience

Years of experience	Response percent	Response count
Less than 1 year	0	0
1 to 3 years (one term)	8.7	2
3 to 6 years (two terms)	30.4	7
6 to 9 years (three terms)	13	3
9 to 12 years (four terms)	21.7	5
More than 12 years (more than four terms)	26.1	6
Total	100	23

Almost half of the participants (47.8%) were currently serving as their board chairperson and 65.2% had served as board chair at some point during their board service (Table 4.5). Seventeen, or nearly three-fourths of participants (73.9%) had achieved the Gold level – Marvin Heintz Award level of certification from the MTSBA for exemplary participation in board training and six (26.1%) had achieved the Silver level of certification.

Participants were selected based upon membership as a MTSBA Gold or Silver level certified trustee which represented attendance at board training sessions. Indeed, 43.5% had attended more than five training events during the previous year. Over half

Table 4.5. Years served as board chairperson

Number of years	Response percent	Response count
Never served as chairperson	34.8	8
Less than 1 year	0	0
1 to 3 years	30.4	7
4 to 6 years	17.4	4
More than 6 years	17.4	4
Total	100	23

(52.2%) had attended between one and five events, while only one participant had not yet participated in any training sessions during the previous year (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Panelists' attendance at board training events during the previous year

Number of events	Response Percent	Response count
None	4.3	1
1 to 3	26.1	6
3 to 5	26.1	6
More than 5	43.5	10
Total	100	23

#### Sizes of Districts Represented

Of the 23 participants returning round 1 surveys, two belonged to Class AA school districts according to the Montana High School Association (MHSA) classification system. Eight were members of Class A school districts, four were members of Class B school districts, eight belonged to Class C school districts, and one was a member of an Independent Elementary school district (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. MHSA classification of panelists' school district size

MHSA Classification	Response Percent	Response Count	Enrollment by Class-June 2016
Class AA	8.7	2	1000+
Class A	34.8	8	142-802
Class B	17.4	4	108-354
Class C	34.8	8	4-128
Other -Independent Elementary	4.3	1	1-1513
Total	100	23	

### Delphi Study Round 1 Data Analysis

The round 1 questionnaire consisted of 13 questions presented to panelists via the SurveyMonkey platform. The first question was an indication of consent to participate. All 23 panelists indicated agreement to participate in question 1. The second question was an open-ended question: What practices or processes do you believe school boards should use to provide effective school district governance? The third question was also an open-ended question: What are the obstacles that interfere with a school board's ability to govern effectively? The 23 participants responded to these two questions by writing lists or paragraphs describing their perceptions of effective school board practices and of the obstacles that interfere with a board's ability to govern effectively.

#### Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses from Round 1

The round 1 response rate was 100% with all 23 expert panelists returning completed questionnaires. Three panelists completed the survey in over a week using multiple sessions, three completed the survey in over a day, and the remaining 17

panelists completed the survey in an average of 18 minutes. Completion time ranged from 2 minutes 34 seconds to 64 minutes 53 seconds (Appendix Q).

Qualitative coding processes were used to examine the raw data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs (Saldana, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Open coding was used initially to identify the words, phrases, or sentences that contained meaning in the text. In vivo coding was used as often as possible to preserve the voice of the participants. This process resulted in a list of 117 statements of effective practices and 84 statements of obstacles. Next, using axial coding, similar statements were grouped together and the groups were assigned a label. This process resulted in 117 effective practices being organized into 12 themes or categories and 84 obstacles being organized into an additional 12 themes or categories. Jones (2012) reports a process used to summarize and condense initial data from a round 1 Delphi study:

The following steps were taken to summarize and condense the 236 competencies to use during Round Two: (a) eliminate duplicate competencies, (b) collapse items whose meaning and content were similar, (c) eliminate items that were unclear, and (d) eliminate items that were not aligned to the purpose of the study. (p. 110)

Using a similar process, some statements in the current study were eliminated or combined to reduce redundancy. This produced 50 effective practice statements in 12 categories and 45 obstacle statements in 12 categories for a total of 95 unique statements in 24 categories. These items were presented to participants as the questionnaire items in the round 2 survey (Tables 4.8 and 4.9).

### Delphi Study Round 2 Data Analysis

#### Delphi Study Results for Round 2 Part 1 Effective Practices and Part 2 Obstacles to Effective Governance

The round 2 survey used the SurveyMonkey software platform to present the 95 statements condensed from round 1 data to the panelists. In round 2, 21 panelists returned completed surveys. This represented a 91.3% response rate from round 1 to round 2. Panelists used a seven-point Likert scale to rate the Part 1 statements derived from their open-ended responses describing effective school board practices as well as the Part 2 statements describing barriers to effective school governance. The scale used for Part 1 was: Highly Effective (7), Effective (6), Slightly Effective (5), Neither Effective nor Ineffective (4), Slightly Ineffective (3), Ineffective (2), and Highly Ineffective (1). The scale used for Part 2 was: Strongly Agree (7), Agree (6), Slightly Agree (5), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Slightly Disagree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Participants were able to choose one rating per statement.

The statements were presented in groups by thematic categories with each SurveyMonkey page containing 1 or 2 themes. The entire survey contained 24 pages with 4 to 8 statements per page to reduce the scrolling required to view all items on the page. A progress bar displayed at the bottom of the page assisted participants in understanding the number of statements they had completed and the number that were remaining. They could quit the survey and return to it later if needed. One participant completed the survey in over a day. The remaining 20 participants completed the survey between 10 minutes 25 seconds and 51 minutes 8 seconds with an average completion time of 19 minutes and 50 seconds (Appendix R).

Table 4.8. Round 1 effective practices statements grouped by categories

Category	Representative statements
Policy Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations</li> <li>• Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated</li> <li>• Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism</li> </ul>
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic planning so that all board and staff members are able to assess where the district is heading and whether efforts are being effective</li> <li>• Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations</li> <li>• Have a thorough understanding of the school’s mission, vision, and values</li> </ul>
Board/Superintendent Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent</li> <li>• Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process</li> </ul>
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan</li> <li>• Able to make decisions and create solutions that meet the needs of the district when faced with guidelines written for urban schools</li> <li>• Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes</li> <li>• Decisions are made that focus on all students’ needs and improved student outcomes</li> <li>• Operate from a common body of knowledge about the school district</li> </ul>
Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board</li> <li>• School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education</li> </ul>

Table 4.8 continued

Category	Representative statements
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively seek community involvement for engagement and support</li> <li>• Keep the public informed through adherence to open meeting laws</li> <li>• Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing, required training for all school board members throughout their service to include school finance, school law, and the role of the board</li> <li>• Stay up-to-date and informed by reading and attending training</li> <li>• Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team</li> <li>• Take advantage of teacher training sessions to learn about best practices and problems of practice</li> <li>• Advanced training for those aspiring to serve as a board chair</li> <li>• Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year</li> </ul>
Board Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the board's role as leaders; not micromanagers</li> <li>• Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff</li> <li>• Establish policy then trust the staff to carry out the policies</li> <li>• Leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive</li> <li>• Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management</li> <li>• Work as a team with staff</li> <li>• Have a clear purpose for the district that is defined by the board</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a district.</li> <li>• Have a good line of communication between superintendent, principal(s), and the board</li> </ul>

Table 4.8 continued

Category	Representative statements
Communications continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain clear communication between members including listening to others</li> <li>• Interact with other school leaders to discuss issues facing other districts around the state</li> <li>• Visit the schools in your district on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials</li> <li>• Annual or semi-annual board retreats for conversation and board self-assessment</li> <li>• Agenda includes discussion topics that contemplate future ideas</li> <li>• Trustees should share the responsibility for participation in working committees that communicate regularly with the board as a whole</li> <li>• Use Roberts Rules of Order</li> <li>• Effective and competent board chair</li> <li>• Conduct board business with genuine transparency</li> </ul>
Board Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other</li> <li>• Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions</li> <li>• Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another</li> <li>• Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints</li> <li>• Be opened minded</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor administrative operations and act only when the policies and procedures aren't working effectively</li> <li>• The Board needs to hold itself accountable</li> </ul>

Table 4.9. Round 1 obstacles to effective governance statements grouped by categories

Category	Representative statements
Legal Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and Federal mandates that require more funding from local taxpayers but don't allow for local control of those funds</li> <li>• Federal and State Education Offices that dictate curriculum, testing, and funding</li> <li>• Union contracts that require boards to keep underperforming staff and restrict how exemplary staff can be rewarded</li> <li>• Teacher tenure can be an obstacle when dealing with less effective staff members</li> <li>• Conducting all business in open meetings during difficult or delicate situations</li> <li>• School elections that occur in May result in new trustees not able to make informed decisions about budget, contract renewals and policy issues</li> </ul>
Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local school boards have relatively little control over funding to improve Financial Issues and innovate</li> <li>• Funding laws that don't allow communities to provide more financial support if desired</li> <li>• Uncertainty of funding from the legislature makes long term planning difficult</li> <li>• Because of GAAP, we can't carry over general fund budget in anticipation of next year's needs</li> </ul>
Personal Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty separating the role of parent vs. trustee</li> <li>• Individuals who are on the school board to advance their own personal gain or agendas</li> </ul>
The Board / Superintendent Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board</li> <li>• Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent</li> <li>• Poor communication between board members and the superintendent</li> </ul>
Lack of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of good preparatory information from administrators prior to discussion or decision-making</li> </ul>

Table 4.9 continued

Category	Representative statements
Lack of Information continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of communication between board members and from the chairperson to other board members</li> <li>• Advice from MTSBA does not necessarily fit district circumstances</li> </ul>
Board Dysfunction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school board that does not work as a team</li> <li>• A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board</li> <li>• Getting sidetracked by new issues before dealing with other current issues</li> <li>• Micromanagement by some trustees that move us away from the important issues</li> <li>• Appearing to be the rubber stamp of administration</li> <li>• An attitude of them against us regarding trustees and staff</li> </ul>
Inability to Hire and Retain Quality Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of high quality teachers to hire</li> <li>• Nepotism and political patronage leading to employment of least qualified applicants</li> <li>• Inability to attract and retain a quality superintendent (administrator)</li> </ul>
Lack of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice</li> <li>• Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about or use of effective governance/ leadership strategies and tools</li> <li>• Lack of training about team-building</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of and adherence to school board policies and school law</li> </ul>
Lack of Commitment to the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members who are unwilling or unable to devote the time necessary to be an active participant</li> <li>• Excessive board turnover</li> </ul>
Interactions Among Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other trustees who are unwilling to change and are close minded</li> </ul>

Table 4.9 continued

Category	Representative statements
Interactions Among Board Members continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees who are unwilling to voice an opinion in opposition to major issues or in evaluating the administration</li> <li>• Trustees who have a lack of respect or trust for fellow board members</li> <li>• Political disputes between board members</li> <li>• Being unable to function transparently by not having candid discussions about student needs</li> </ul>
Communications with the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping the community informed about what is going on in the schools and about how education is changing</li> <li>• Parents and the general public do not understand all that boards must consider in the running of an effective and successful district</li> <li>• Lack of community understanding about the board's role in hiring/firing</li> <li>• 'Citizen push-back' from those feeling that they are not getting the most out of their educational dollar</li> <li>• Disinterested citizens who have no sense of civic responsibility</li> </ul>
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to outpace misinformation that is readily spread via social media</li> </ul>

Analysis of completed round 2 surveys was conducted to determine to what extent agreement could be reached by the panelists. According to Hsu & Sandford (2007):

The major statistics used in Delphi studies are measures of central tendency (means, median, and mode) and level of dispersion (standard deviation and inter-quartile range) in order to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents (Hasson, Keeney, & McKenna, 2000). Generally, the uses of median and mode are favored.... In the literature, the use of median score, based on Likert-type scale, is strongly favored. (p. 4)

The measures of central tendency used in this study were means and medians while interquartile ranges were used as measurement of the level of dispersion. In this

study, 80% was the consensus level used. The literature does not provide any clear guidelines about what level of agreement determines consensus. Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna (2006) summarized:

...the *raison d'être* for using the Delphi technique is to gain consensus or a judgment among a group of perceived experts on a topic. However, experts can differ and it would be difficult to gain 100% agreement on all issues. Therefore, a key question in any Delphi study is what percentage agreement would a researcher accept as synonymous with consensus. The answer may lie with the importance of the research topic. For instance, if it were a life and death issue such as whether or not to switch off a respirator in an intensive care unit, a 100% consensus level may be desirable. Alternatively, if the topic was related to the selection of a new nurses' uniform, a consensus of 51% may be acceptable. As with most aspects of the Delphi technique, the literature provides few clear guidelines on what consensus level to set... From the authors' perspective, 75% appears to be the minimal level but there is no obvious scientific rationale for this. (p. 210)

Descriptive statistics using Excel provided information about mean, median, standard deviation, first and third quartiles, and the interquartile range for each of the 95 statements. Determination of consensus was based upon application of predetermined criteria containing three components. First, at least 80% of the panelists must have rated a statement at either a 6 or a 7. Secondly, a statement must have received a median score of at least 6. Thirdly, the statement must have received an interquartile range of 1 or smaller.

Table 4.10 provides the descriptive statistics for round 2 ratings of statements by the panelists for part 1 and Table 4.11 provides the descriptive statistics for round 2 ratings for part 2. Part 1 contained items 1.1 through 12.2 and part 2 contained items 13.1 through 24.1 for a total of 95 statements. Of the 50 statements contained in part 1, 30 statements met the criteria of 80% agreement at either a level 6 or 7, a median score of 6 or higher and an interquartile range of 1 or lower. Of the 45 statements contained in

Table 4.10. Descriptive statistics of panelists' responses in round 2 part 1: effective practices

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
1.1 Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations					4.76% (1)	57.14% (12)	38.10% (8)	6.33	6.00	1	95.24%
1.2 Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated			4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	47.62% (10)	42.86% (9)	6.24	6.00	1	90.48%
1.3 Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism			4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	47.62% (10)	38.10% (8)	6.10	6.00	1	85.72%
2.1 Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations				9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	52.38% (11)	33.33% (7)	6.10	6.00	0	85.71%
2.2 Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values				4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	52.38% (11)	38.10% (8)	6.24	6.00	1	90.48%
2.3 Strategic planning so that all board and staff members are able to assess where the district is heading and whether efforts are being effective				9.52% (2)	14.29% (3)	28.57% (6)	47.62% (10)	6.14	6.00	2	76.19%
3.1 Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent			4.76% (1)			33.33% (7)	61.90% (13)	6.48	7.00	1	95.23%

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<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
3.2 Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process				4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	76.19% (16)	6.62	7.00	1	90.48%
4.1 Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board			4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	33.33% (7)	57.14% (12)	6.33	7.00	1	90.47%
4.2 School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	33.33% (7)	52.38% (11)	6.14	7.00	1	85.71%
5.1 Align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan				9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	42.86% (9)	38.10% (8)	6.10	6.00	1	80.96%
5.2 Able to make decisions and create solutions that meet the needs of the district when faced with guidelines written for urban districts		4.76% (1)		23.81% (5)	19.05% (4)	38.10% (8)	14.29% (3)	5.29	6.00	2	52.39%
5.3 Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes have occurred				4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	42.86% (9)	38.10% (8)	6.14	6.00	1	80.96%
5.4 Decisions are made that focus on all students' needs							14.29% (3)	47.62% (10)	38.10% (8)		85.72%
5.5 Operate from a common body of knowledge about the school district			4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	42.86% (9)	38.10% (8)	6.00	6.00	1	80.96%

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<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
6.1 Actively seek community involvement for engagement and support			4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	28.57% (6)	19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	5.86	6.00	2	61.91%
6.2 Keep the public informed through adherence to open meeting laws			4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	42.86% (9)	33.33% (7)	6.00	6.00	1	76.19%
6.3 Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints					19.05% (4)	52.38% (11)	28.57% (6)	6.19	6.00	1	80.95%
7.1 Stay up-to-date and informed by reading and attending training			4.76% (1)		19.05% (4)	38.10% (8)	38.10% (8)	6.05	6.00	2	76.20%
7.2 Ongoing, required training for all school board members throughout their service to include school finance, school law, and the role of the board	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)		14.29% (3)	23.81% (5)	47.62% (10)	5.76	6.00	2	71.43%
7.3 Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team		4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	33.33% (7)	47.62% (10)	6.10	6.00	1	80.95%
7.4 School board members attend teacher training sessions to learn about best practices and problems of practice		14.29% (3)	4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	28.57% (6)	23.81% (5)	4.76% (1)	4.57	5.00	1	28.57%

Note. 1=Highly Ineffective, 2=Ineffective, 3= Slightly Ineffective, 4= Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 5= Slightly Effective, 6= Effective, 7= Highly Effective. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
7.5 Advanced training for those aspiring to serve as a board chair	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)		14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	33.33% (7)	23.81% (5)	5.33	6.00	1	57.14%
7.6 Attend MTSBA’s training sessions throughout the year			4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	42.86% (9)	42.86% (9)	6.24	6.00	1	85.72%
8.1 Understand the board’s role as leaders; not micromanagers					14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	52.38% (11)	6.38	7.00	1	85.71%
8.2 Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff				4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	33.33% (7)	57.14% (12)	6.43	7.00	1	90.47%
8.3 Establish policy then trust the staff to carry out the policies				4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	47.62% (1)	6.14	6.00	2	71.43%
8.4 Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive					14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	52.38% (11)	6.38	7.00	1	85.71%
8.5 Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management		4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	42.86% (9)	38.10% (8)	5.95	6.00	1	80.96%
8.6 Have a clear purpose for the district that is defined by the board			4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	42.86% (9)	6.05	6.00	2	76.19%
8.7 Work as a team with staff		4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	19.05% (4)	38.10% (8)	28.57% (6)	5.71	6.00	1	66.67%

Note. 1=Highly Ineffective, 2=Ineffective, 3= Slightly Ineffective, 4= Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 5= Slightly Effective, 6= Effective, 7= Highly Effective. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
9.1 Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others		4.76% (1)			4.76% (1)	42.86% (9)	47.62% (10)	6.24	6.00	1	90.48%
9.2 Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district		4.76% (1)			9.52% (2)	47.62% (10)	38.10% (8)	6.10	6.00	1	85.72%
9.3 Have a good line of communication between superintendent, principal(s), and the board				9.52% (2)	14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	57.14% (12)	6.24	7.00	1	76.19%
9.4 Interact with other school leaders to discuss issues facing other districts around the state		4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	38.10% (8)	33.33% (7)	5.86	6.00	2	71.43%
9.5 Visit the schools in your district on a regular basis				9.52% (2)	28.57% (6)	23.81% (5)	38.10% (8)	5.90	6.00	2	61.91%
10.1 Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials						42.86% (9)	57.14% (12)	6.57	7.00	1	100.00%
10.2 Annual or semi-annual board retreats for conversation and planning		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	23.81% (5)	19.05% (4)	33.33% (7)	5.48	6.00	2	52.38%

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<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
10.3 Agenda includes discussion topics that contemplate the future					33.33% (7)	47.62% (10)	19.05% (4)	5.86	6.00	1	66.67%
10.4 Trustees should share the responsibility for participation in working committees that communicate regularly with the board as a whole	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	28.57% (6)	23.81% (5)	33.33% (7)	5.86	6.00	1	57.14%
10.5 Use Robert's Rules of Order	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	19.05% (4)	47.62% (10)	14.29% (3)	5.67	6.00	1	61.91%
10.6 Have an effective and competent board chair					4.76% (1)	28.57% (6)	66.67% (14)	6.62	7.00	1	95.24%
10.7 Conduct board business with genuine transparency		4.76% (1)			4.76% (1)	28.57% (6)	61.90% (13)	6.38	7.00	1	90.47%
11.1 Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other					4.76% (1)	38.10% (8)	57.14% (12)	6.52	7.00	1	95.24%
11.2 Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions		4.76% (1)			4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	66.67% (14)	6.43	7.00	1	90.48%
11.3 Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another					9.52% (2)	19.05% (4)	71.43% (15)	6.62	7.00	1	90.48%

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<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.10 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
11.4 Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints					14.29% (3)	47.62% (10)	38.10% (8)	6.24	6.00	1	85.72%
11.5 Be opened minded					9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	52.38% (11)	6.43	7.00	1	90.48%
12.1 Monitor administrative operations and act only when the policies and procedures aren't working effectively			4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	47.62% (10)	23.81% (5)	5.81	6.00	1	71.43%
12.2 The Board needs to hold itself accountable through self-evaluation		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)		14.29% (3)	42.86% (9)	33.33% (7)	5.86	6.00	2	76.19%

Note. 1=Highly Ineffective, 2=Ineffective, 3= Slightly Ineffective, 4= Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 5= Slightly Effective, 6= Effective, 7= Highly Effective. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11. Descriptive statistics of panelists' responses in round 2 part 2: obstacles to effective governance.

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
13.1 State and Federal mandates that require more funding from local taxpayers but don't allow for local control of those funds.	4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)		33.33% (7)	33.33% (7)	19.05% (4)	5.33	6.00	1	52.38%
13.2 Federal and State Education Offices that dictate curriculum, testing, and funding		9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	33.33% (7)	28.57% (6)	5.48	6.00	1	61.90%
13.3 Union contracts that require boards to keep underperforming staff and restrict how exemplary staff can be rewarded	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)		4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	5.38	6.00	3	61.91%
13.4 Teacher tenure can be an obstacle when dealing with less effective staff members	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)			23.81% (5)	19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	5.57	6.00	2	61.91%
13.5 Conducting all business in open meetings during difficult or delicate situations	4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	4.76% (1)	4.10	4.00	4	38.09%
13.6 School elections that occur in May result in new trustees not able to make informed decisions about budget, contract renewals and policy issues		23.81% (5)	9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	4.76% (1)	28.57% (6)	9.52% (2)	4.19	4.00	3	38.09%
14.1 Local school boards have relatively little control over funding to improve and innovate	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	47.62% (10)	9.52% (2)	5.29	6.00	1	57.14%

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Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range. <sup>a</sup>Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
14.2 Funding laws that don't allow communities to provide more financial support if desired	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	14.29% (3)	9.52% (2)	33.33% (7)	19.05% (4)	4.90	6.00	3	52.38%
14.3 Uncertainty of funding from the legislature makes long term planning difficult			14.29% (3)		9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	38.10% (8)	5.86	6.00	1	76.2%
14.4 Because of GAAP, we can't carry over general fund budget in anticipation of next year's needs		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	42.86% (9)	5.71	6.00	2	66.67%
15.1 Difficulty separating the role of parent vs. trustee	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	19.05% (4)	9.52% (2)	4.62	5.00	2	28.57%
15.2 Individuals who are on the school board to advance their own personal gain or agendas.		14.29% (3)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	19.05% (4)	23.81% (5)	4.95	5.00	3	42.86%
16.1 A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board		9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)			38.10% (8)	47.62% (10)	5.95	6.00	1	85.72%
16.2 Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent			4.76% (1)		14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	47.62% (10)	6.19	6.00	1	80.95%
16.3 Poor communication between board members and the superintendent		14.29% (3)		4.76% (1)		33.33% (7)	47.62% (10)	5.81	6.00	1	80.95%

Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
17.1 Lack of good preparatory information from administrators prior to discussion or decision-making		14.29% (3)		9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	28.57% (6)	38.10% (8)	5.62	6.00	2	71.43%
17.2 Lack of communication between board members and from the chairperson to other board members		14.29% (3)		9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	28.57% (6)	38.10% (8)	5.52	6.00	2	66.67%
17.3 Advice from MTSBA does not necessarily fit district circumstances	4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	23.81% (5)	14.29% (3)	9.52% (2)	4.14	4.00	3	23.81%
18.1 A school board that does not work as a team		4.76% (1)			23.81% (5)	38.10% (8)	33.33% (7)	5.90	6.00	1	71.43%
18.2 A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board		9.52% (2)			4.76% (1)	33.33% (7)	52.38% (11)	6.10	7.00	1	85.71%
18.3 Getting sidetracked by new issues before dealing with other current issues		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	23.81% (5)	42.86% (9)	9.52% (2)	5.24	6.00	1	52.38%
18.4 Micromanagement by some trustees that move us away from the important issues		4.76% (1)		23.81% (5)	4.76% (1)	38.10% (8)	28.57% (6)	5.57	6.00	2	66.67%
18.5 Appearing to be the rubber stamp of administration	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	19.05% (4)	28.57% (6)	5.00	5.00	2	47.62%
18.6 An attitude of them against us regarding trustees and staff		9.52% (2)		9.52% (2)	14.29% (3)	33.33% (7)	33.33% (7)	5.62	6.00	2	66.66%

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Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
19.1 Lack of high quality teachers to hire	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)		19.05% (4)	28.57% (6)	28.57% (6)	5.19	6.00	1	57.14%
19.2 Nepotism and political patronage leading to employment of least qualified applicants	4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	28.57% (6)	14.29% (3)	4.76	5.00	2	42.86%
19.3 Inability to attract and retain a quality superintendent (administrator)		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	38.10% (8)	5.86	6.00	1	76.2%
20.1 Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice				4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	38.10% (8)	42.86% (9)	6.19	6.00	1	80.96%
20.2 Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member			4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	42.86% (9)	42.86% (9)	6.19	6.00	1	85.72%
20.3 Lack of knowledge about or use of effective governance/ leadership strategies and tools		4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	23.81% (5)	28.57% (6)	33.33% (7)	5.71	6.00	2	61.9%
20.4 Lack of training about team-building		9.52% (2)		9.52% (2)	19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	19.05% (4)	5.43	6.00	1	61.91%
20.5 Lack of knowledge of and adherence to school board policies and school law		4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	33.33% (7)	33.33% (7)	5.71	6.00	1	66.66%

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Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>
21.1 Board members who are unwilling or unable to devote the time necessary to be an active participant		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	47.62% (10)	28.57% (6)	5.76	6.00	1	76.19%
21.2 Excessive board turnover		9.52% (2)		19.05% (4)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	5.24	5.00	2	47.62%
22.1 Other trustees who are unwilling to change and are close minded			9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	38.10% (8)	5.76	6.00	2	61.91%
22.2 Trustees who are unwilling to voice an opinion in opposition to major issues or in evaluating the administration	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	33.33% (7)	5.67	6.00	2	71.43%
22.3 Trustees who have a lack of respect or trust for fellow board members		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)		19.05% (4)	23.81% (5)	47.62% (10)	5.95	6.00	1	71.43%
22.4 Political disputes between board members	4.76% (1)		9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	28.57% (6)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	5.24	5.00	2	47.62%
22.5 Being unable to function transparently by not having candid discussions about student needs	4.76% (1)		4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	23.81% (5)	23.81% (5)	28.57% (6)	5.38	6.00	2	52.38%
23.1 Keeping the community informed about what is going on in the schools and about how education is changing		19.05% (4)	4.76% (1)		19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	14.29% (3)	5.05	6.00	1	57.15%

66

Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree. Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

Table 4.11 continued

Survey Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Median	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7) <sup>a</sup>	
23.2 Parents and the general public do not understand all that boards must consider in the running of an effective and successful district			4.76% (1)			28.57% (6)	47.62% (10)	19.05% (4)	5.76	6.00	1	66.67%
23.3 Lack of community understanding about the board's role in hiring/firing			4.76% (1)	14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	47.62% (10)	14.29% (3)	5.52	6.00	1	61.91%	
23.4 'Citizen push-back' from those feeling that they are not getting the most out of their educational dollar		9.52% (2)	9.52% (2)	4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	42.86% (9)	14.29% (3)	5.19	6.00	1	57.15%	
23.5 Disinterested citizens who have no sense of civic responsibility		4.76% (1)	4.76% (1)	19.05% (4)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	23.81% (5)	5.43	6.00	2	61.91%	
24.1 Inability to outpace misinformation that is readily spread via social media			14.29% (3)	14.29% (3)	14.29% (3)	28.57% (6)	28.57% (6)	5.43	6.00	2	57.14%	

Note. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.

Frequencies are in parentheses. IQR= Interquartile range.

<sup>a</sup> Consensus = % of panelists rating a statement at either a 6 or 7.

part 2, only six statements met these criteria of agreement. This resulted in a total of 36 statements that were highly agreed with by at least 80% of the panelists. The remaining 59 items did not meet the criteria of 80% agreement at a level 6 or 7. The highly agreed with 36 statements were then presented to panelists in round 3 for reconsideration and comments in order to increase levels of consensus.

### Delphi Study Round 3 Data Analysis

The purpose of this Delphi study was to determine which practices school board members reported as effective and to determine the level to which they agreed with these practices. In round 1, panelists provided 201 statements of opinion identifying effective school board practices as well as obstacles to effective governance. In round 2, these statements were condensed to 95 statements and were presented to panelists to rate their levels of agreement with these statements. In round 3, further refinement occurred as panelists were presented with the 36 statements that met the consensus criteria of highly agreed with statements from round 2. The purpose of round 3 was to present panelists with their own scores for these 36 statements along with the group scores, and to provide them with an opportunity to keep or change their ratings as well as to provide specific or general comments about their reasons for keeping or changing their ratings. In round 3, only statements that were highly agreed upon by panelists were provided for re-rating. Individual and group scores for items that showed a lack of agreement were also shared with panelists for their information only. Table 4.12 displays the 36 items from round 2 that were included in the round 3 survey.

Table 4.12. Round 2 statements that met the consensus criteria for inclusion in round 3

	Statements- Part 1 Effective Practices	Median	Mean	SD	Low/ High	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7)
10.1	Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials	7	6.57	0.51	6/7	1	100.00
1.1	Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations	6	6.33	0.58	5/7	1	95.24
10.6	Have an effective and competent board chair	7	6.62	0.59	5/7	1	95.24
11.1	Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other	7	6.52	0.60	5/7	1	95.24
3.1	Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent	7	6.48	0.93	3/7	1	95.23
1.2	Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated	6	6.24	0.94	3/7	1	90.48
2.2	Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values	6	6.24	0.77	4/7	1	90.48
3.2	Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process	7	6.62	0.80	4/7	1	90.48
9.1	Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others	6	6.24	1.14	2/7	1	90.48
11.2	Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions	7	6.43	1.16	2/7	1	90.48
11.3	Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another	7	6.62	0.67	5/7	1	90.48
11.5	Be opened minded	7	6.43	0.68	5/7	1	90.48
4.1	Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board	7	6.33	1.02	3/7	1	90.47
8.2	Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff	7	6.43	0.81	4/7	1	90.47

Table 4.12 continued

	Statements- Part 1 Effective Practices continued	Median	Mean	SD	Low/High	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7)
10.7	Conduct board business with genuine transparency	7	6.38	1.16	2/7	1	90.47
1.3	Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism	6	6.10	1.00	3/7	1	85.72
5.4	Decisions are made that focus on all students' needs	6	6.24	0.70	5/7	1	85.72
7.6	Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year	6	6.24	0.83	4/7	1	85.72
9.2	Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district	6	6.10	1.14	2/7	1	85.72
11.4	Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints	6	6.24	0.70	5/7	1	85.72
2.1	Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations	6	6.10	0.89	4/7	0	85.72
4.2	School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions	7	6.14	1.35	2/7	1	85.72
8.1	Understand the board's role as leaders; not micromanagers	7	6.38	0.74	5/7	1	85.72
8.4	Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive	7	6.38	0.74	5/7	1	85.72
5.1	Align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan	6	6.10	0.94	4/7	1	80.96
5.3	Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes have occurred	6	6.14	0.85	4/7	1	80.96
5.5	Operate from a common body of knowledge about the school district	6	6.00	1.14	3/7	1	80.96
8.5	Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management	6	5.95	1.28	2/7	1	80.96

Table 4.12 continued

Statements- Part 1 Effective Practices continued		Median	Mean	SD	Low/High	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7)
6.3	Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints	6	6.19	0.68	5/7	1	80.96
7.3	Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team	6	6.10	1.26	2/7	1	80.96
Statements- Part 2 Obstacles		Median	Mean	SD	Low/High	IQR	Consensus (6 or 7)
18.2	A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board	7	6.10	1.48	2/7	1	85.72
16.1	A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board	6	5.95	1.60	2/7	1	85.72
20.2	Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member	6	6.19	0.98	3/7	1	85.72
16.2	Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent	6	6.19	1.03	3/7	1	80.96
16.3	Poor communication between board members and the superintendent	6	5.81	1.75	2/7	1	80.96
20.1	Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice	6	6.19	0.87	4/7	1	80.96

An individual email format was used for round 3. SurveyMonkey did not allow for the customization needed to present individual panelists with their own responses in an anonymous way and was not used. Each panelist received an individualized email introducing the round 3 process and form along with detailed directions for downloading, reviewing, and re-rating the 36 statements in the round 3 Microsoft Word document (Appendices E and F). Spaces were provided for any comments panelists wished to provide (Appendix G).

Of the 21 panelists who participated in round 3, 20 returned forms that indicated changes in ratings and comments or indicated by email that no changes were made. One participant did not return a form or email, and round 2 scores were used for that panelist in the analysis of round 3 ratings. There were very few changes in the descriptive statistics for panelists' ratings between rounds 2 and 3. This result is not that surprising according to Hsu & Sandford (2007), who suggest that only a slight increase in the degree of consensus can be expected between rounds 2 and 3. The slight changes in descriptive statistics indicated that an additional round was not necessary (Table 4.13).

Of the participating panelists, seven participants chose to adjust their ratings based upon round 3 data. One person changed two statements, one person changed three statements, three people changed four statements, one person changed six statements, and one person changed 11 statements. Of the 36 statements that were reconsidered, the ratings of 12 statements remained unchanged between rounds 2 & 3. There were 18 statements that received one re-rating, two statements that had two ratings changed, and 4 statements that had 3 ratings changed. Eleven statements saw an increase in agreement, 22 statements did not change, and three statements had reduced agreement (Table 4.14).

Research Question 1 asked: What processes and practices do expert school board members in Montana identify as components of effective school board governance? Analysis of round 3 data results yielded a set of 17 highly agreed upon effective school board practices that had at least 90% agreement by a panel of expert school board members in Montana (Table 4.15). These 17 practices clustered into 8 categories: Board interactions, board meetings, policy making, the board/superintendent relationship, the

Table 4.13. Changes in descriptive statistics between rounds 2 &amp; 3

Statement #	R2 Mean	R3 Mean	R2 Median	R3 Median	R2 Standard Deviation	R3 Standard Deviation	R2 Consensus (% 6 or 7)	R3 Consensus (% 6 or 7)
Part 1 – effective practice statements								
1.1	6.33	6.33	6	6	0.58	0.58	95.24	95.23
1.2	6.24	6.24	6	6	0.94	0.94	90.48	90.48
1.3	6.10	6.14	6	6	1.00	0.96	85.72	85.71
2.1	6.10	6.14	6	6	0.89	0.79	85.71	85.71
2.2	6.24	6.24	6	6	0.77	0.77	90.48	90.48
3.1	6.48	6.43	7	7	0.93	0.98	95.23	90.48
3.2	6.62	6.57	7	7	0.80	0.81	90.48	90.48
4.1	6.33	6.29	7	7	1.02	1.01	90.47	85.71
4.2	6.14	6.19	7	7	1.35	1.36	85.71	85.71
5.1	6.10	6.19	6	6	0.94	0.81	80.96	85.71
5.3	6.14	6.24	6	6	0.85	0.83	80.96	85.71
5.4	6.24	6.29	6	6	0.70	0.64	85.72	90.48
5.5	6.00	6.00	6	6	1.14	1.14	80.96	80.95
6.3	6.19	6.19	6	6	0.68	0.68	80.95	85.71
7.3	6.10	6.14	6	6	1.26	1.24	80.95	85.71
7.6	6.24	6.19	6	6	0.83	0.87	85.72	80.95
8.1	6.38	6.43	7	7	0.74	0.75	85.71	85.71
8.2	6.43	6.43	7	7	0.81	0.81	90.47	90.48
8.4	6.38	6.52	7	7	0.74	0.68	85.71	90.48
8.5	5.95	6.00	6	6	1.28	1.22	80.96	80.95
9.1	6.24	6.24	6	6	1.14	1.14	90.48	90.48
9.2	6.10	6.14	6	6	1.14	1.11	85.72	90.48
10.1	6.57	6.62	7	7	0.51	0.50	100.00	100.00
10.6	6.62	6.62	7	7	0.59	0.59	95.24	95.23
10.7	6.38	6.38	7	7	1.16	1.16	90.47	90.48
11.1	6.52	6.67	7	7	0.60	0.58	95.24	95.23
11.2	6.43	6.43	7	7	1.16	1.16	90.48	90.48
11.3	6.62	6.62	7	7	0.67	0.67	90.48	90.48
11.4	6.24	6.24	6	6	0.70	0.70	85.72	85.71
11.5	6.43	6.43	7	7	0.68	0.68	90.48	90.48

Note. R2= round 2. R3=round 3.

Table 4.13 continued

Statement #	R2 Mean	R3 Mean	R2 Median	R3 Median	R2 Standard Deviation	R3 Standard Deviation	R2 Consensus (% 6 or 7)	R3 Consensus (% 6 or 7)
Part 2: Challenges to effective practice statements								
16.1	5.95	6.19	6	7	1.60	1.33	85.72	90.48
16.2	6.19	6.33	6	6	1.03	0.73	80.95	85.71
16.3	5.81	6.05	6	7	1.75	1.53	80.95	85.71
18.2	6.10	6.14	7	7	1.48	1.49	85.71	85.71
20.1	6.19	6.24	6	6	0.87	0.77	80.96	80.95
20.2	6.19	6.48	6	7	0.98	0.60	85.72	95.23

*Note.* R2= round 2. R3=round 3.

boards' role, communications, decision making, and strategic planning. Four of the 17 practices were descriptions of board interactions and three were descriptions of board meetings. Two effective practices were identified in the categories of policy making, the board/superintendent relationship, the boards' role, and communications. The remaining categories, containing one effective practice each were: decision making and strategic planning.

At a lesser level of agreement, five additional effective practice statements were agreed with by panelists at an 80% to 90% agreement level (Table 4.16). These statements were in the categories of board discussion, communications with the community and board training.

Research Question 2 asked: What challenges do expert school board members in Montana identify as obstacles to effective school board governance? Analysis of round 3 data resulted in two highly agreed upon obstacles to effective school board governance using a 90% rate of agreement (Table 4.17). The two categories that contained these two statements of obstacles were: the board/superintendent relationship and lack of training.

Table 4.14. Consensus: Changes in percentage of agreement at a 6 or 7

Statement number	Round 2	Round 3	Increased agreement	Same	Decreased agreement
1.1	95.24	95.23		X	
1.2	90.48	90.48		X	
1.3	85.72	85.71		X	
2.1	85.71	85.71		X	
2.2	90.48	90.48		X	
3.1	95.23	90.48			X
3.2	90.48	90.48		X	
4.1	90.47	85.71			X
4.2	85.71	85.71		X	
5.1	80.96	85.71	X		
5.3	80.96	85.71	X		
5.4	85.72	90.48	X		
5.5	80.96	80.95		X	
6.3	80.95	85.71	X		
7.3	80.95	85.71	X		
7.6	85.72	80.95			X
8.1	85.71	85.71		X	
8.2	90.47	90.48		X	
8.4	85.71	90.48	X		
8.5	80.96	80.95		X	
9.1	90.48	90.48		X	
9.2	85.72	90.48	X		
10.1	100.00	100.00		X	
10.6	95.24	95.23		X	
10.7	90.47	90.48		X	
11.1	95.24	95.23		X	
11.2	90.48	90.48		X	
11.3	90.48	90.48		X	
11.4	85.72	85.71		X	
11.5	90.48	90.48		X	
16.1	85.72	90.48	X		
16.2	80.95	85.71	X		
16.3	80.95	85.71	X		
18.2	85.71	85.71		X	
20.1	80.96	80.95		X	
20.2	85.72	95.23	X		
Total			11	22	3

Table 4.15. Round 3 effective practices with at least 90% consensus in categories

Category		Highly agreed upon statements	% consensus	# of statements
Board interactions	11.1	Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other	95.23	4
	11.2	Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions	90.48	
	11.3	Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another	90.48	
	11.5	Be opened minded	90.48	
Board meetings	10.1	Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials	100.00	3
	10.6	Have an effective and competent board chair	95.23	
	10.7	Conduct board business with genuine transparency	90.48	
Policy Making	1.1	Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations	95.23	2
	1.2	Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated	90.48	
The board/ superintendent relationship	3.1	Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent	90.48	2
	3.2	Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process	90.48	
Board Role	8.2	Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff	90.48	2
	8.4	Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive	90.48	
Communications	9.1	Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others	90.48	2
	9.2	Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district	90.48	
Decision Making	5.4	Decisions are made that focus on all students' needs	90.48	1
Strategic Planning	2.2	Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values	90.48	1

Table 4.16. Round 3 effective practices with between 80% and 90% consensus in categories

Category		Highly agreed upon statements	% consensus	# of statements
Board Discussion	4.1	Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board	85.71	2
	4.2	School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education	85.71	
Communications with the Community	6.3	Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints	85.71	1
Board Training	7.3	Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team	85.71	2
	7.6	Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year	80.95	

Table 4.17. Round 3 obstacles statements in categories with at least 90% consensus in categories

Category		Highly agreed upon statements	% consensus	# of statements
The Board / Superintendent Relationship	16.1	A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board	90.48	1
Lack of Training	20.2	Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member	95.23	1

At a lesser level of agreement, one additional obstacle statement was agreed with by panelists at an 80% to 90% agreement level (Table 4.18). This statement was in the category of board dysfunction.

Table 4.18. Round 3 obstacles statements in categories with between 80% and 90% consensus in categories

Category	Highly agreed upon statements	% consensus	# of statements
Board Dysfunction	18.2 A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board	85.71	1

### Round 3 Differences by District Size

Research questions three and six sought to identify any differences in responses of trustees serving in different sized school districts. District size was measured using the Montana High School Association's (MSHA) classification method (Table 4.19). Elementary school districts that do not have a high school were grouped into the Independent Elementary school district category. One panelist from an Independent Elementary district participated in round 2, but did not participate in round 3.

Table 4.19. Description and participation rates of MSHA school district size groups in round 3.

District size classification	Response percent	Response count	June 2016 enrollment by class
Class AA	9.5	2	1000+
Class A	38.1	8	142-802
Class B	14.3	3	108-354
Class C	38.1	8	4-128
Other -Independent Elementary	0	0	1-1513
Total	100.00	21	

Group mean scores were calculated for each school district class size in order to examine round 3 results for differences in responses between MSHA district classifications (Table 4.20). The variability between each of the four sizes of school districts and the total group means showed more differences in the districts that had fewer

Table 4.20. Means for MHS district class sizes

Round 3 Statements	Group means					Range from mean (all)	
	Class AA n=2	Class A n=8	Class B n=3	Class C n=8	All n=21	High (mean +.5)	Low (mean -.5)
1.1	6.50	6.00	6.67	6.50	6.33	6.83	5.83
1.2	7.00	6.38	5.00	6.38	6.24	6.74	5.74
1.3	6.50	6.13	6.00	6.13	6.14	6.64	5.64
2.1	6.00	6.00	6.33	6.25	6.14	6.64	5.64
2.2	5.50	6.13	6.33	6.50	6.24	6.74	5.74
3.1	7.00	6.13	6.33	6.63	6.43	6.93	5.93
3.2	7.00	6.38	6.67	6.63	6.57	7.00	6.07
4.1	6.50	6.38	6.33	6.13	6.29	6.79	5.79
4.2	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.38	6.19	6.69	5.69
5.1	6.50	5.88	6.33	6.38	6.19	6.69	5.69
5.3	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.50	6.24	6.74	5.74
5.4	6.50	6.13	6.33	6.38	6.29	6.79	5.79
5.5	6.00	5.75	6.33	6.13	6.00	6.50	5.50
6.3	6.00	6.13	6.33	6.25	6.19	6.69	5.69
7.3	5.50	6.38	6.67	5.88	6.14	6.64	5.64
7.6	6.50	6.38	5.67	6.13	6.19	6.69	5.69
8.1	6.50	6.25	6.67	6.50	6.43	6.93	5.93
8.2	6.00	6.25	6.67	6.63	6.43	6.93	5.93
8.4	6.50	6.38	6.67	6.63	6.52	7.00	6.02
8.5	6.00	6.00	6.33	5.88	6.00	6.50	5.50
9.1	6.50	6.38	6.33	6.00	6.24	6.74	5.74
9.2	6.50	6.13	6.67	5.88	6.14	6.64	5.64
10.1	7.00	6.38	6.67	6.75	6.62	7.00	6.12
10.6	6.50	6.63	7.00	6.50	6.62	7.00	6.12
10.7	7.00	6.50	6.67	6.00	6.38	6.88	5.88
11.1	7.00	6.75	6.33	6.63	6.67	7.00	6.17
11.2	6.00	6.63	7.00	6.13	6.43	6.93	5.93
11.3	7.00	6.50	7.00	6.50	6.62	7.00	6.12
11.4	6.00	6.25	6.67	6.13	6.24	6.74	5.74
11.5	6.50	6.50	6.67	6.25	6.43	6.93	5.93
16.1	6.50	6.00	6.67	6.13	6.19	6.69	5.69
16.2	6.50	6.25	6.00	6.50	6.33	6.83	5.83
16.3	6.50	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.05	6.55	5.55

*Note.* Yellow indicates a score that is at least .5 higher than the overall mean. Green indicates a score that is at least .5 lower than the overall mean.

Table 4.20 continued

Round 3 Statements	Group means					Range from mean (all)	
	Class AA n=2	Class A n=8	Class B n=3	Class C n=8	All n=21	High (mean +.5)	Low (mean -.5)
18.2	7.00	5.88	5.33	6.50	6.14	6.64	5.64
20.1	6.50	6.00	6.33	6.38	6.24	6.74	5.74
20.2	6.50	6.50	6.33	6.50	6.48	6.98	5.98

*Note.* Yellow indicates a score that is at least .5 higher than the overall mean. Green indicates a score that is at least .5 lower than the overall mean.

panelists participating in the study. Two panelists belonged to Class AA sized districts and had six statements that differed by at least .5 from the group means. Three panelists represented Class B sized districts and had eight statements that differed by at least 0.5 from the group means. The Class A and C districts, both with eight panelists each, were most closely aligned with the group means scores and had no statements that differed by at least 0.5 from the group means. These findings would seem to indicate a greater occurrence of response differences based upon the numbers of participants in each school district class represented in the survey (Table 4.21). Although differences were found between district class sizes, it is difficult to attribute these differences of ratings solely to differences of opinions between school board members who belong to different sized districts.

Table 4.21. Number of responses that differed from the group mean scores.

District size	Number of panelists	Higher than group mean	Lower than group mean
Class AA	2	4	2
Class A	8	0	0
Class B	3	3	5
Class C	8	0	0

Rating Differences in Class AA Districts

The members of the Class AA districts rated three effective practices statements with a 7 (highly effective) which was at least 0.5 higher than the group means scores (Table 4.22). Those statements were: 1.2 Use the board policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated; 3.1 Maintain open communications and trust with the district superintendent; and 10.7 Conduct board business with genuine transparency. One obstacle to effective governance statement was rated a 7 (strongly agree) which was also at least 0.5 higher than the group means scores: 18.2 A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consensus of the full board. Two effective practices statements were rated at least 0.5 lower than the group means indicating less emphasis on these statements by Class AA members: 2.2

Table 4.22. Statements that showed differences between district class size and group means scores.

Round 3 Statements	Group means					Range from mean (all)	
	Class AA n=2	Class A n=8	Class B n=3	Class C n=8	All n=21	High (mean +.5)	Low (mean -.5)
1.2	7.00	6.38	5.00	6.38	6.24	6.74	5.74
2.2	5.50	6.13	6.33	6.50	6.24	6.74	5.74
3.1	7.00	6.13	6.33	6.63	6.43	6.93	5.93
4.2	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.38	6.19	6.69	5.69
5.3	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.50	6.24	6.74	5.74
7.3	5.50	6.38	6.67	5.88	6.14	6.64	5.64
7.6	6.50	6.38	5.67	6.13	6.19	6.69	5.69
9.2	6.50	6.13	6.67	5.88	6.14	6.64	5.64
10.7	7.00	6.50	6.67	6.00	6.38	6.88	5.88
11.2	6.00	6.63	7.00	6.13	6.43	6.93	5.93
18.2	7.00	5.88	5.33	6.50	6.14	6.64	5.64

Note. Color indicates a score that fell + or - .5 from the all mean score. Yellow indicates a score that is at least .5 higher than the overall mean. Green indicates a score that is at least .5 lower than the overall mean.

Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values; and 7.3 Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team.

#### Rating Differences in Class B Districts

The members of the Class B districts rated one effective practices statement with a 7 (highly effective) which was at least 0.5 higher than the other groups. That statement was: 11.2 Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions. Two statements were rated with a 6.667 (6 = effective) which was also at least 0.5 higher than the group means: 7.3 Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team, and 9.2 Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district

The panelists from Class B school districts rated four effective practices statements lower than the group means by at least 0.5: 1.2 Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated; 4.2 School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education; 5.3 Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes have occurred; and 7.6 Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year. The ratings of these statements seem to indicate that school board members in Class B districts do not agree as strongly as school boards in other sized districts that these are effective practices.

The panelists from Class B school districts rated one obstacle statement lower than the group mean by at least 0.5: 18.2 A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consensus of the full board. This seems to indicate that school board members in Class B districts do not agree as strongly as school boards in other sized districts that this is an obstacle to effective school board governance.

#### Rating Differences in Class A and C Districts

The Class A and C sized district panelists' responses were most closely aligned with the group means. Their scores on all statements of effective practices and obstacles to effective governance differed from the group means by less than 0.5.

#### Means Score Range Differences

A second method was used to analyze differences between district class size groups. The range of class mean scores was calculated to determine the difference between the highest class mean score and the lowest class mean score (Table 4.23). A small range indicated closer agreement between all district class group sizes and a larger range indicated more disagreement between the district class size groups. The smallest range was 0.17 and the largest range was 2.0 (Tables 4.24 and 4.25).

#### Summary of Results

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify agreed upon effective school board governance practices in Montana from the perspectives of currently seated school board members and to also identify agreed upon obstacles to effective school board

Table 4.23. Range of highest and lowest district class size group mean scores

Statement #	Class AA n=2	Class A n=8	Class B n=3	Class C n=8	Range
1.1	6.50	6.00	6.67	6.50	0.67
1.2	7.00	6.38	5.00	6.38	2.00
1.3	6.50	6.13	6.00	6.13	0.50
2.1	6.00	6.00	6.33	6.25	0.33
2.2	5.50	6.13	6.33	6.50	1.00
3.1	7.00	6.13	6.33	6.63	0.87
3.2	7.00	6.38	6.67	6.63	0.62
4.1	6.50	6.38	6.33	6.13	0.37
4.2	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.38	0.83
5.1	6.50	5.88	6.33	6.38	0.62
5.3	6.50	6.13	5.67	6.50	0.83
5.4	6.50	6.13	6.33	6.38	0.37
5.5	6.00	5.75	6.33	6.13	0.58
6.3	6.00	6.13	6.33	6.25	0.33
7.3	5.50	6.38	6.67	5.88	1.17
7.6	6.50	6.38	5.67	6.13	0.83
8.1	6.50	6.25	6.67	6.50	0.42
8.2	6.00	6.25	6.67	6.63	0.67
8.4	6.50	6.38	6.67	6.63	0.29
8.5	6.00	6.00	6.33	5.88	0.45
9.1	6.50	6.38	6.33	6.00	0.50
9.2	6.50	6.13	6.67	5.88	0.79
10.1	7.00	6.38	6.67	6.75	0.62
10.6	6.50	6.63	7.00	6.50	0.50
10.7	7.00	6.50	6.67	6.00	1.00
11.1	7.00	6.75	6.33	6.63	0.67
11.2	6.00	6.63	7.00	6.13	1.00
11.3	7.00	6.50	7.00	6.50	0.50
11.4	6.00	6.25	6.67	6.13	0.67
11.5	6.50	6.50	6.67	6.25	0.42
16.1	6.50	6.00	6.67	6.13	0.67
16.2	6.50	6.25	6.00	6.50	0.50
16.3	6.50	6.00	6.00	6.00	0.50
18.2	7.00	5.88	5.33	6.50	1.67
20.1	6.50	6.00	6.33	6.38	0.50
20.2	6.50	6.50	6.33	6.50	0.17

Note. Green indicates highest mean score per statement; pink indicates lowest mean score per statement.

Table 4.24. Effective practices statements ordered by range of group means scores

Statement #	Statement	Range
8.4	Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive	0.29
2.1	Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations	0.33
6.3	Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints	0.33
4.1	Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board	0.37
5.4	Decisions are made that focus on all students' needs	0.37
8.1	Understand the board's role as leaders; not micromanagers	0.42
11.5	Be opened minded,	0.42
8.5	Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management	0.45
1.3	Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism	0.50
9.1	Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others	0.50
10.6	Have an effective and competent board chair	0.50
11.3	Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another	0.50
5.5	Operate from a common body of knowledge about the school district	0.58
3.2	Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process	0.62
5.1	Align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan	0.62
10.1	Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials	0.62
1.1	Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations	0.67
8.2	Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff	0.67
11.1	Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other	0.67
11.4	Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints	0.67
9.2	Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district	0.79
4.2	School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education	0.83
5.3	Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes have occurred	0.83
7.6	Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year	0.83
3.1	Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent	0.87
2.2	Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values	1.00
10.7	Conduct board business with genuine transparency	1.00

Table 4.24 continued

Statement #	Statement	Range
11.2	Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions	1.00
7.3	Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team	1.17
1.2	Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated	2.00

Table 4.25. Obstacles statements ordered by range of group means scores

Statement #	Statement	Range
20.2	Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member	0.17
16.2	Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent	0.50
16.3	Poor communication between board members and the superintendent	0.50
20.1	Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice	0.50
16.1	A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board	0.67
18.2	A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board	1.67

governance. Additionally, the study sought to identify and describe any differences of opinions that occurred between panelists belonging to different sized school districts.

A Delphi methodology was used to reach a consensus of opinions by a selected sample of currently seated school board members in the state of Montana. The Delphi technique contains both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Online survey software (SurveyMonkey) and emails were used to deliver the surveys to the panelists. SurveyMonkey was used to deliver rounds 1 and 2 and direct emails were used to deliver round 3.

Panelists were selected for participation based upon their membership level in the MTSBA's School Board Academy. All 102 gold and silver level members were invited to participate with 27 responding positively. Twenty-three school board members

participated in round 1. Twenty –one panelists participated in rounds 2 and 3. Only current school board members in Montana were eligible to participate as members of the MTSBA School Board Academy.

The first round of the Delphi study asked participants open-ended questions about which school board practices they believed contributed most to effective school board governance and what obstacles to effective school board governance were encountered. Qualitative data analysis techniques were used to identify 117 effective practice statements and 84 obstacles to effective governance statements. These initially identified statements were reduced to 50 effective practices statements and 45 obstacles statements by eliminating duplicates and combining similar statements. These statements were subsequently presented to panelists in round 2.

In round 2, panelists rated each of the 95 statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Descriptive statistics were computed for round 2 responses. Mean, median, range, standard deviation, and interquartile range scores were calculated for each statement. Statements that met three previously determined consensus criteria were identified from this data. In order to meet these criteria, at least 80% of the panelists must have rated a statement at either a 6 or a 7, the median score of the statement must have been at least a 6, and the interquartile ranges must have been a 1 or smaller. Thirty statements of effective governance and six statements of obstacles to effective governance met these criteria.

In the round 3 survey, panelists received an individually emailed Word document which presented them with their own scores and the groups' scores. Panelists were given

an opportunity to re-rate these 36 statements in light of the information presented. They were also able to make comments about why they kept or changed their ratings as well as any general comments. Descriptive statistics conducted on round 3 showed very few changes between rounds 2 and 3 and indicated that an additional round to reach consensus was not needed. Refinement of round 3 results yielded a set of 17 highly agreed upon effective school board practices and a two highly agreed upon obstacles to effective governance. The following chapter will present conclusions, implications, and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the major findings. Also, current study findings are compared with past research to illustrate ways that this study supports or challenges previous studies. This chapter also includes a discussion of the implications, suggestions for future research, and concludes with an overall summary of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify agreed upon effective school board governance practices in Montana from the perspectives of currently seated school board members. Additionally, the study sought to identify agreed upon obstacles to effective school board governance, and to determine whether school board members in different sized districts employed different practices.

The study began with a review of the literature to uncover effective school board governance practices identified from previous research. School board effectiveness has been investigated in a variety of ways. Meta-analyses have been conducted to discover relationships between school board governance and student achievement (Land, 2002; Marzano and Waters, 2009). Comparative studies looked at boards from low achieving and high achieving districts and compared them to detect what the boards in the high

achieving districts did differently (Caruso, Logee, & Sessler, 2015; Delagardelle, 2008; IASB, 2000; IASB, 2007). Case studies were conducted that focused on quickly improving school districts to determine what those districts did differently- including their boards (Togneri & Anderson, 2006; Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997).

While efforts to improve school board effectiveness are supported by recent research, the description of effective governance practices has varied widely. Additionally, few recent studies have focused on experts' evaluation of the practices that contribute to effective school board governance and the obstacles encountered that interfere with effective governance.

### Methodology

Using a Delphi research methodology, expert school board members in Montana were invited to relate their experiences and opinions in a three-round survey process. The first survey included open-ended questions where panelists offered their opinions about effective school board practices and about the obstacles they encountered to effective governance. The online platform, SurveyMonkey, was used to deliver the round 1 questions. Using qualitative coding methods, statements of effective practices and obstacles to effectiveness were identified. These statements were condensed and categorized into 12 major areas of effective governance and 12 additional categories of obstacles. These statements were then presented to the panelists, via the online SurveyMonkey platform, who were asked to rate these statements using a 1 (low) to 7 (high) Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were calculated to identify the statements that were most highly agreed with by the experts. In round 3, panelists were provided with

their own scores, along with the scores of the group, and were asked to reconsider their responses in light of this information. Panelists were able to keep or change their ratings and were able to provide comments to explain their scores and decisions.

The results of the round 3 survey form a set of best practices for effective school board governance that can be used by new and experienced school board members for self-evaluation and to improve the effectiveness of the school board as a governing body. Results can also be used to develop educational training sessions about effective governance practices for school board members.

### Problem

Although effective school board governance practices have been previously studied, few recent studies have focused on experts' evaluation of what practices they believe contribute to effective school board governance. It was also unknown if district size contributed to school boards members' opinions about effective practices. Additionally, few studies have focused on identifying the obstacles encountered to effective school board governance.

### Findings

#### Findings about Effective School Board Practices

Research question 1 was: What processes and practices do expert school board members in Montana identify as components of effective school board governance? Research question 2 asked: To what extent do board members agree on these identified practices and processes of effective governance? Table 4.15 reports the general

categories and defining statements that the expert panelists highly agreed with and each of these eight categories will be discussed in this section.

Board Interactions. Expert panelists identified positive board interactions as an important component of effective school board governance. In fact, this category included four highly agreed with statements, more than any other category. This category, board interactions, refers to the manner in which board members interact with each other through both actions and words. Effective boards operate with integrity. They treat each other with respect, patience, and tolerance even though they may disagree with each other or share vastly different backgrounds and experiences. They are honest with each other, even through conflict. They work hard to establish a board culture that encourages all board members to share their opinions openly and to ask questions to add to their own understanding of the issues they face. They are open-minded; willing to actively listen to fellow board members and seek to understand their various viewpoints. Effective boards communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another. Effective boards set a model for the district in the ways that they interact with each other. In the current study, one panelist said that “Trust is important with board members, staff and the community” (P19).

Previous studies also identified board interactions as major components of effective board governance. Smoley (1999) found that effective “boards exhibit the characteristics of well-functioning groups; a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values” (p. xvii). He further explained that they operate with norms, they act on values, and show respect to one another. Togneri & Anderson (2006), in their *Beyond*

*Islands of Excellence* study found that effective school boards, “strove for consensus and collegiality, and members acted respectfully toward one another in public discourse” (p. 33). When they did encounter philosophical differences, they were able to respectfully work through those differences.

Additionally, Lorentzen (2013) reported that the “board provides responsible school governance by conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner” (p. 57). Ford and Ihrke (2015) likewise found that effective board practices include “being open and honest with one another” (p. 11).

Board Meetings. The second most highly represented category was the board meetings category. This category refers to the mechanics, processes, procedures, and routines followed by the school board during their board meetings. Panelists agreed that the most important practice contributing to effective school board governance was coming to all scheduled monthly meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing the informational materials provided by the superintendent. This practice was the only practice that all panelists agreed with at a 100% level. Next, they agreed that effective governance is dependent upon selecting an effective and competent board chairperson. Lastly, in this category, panelists agreed that effective boards should conduct all board business with genuine transparency. As representatives of the public, it is important to hold open and honest discussions in front of the public and in open meetings. The times and places of all board meetings and committees should be adequately published so that any interested parties are able to attend. One panelist further explained this by reporting:

Being a board member is a lot more than attending two meetings. Attending training sessions, listening sessions at the school, being prepared by having read all 150 pages of the agenda packet – these are critical to being informed and making good decisions. Leadership helps make sure this happens. (P19)

Smoley (1999) also identified all three of these effective practices in his research with Delaware school boards. Concerning the importance of board president leadership, Smoley stated that “The board shows clear evidence of leadership. Usually, but not always the board president takes the lead” (p. 36). One of his interviewees explained:

The president is responsible for building consensus. There is a need to be open and honest and above board, not to pit one board member against another...to be knowledgeable...get a feeling for how particular board members think. Answer questions to get them to go along with the others; figure out what hang-ups they have. (p. 31)

He also noted that a common norm for smooth board operations included recognition that, “Board members invest the time and effort to review materials and participate in meetings” (p. 34). Smoley also reported on the importance of preparing for and providing for public discussion during school board meetings, “The use of public sessions is deliberate in preserving open discussion of all issues not protected by law “(p. 32).

Lee and Eadens (2014) researched high, medium, and low achieving school districts by observing 115 online school board meetings and using a standard protocol to analyze the meetings. They found that high and medium performing districts listened respectfully and attentively to whomever was speaking and that board members shared in discussions, as opposed to being dominated by any one individual board member. Discussions were also more likely to be focused on student achievement.

Policy Making. The third category was policy making which included two highly agreed upon practices. The policy making role of the school board is included in the Montana Code Annotated (2015) as a responsibility of the board and it outlines several required board adopted policies. Expert panelists recognized the importance of this role by agreeing that effective board governance means acting as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations. They also agreed that using an outside board policy service, such as the one provided through the Montana School Boards Association helps keep board policies updated on a regular schedule.

A third effective practice in the policy making category suggests that it is not enough to make and adopt policies; but boards must also know, study, and adhere to the policies themselves for consistency and to avoid favoritism. Two expert panelists added their perspectives to the importance of policy making to effective school board governance:

In my view a strong school board serves as a policy making board, hiring and supervising as needed the right people to carry out those policies. This should be done in conjunction with a long range strategic plan, so that all policies and application of those policies serves to move the school board in the right direction. (P19)

This is often quite time consuming and a challenge for many board members. Utilizing the policy and procedure manuals as designed ensures effective practice. (P21)

The National School Boards Association (2015) lists policy making as one of its five key works of an effective school board:

Policy is how a board sustainably exercises power to serve students. Through policy, school boards establish a set of cohesive guidelines to

transform vision into reality. Board policy should not be cluttered. Policy should include only those topics pertinent to the implementation of the board's vision. Effective school boards perform effectively through well-crafted policy. Effective policy and board operations are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time establishing the infrastructure and operations required to drive student achievement. (p. 4)

Past research also supports the importance of policy making to effective school board governance. Togneri and Anderson (2006) found that, "School boards were policy and accountability driven. In addition, the boards took their policy roles seriously and promulgated policies to support instructional reform" (p.33). Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997) reported that effective boards, "Focus school board meetings on policy, action required by law and recognition of outstanding students, staff, and citizens" (p. 6).

The Board/ Superintendent Relationship. The board/superintendent relationship is the fourth category to include effective practice statements highly agreed upon by the panel of experts. Panelists recognized the importance of the relationship between the superintendent and the board as the superintendent is hired by the board to carry out the policies of the board and to provide day-to-day leadership to the district. They agreed that hiring a good superintendent was perhaps one of the most important activities that the board undertakes. Also, it was important to maintain open communications and to place trust in the superintendent. A good superintendent evaluation process helped keep the board and superintendent on the same page. Panelists shared:

If there is not good communication with the superintendent, and you cannot trust them to carry out policies with the LRSP (long range strategic plan) in mind, you need a new superintendent. They are the kingpin to running the district. (P19)

Hiring a competent superintendent is clearly a very important task. Almost everything else is secondary. (P21)

The NSBA (2015) found the board/superintendent relationship to be an important component of effective school board governance and included it is one of their five key work action areas. In their recent revision to the *Key Works of School Boards* (NSBA, 2015), they report:

Simply put, the Board/Superintendent relationship is pivotal. Boards simply cannot be effective without effective superintendents in place. Both the school board and the superintendent have essential leadership roles that are interconnected but unique: The school board governs the school system; the superintendent administers it. (p. 4)

Lorentzen and McCaw (2015, p. 62) also discussed the importance of clear board/superintendent roles and boundaries. Their Balanced Governance approach is based upon the concept that there are some things only a board should do, and some things only a superintendent should do, and an area of overlap where they must work together. The first of seven prioritized elements representing a Balanced Governance approach is: “Effective boards hold the school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations by evaluating the superintendent on clear and focused expectations” (p. 56). The sixth element is: “The board models responsible school district governance by working as an effective and collaborative team” (p. 57).

Ford and Ihrke (2015) studied Wisconsin school boards to determine if adherence to NSBA’s Key Works of School Boards principles was related to higher student achievement. Their results supported the tenet that school boards behave effectively when they are governing in partnership with their superintendent. Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) also emphasized the importance of school boards and superintendents

working together as a true leadership team, “Above all else, the school boards and their superintendents in these high-performing districts work collaboratively on behalf of children” (p. 16). They also recognized a high level of mutual trust.

The Boards’ Role. The fifth effective practices category in the current study is the board’s role. The board’s role refers to the ways in which board members view their work in relation to the operations and governance in the entire district. This includes how the board works with the superintendent, other staff, and the community; as well as the kinds of work that the board and its committees focus on. Expert panelists highly agreed that the board’s role is to provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive. In short, the school board creates the climate in which students and staff can best learn and grow. Panelists believed that this is accomplished by delegating authority to the superintendent to manage the district and to provide the educational leadership necessary for district improvement. Additionally, they agreed that the board needs to understand its role as leaders in the district, not micromanagers. Their job is to focus on the strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to the day-to-day management. Panelists provided additional comments about the board’s role:

The Board’s Role- “not micromanagers” - as a board you need to make sure the Superintendent is doing his/her job- as well as the Principals, just because they say things are getting completed or handled I believe the Board sometimes needs to verify it. When it comes to firing (or “without cause”) a teacher the Board needs to know that everything has been documented (evaluations have been completed every year on staff members) etc. (P16)

A second panelist said:

Establish policy, then trust but verify. It is still the board's responsibility to provide oversight, but not to micromanage. The clear purpose for the board needs to be first outlined by the community, then defined by the board. The LRSP (long range strategic plan) should be the focus for all decision making, and hopefully centers around the students and staff. The goals and initiatives should flow from this, not be separate. When not connected to the LRSP, teachers and staff feel overwhelmed by all the different initiatives going on. (P19)

In Alsbury's (2015) recent book chapter, *A Call for Balanced Governance*, he provides support for boards and superintendents each focusing on their unique, but overlapping roles. His model, called Balanced Governance "supports and promotes balance – discouraging micromanaging on one end of the governance continuum and a disengaged, rubber-stamping board on the other" (p. 9). This balance is individual to each board/superintendent team, with each fulfilling a separate but overlapping role. The last of Lorentzen's (2013) seven prioritized elements representing a Balanced Governance approach emphasized that effective board members exercised their authority discreetly and stood firm when necessary.

Smoley (1999) also elaborated on the importance of the balance between the board and superintendent roles when defining what the board's role should be:

In discussing their ability to act effectively, board members speak of the need to negotiate the delicate balance between exercising authority and supporting the school district's chief executive. Traditional governance wisdom suggests that you hire the best chief executive and then get out of his or her way. Board interviews indicate that it's not that simple. The superintendent's recommendation may be clearly contrary to the board's sense of what is important or supported by the community, or the superintendent may violate a prior understanding of proposed action. In these and other situations, boards feel they must exercise independent authority. In addition, the community often wants to see the board as independent of the superintendent. If the superintendent's

recommendations are always approved, the board may be viewed as not sufficiently monitoring administrative actions. (p. 43)

Additionally, Togneri and Anderson (2006) found the board's role was that of policy maker, holding the superintendent accountable for progress but not engaging in the daily administration of schools (p. 33).

Communications. The sixth category of effective practices in the current study is communications. In this category, communications refers to both internal and external communications between board members, with the superintendent, the staff, and the community. It refers to the ways in which the board communicates with others and also to the ways in which the board listens to the input of others. Although related to the board interactions category, communications encompasses a broader scope than what takes place inside a board meeting and includes both the internal and external communities.

Panelists agreed that communications between board members must be clear and should include listening to others. They also agreed that it is important to establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay informed about the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to run a school district. One panelist commented:

Having board leadership meet with the other members individually or in small groups to talk about process and communication, not individual issues, can be very important in maintaining communication and allowing board members the opportunity to be heard. (P19)

Smoley (1999) also acknowledged the importance of the flow of communications as one of his six components of effective board governance, connecting to the community. Referring to the outside community he said, "The board provides for an

open flow of relevant information to and from the community. Board members included in their examples of effective board action the way in which they promote the flow of information and understanding between community and board' (p. 58-59). He also addressed connections with the internal community by stressing the importance of obtaining input, explaining actions, and facilitating communications with teachers and other staff.

One of NSBA's (2011) eight characteristics of an effective school board specifically addressed developing a collaborative relationship with staff and the community by establishing a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

Decision Making. The seventh category of effective practices in the current study is decision making. Decision making refers to the manner in which a school board makes its decisions. Panelists highly agreed that first and foremost all decisions should be made in the best interests of all students. Boards make many decisions, taking the form of motions and votes, during each board meeting and students' interests must always come first. Sometimes, boards discover conflicting interests when considering the needs of students and staff members, both groups for whom the board is responsible. Competing interests may also be encountered when considering a need for adding or maintaining student services versus the need to keep taxes low for community members. In these cases, panelists agree that decisions must be made that consider students' interests first.

Panelists also agreed, to a lesser degree, that it is important to align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan. Many boards use their strategic plan

as the lens through which all decisions are made and resources are allocated. Also, panelists believed it important to unite behind and support decisions once they are discussed and voted upon in board meetings. Although disagreements may occur and differing opinions may be voiced during board meetings, once a decision has been made, individual board members agree that a united front contributes to effective governance.

Panelists also found it important that board members operate from a common body of knowledge to the extent that it is possible. Although board members have different personal experiences based upon their own occupations, education levels, and contacts with the community; information that is provided to one board member should be provided to all board members. An exception to this may occur when boards authorize committees to work on their behalf. Eventually, however, committees must share information they have considered when the board must take action on an agenda item.

Some panelists further explained their opinions about board decision making:

Board members may disagree, but once a decision has been made, it is the duty of each board member to unite and make the decision work. Board training should make sure that the entire board is working from a common body of knowledge, preferably based on research and best practices. (P19)

We need to work with our experts in education when deciding how to adapt urban solutions to our rural schools (yes, even my town is technically rural). (P19)

I do feel strongly that decisions should align with the strategic plan, should focus on students, and the board should definitely unify behind the majority decision! (P20)

In his 1999 study, Smoley discussed how rational board decision making contributed to effective school board governance. “It is no surprise that when board

members are asked what makes them effective, they talk about the way they decide things from virtually automatic appointments to potentially divisive issues” (p. 17). His effective school board governance model places rational decision making as the first area of board effectiveness. In his model, rational decision making contains these four components:

1. Access and use relevant information- relevant information comes from multiple sources, including district staff and community; it is focused on central board concerns such as resolving immediate crises and strengthening longer-term educational results; it is accurate, balanced, and presented as an efficient guide for action. (p. 18)
2. Discuss deliberately – deliberate discussion leading to board decisions are systematic, objective, and open; board members frame issues, consider information and context, and give the time necessary to avoid forcing decisions prematurely; they put aside personal difference, lack hidden agendas, and consider without prejudice the merits of the particular situation or issue; they are honest and forthright in their exchange of viewpoints. (p. 20)
3. Consider alternative actions – Consideration of alternative actions indicates that the discussion reflects different points of view, hears all sides, and assesses the positive and negative consequences of various choices. (p. 23)
4. Work toward consensus – when boards work toward consensus, board members try to find areas of communality; they tolerate ambiguity and recognize the need for compromise and the importance of reaching agreement. (p. 24)

Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, (1997) supported the position that students’ needs should be considered first. Effective school boards, “are strong advocates for children, based on knowledge of student achievement and needs” (p. 6).

Strategic Planning. Although strategic planning was mentioned often by school board members, only one effective practice statement was highly agreed with by school board members. Panelists highly agreed that an effective school board must have a

thorough understanding of the district's (or school's) mission, vision, and values. The mission, vision, and values of board members serve as a foundation for a strategic plan. While having a long range strategic plan was valued by panelists, having the foundational components (mission, vision, values) were necessary precursors to the plan itself. Panelists agreed that the long range strategic plan should be focused on students' needs and community expectations and shared these comments:

A community based LRSP is critical to being a policy making board and keeping your eye on the vision. When such a plan is in place, every decision from expulsions to hiring is done through the filter of that vision. (P19)

Strategic planning is critical in order to set direction and priorities, especially with limited resources. (P19)

Our mission, vision and values are clear and encompassing. Ensuring that those are effectively communicated to the community takes time, dedication and commitment. (P21)

Previous studies lend much support to the importance of a school board operating with a long range strategic plan. Nearly every past study that has investigated school board effectiveness has strategic planning at the heart of effective board governance. One of six components of Smoley's (1999) board effectiveness model is acting strategically. His interviewees identified five components that contributed to effective strategic planning: address critical issues, plan, organize, consider context, and evaluate.

Without specifically mentioning the term strategic planning as one of the NSBA's (2015) five Key Work action areas, developing a common vision and planning for the future is advised:

Vision enables school districts to improve, and school boards set that vision. Effective school boards establish a clear vision with high expectations for quality teaching and learning that supports strong student outcomes. They establish clear and specific goals to move districts forward. Effective

leaders have strong shared beliefs and values about what students can achieve, holding teachers and students accountable to rigorous academic standards. Effective boards are data savvy, accessing the latest credible research aimed at improving teaching and learning and driving continuous improvement. Visionary boards leverage resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals. (p. 3)

Lorentzen (2013) identified two connections between school board effectiveness and high student achievement in the strategic planning process. An effective school board should set and communicate high expectations for student learning while developing clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations. Effective boards also commit to a continuous improvement plan that focuses on student achievement.

As one of their six key tenets, Ford and Ihrke (2015) found that school boards can positively impact student achievement by keeping its strategic plan up-to-date. Togneri and Anderson (2006) described effective boards in this way: “They adopted visions and strategic plans that placed children’s learning needs at the center, and they attempted to implement policies to support the strategic plan” (p. 33). Goodman and Zimmerman (1997) also listed as one of their 41 effective school board characteristics, “Establish a long-term vision and direction for the district” (p. 4).

Three additional categories contained effective practices statements that were agreed with by between 80% and 90% of the expert panelists. The three additional categories were: board discussions with two effective practice statements; communications with the community with one effective practice statement; and board training with two effective practice statements.

Board Discussion. Along with positive board interactions, panelists agreed that the discussions that boards have during board meetings also contributes to effective board

governance. Open dialogue should be encouraged and facilitated by the board chair, the superintendent, and other board members. School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education. Board members acknowledged that, in addition to interacting respectfully and honestly, what the board chooses to discuss also matters.

Board Training. The category of board training contained two effective practice statements. Panelists agreed that board training contributes to effective board governance whether it occurs on site or off site. Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year in order to build a strong leadership team. Some boards choose to accomplish this by bringing training into the board room by scheduling training during work sessions; by bringing in outside experts or by participating in various online webinars or other web based training. Most districts encourage board members to attend training provided by the Montana School Boards Association at either state, regional, or onsite events.

One panelist had this comment about board training: “I think 7.3 should be researched more. Having all the board and the superintendent trained in house gives them the opportunity to get to know each other” (P1). Another panelist said, “Training with and by your administrative team builds communication and helps the board to be educated in their decision making. The MTSBA training also supports that, especially when administrators and board members attend together” (P19).

Communications with the Community. The category about communications with the community contained one effective practice statement. While board members value input from the community, they also understand that board meetings can be derailed when comments from community members become personal. Panelists agree that it is very important to allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints. A competent board chair can often guide a conversation so that members of the public feel satisfied that their concerns have been heard and will be followed up with.

Panelists had these comments about communications with the community:

Listening to the community is important. If an important issue is raised, it should be dealt with according to policies and procedures. Often an issue is raised that the district has no control over, such as property taxes being the only tool for funding schools. Then it is appropriate to listen, and direct to the legislature. People need to feel heard. (P19)

Community input is critical to planning and making decisions. If the community isn't involved, you likely won't get them behind you in order to pass the levy or bond. (P19)

Of course, this is important whenever someone wishes to speak. But our community does not often feel the need to participate. (P20)

#### Findings about Obstacles to Effective Board Governance

Research question 4 was: What challenges do expert school board members in Montana identify as obstacles to effective school board governance? Research question 5 asked: To what extent do board members agree on these identified obstacles to effective governance. Table 4.11 provides a full listing of all 35 obstacles identified by panelists. Table 4.17 reports the general categories and defining statements that the expert panelists highly agreed with and each of these 2 categories will be discussed in this section.

The Board/Superintendent Relationship (Obstacle). Just as expert panelists identified a strong board/superintendent relationship as necessary for effective school board governance, it is not surprising that they also identified a poor relationship as a highly agreed upon obstacle to effective governance. One obstacle statement was highly agreed with and two more were agreed with at a slightly lesser level. Panelists believed the biggest obstacle to being able to carry out their duties as trustees was a superintendent who was not willing to partner with the board. An effective board works in partnership with the superintendent and a superintendent that tends to ‘manage’ a school board by withholding information or ‘going at it alone’ seriously damages the ability of the board to effectively carry out its role. According to panelists, board members who are unwilling to trust the superintendent can also hinder a boards’ ability to act effectively. Without trust running both ways, school district leadership and management suffers. A third agreed upon obstacle was poor communication between board members and the superintendent. Without intentional effort to put a smooth process of communications in place, even the most well-intentioned board and superintendent can reduce the ability of the board to work effectively. One panelist commented, “The board makes policy, the superintendent enacts it. Without agreement, it just doesn’t work” (p. 19).

In the recent Lee and Eadens (2014) study of low-performing school boards, they also found that a poor school board/superintendent relationship can hinder a boards’ effectiveness. In low-performing districts, board members were perceived as having poor working relationships and a lack of collaboration among governance team members.

In the landmark Lighthouse inquiry, Rice et al (2000) also noted that in districts that were not improving student achievement, so called ‘stuck’ districts, board members often cited problems with communication between the superintendent and board. They believed that it was the superintendent’s responsibility to learn and interpret information and then recommend solutions to the board. The superintendent was viewed as ‘owning’ the information. They also reported that the superintendent was their primary source of information and that not all information was shared with them or that it was not shared equally. Some felt left out. Board members felt that their decision-making process consisted of discussing the recommendations from the superintendent and then deciding.

Lack of Training. The second category panelists identified as presenting significant obstacles to effective governance was a lack of training of board members. The most highly agreed upon obstacle to board effectiveness was the presence of board members who don’t understand what they can and can’t do, or should and shouldn’t do. This lack of understanding can affect all aspects of board behavior including the micromanaging of staff members; making promises to special interest groups and community members; and causing disruptions during board meetings. By participating in board training, either on or off site, board members begin to understand their role and legal authority. Experienced board members will admit that this develops over time, but training is crucial. As volunteers with other occupations and interests, board members do not necessarily understand how schools and districts operate and board training is essential to build the knowledge and skills needed to do a good job.

Along with the need for training, a second agreed upon obstacle is encountered when board members are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice. There may be many reasons explaining why board members either will not or cannot attend training. With 'day jobs' and busy families, some newly elected board members may not understand the time it takes to participate in board and committee meetings; to properly inform themselves about board issues; or to prepare for board meetings by studying provided materials. Some board members may believe that the training they receive in their 'day jobs' is all the preparation they need to know to function as a board member. On the other hand, some board members may simply not want to go to board trainings. They may flatly refuse to participate as they perceive training as 'indoctrination'. Panelists had these comments about board members who do not, or will not, attend training:

I have the misfortune of having board members who do not share the idea that board training is a need. Ironically, the board is always in complete support of staff training opportunities. I cannot seem to get them to understand that there isn't any difference. (P12)

Education is a very complicated issue, then add in funding as well. A board member needs education to understand research and best practices, they need to understand their role to be effective. I am very leery when a prospective board member says they don't need training because they know everything. I have been on the board nine years, participate in almost every training opportunity, and I still have so much to learn. (P19)

Occasionally I've served with a trustee who is not trained, and will not seek training. They have a negative effect on positive direction and confidence of the Board. The lack of effort, and lack of respect for fellow trustees casts a pall of (on) operations. (P20)

As past research supports the need for board training, past studies also report that a lack of training can negatively affect board functioning. Lee and Eadens (2014) found in their study of low-performing districts:

If board members from low performing school systems display behavior that is not conducive to high-quality leadership and student learning, training may help. In the governance team, politics and personal agendas become apparent. These barriers should be eliminated if board behavior is to change and board members are to be effective and productive, as they could be. (p. 4)

Board Dysfunction. Board dysfunction was a third category in the obstacles to effective governance data that contained one statement panelists agreed with. Just as board members identified having an effective and competent board chair as an effective board practice, they also noted that having a poor board chair can act as an obstacle to effectiveness. Particularly, panelists felt that a chairperson who acts on his or her own without the consent of the full board is a danger to effective operations. Panelists shared these comments:

I am our board chair and (name omitted) would ring my neck if I took action on my own. Just the look she can give is enough. (P1)

Even the chair is just a member – they cannot take action without the board. They lead the board, but also need to listen and build consensus before acting. A chairperson who takes action will destroy the trust relationship with other board members, school staff and the community. (P19)

### Differences Between District Sizes

Research question 3 explored whether school boards in larger or smaller sized school districts had certain practices that were more or less effective depending upon the size of the district. Research question 3 was: Do experts' perceptions of effective school

board practices differ by district size? For obstacles encountered, research question 6 asked: Do experts' perceptions of identified obstacles differ by district size?

While the current study did find differences between panelists' responses in the four district size classes studied, the reasons for these differences were not clear. Classes AA and B group means scores differed from the whole group mean scores the most. However, due to the small number of panelists in each of these two groups, it is difficult to attribute mean score differences completely to differences of opinions held by members of those district class sizes. Class AA group mean scores showed four effective practice and obstacle statements as higher than the whole group mean scores and two statements that were lower than the whole group means. Class B group means showed three statements as higher and five statements as lower than the whole group means. Classes A and C did not show any scores that differed from the whole group mean scores by more than 0.5.

Ten effective practices statements and one obstacle statement had both a larger range in the mean group scores and more than a 0.5 difference from the mean score for the whole group (Table 4.20). This seems to indicate that for these 11 statements fewer scores occurred at either the high or low score extremes and that most scores fell nearer the overall mean score. Indeed, Class AA had two members and Class B had three members while Classes A and C had eight members each. Thus, while differences in panelists' responses occurred between the different group sizes, it is difficult to attribute the differences to actual differences of opinions rather than to the small size of the group.

Limited research exists about differences in effective governance practices between small and large districts. While the unique needs of rural school districts are well supported by the literature (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2016), differences in rural school board behaviors and practices have not been adequately studied. Harris and Webster (2009) conducted a study about the connections between rural Missouri school board governance and student achievement. They found that effective rural school boards in Missouri prioritized three areas that contributed to effective rural school board governance. These three areas were: having a focus on student achievement; having a positive and open school board/ superintendent relationship, and participating in school board training. These findings align with the overall findings in the current study and support an inference that effective school board practices in small and large school districts are similar.

### Implications

#### Implications for Theory

The current research produced a set of effective school board practices that contributes to an emerging theory of contemporary school board effectiveness. Past studies have generated sets of effective practices and these various sets have been shaped by the research questions they addressed. Some lists were generated through meta-analyses of relevant studies. Land's (2002) and Marzano's (2009) recommended practices were generated in this way. Other studies, like the Lighthouse Inquiry (Delagardelle, 2008), generated a set of effective practices based upon comparing high and low achieving school districts and determining what the boards from high achieving

districts did differently. Data from case studies of high achieving districts, like *Beyond Islands of Excellence* (Togneri & Anderson, 2006) research also yielded sets of effective school board practices.

The current study sought to prioritize the opinions and experiences of school board members themselves, rather than use outside methods of judgment such as the opinions of superintendents, teachers, school boards associations, or even high student test scores. Expert school board members, themselves, are in the best position to provide insight into which practices contribute most to effective school board governance. This study sought to identify those effective practices through the lens of expert school board members in order to contribute to an emerging theory of effective school board governance. Figure 4 presents an explanatory model of Effective School Board Governance based upon the current study findings. Current findings support a model of effective school board governance that is comprised of four main components: understanding the boards' role; board communications; board meetings, and board training. The interaction of these four components is enhanced when operating within an environment of trust.

Understanding the Board's Role. Understanding the board's role is a crucial component to effective governance. The current study found that expert school board members believed that the board should be a policy making board, focusing primarily on the big picture. The board should play a vital role in strategic planning, making sure that

### Model of Effective School Board Governance

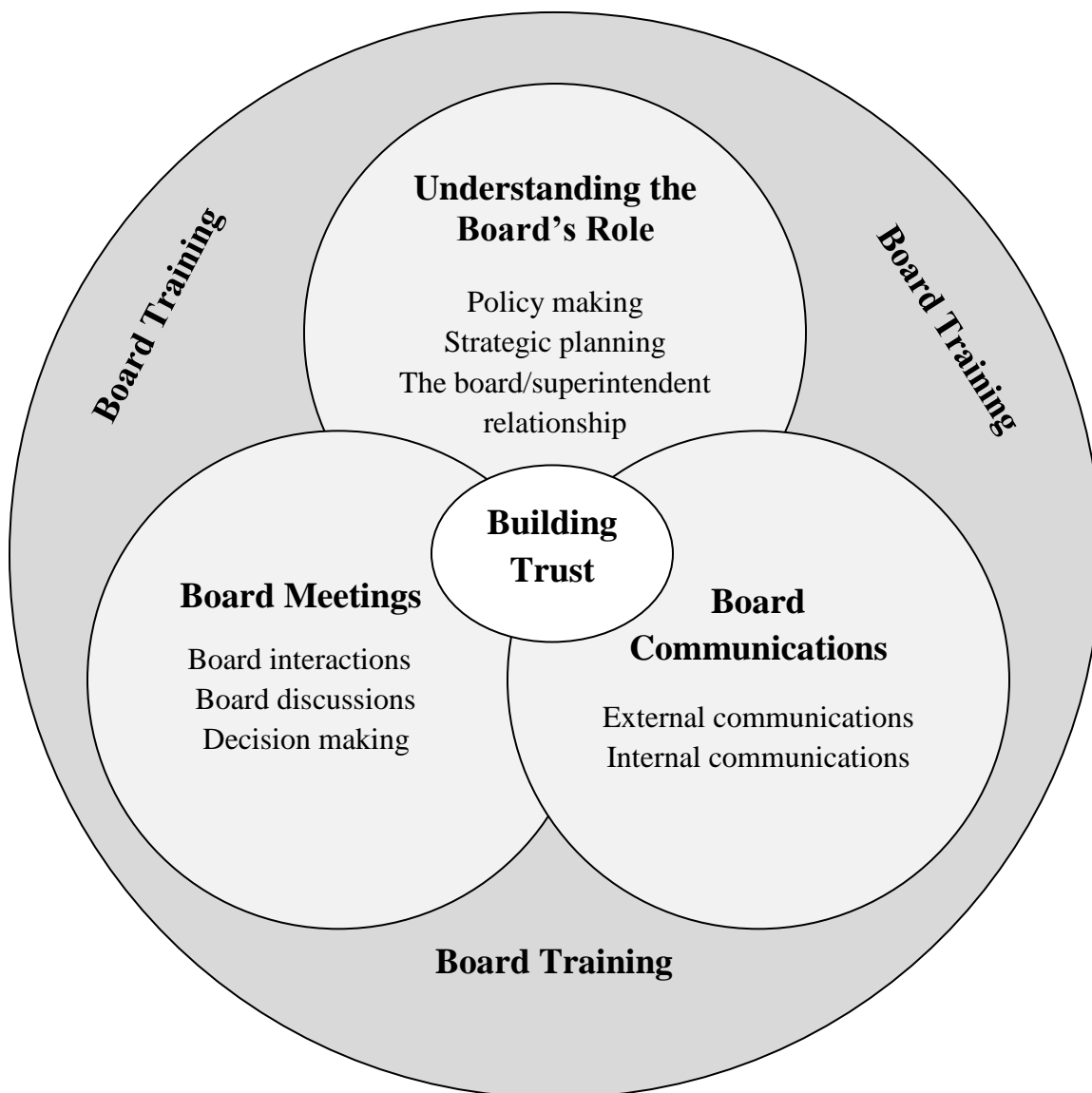


Figure 4. Model of Effective School Board Governance

all parties have a thorough understanding of the district's mission, vision, and values.

The board also needs to clearly understand the balance of roles between the superintendent and the board. The board should delegate district operations to the superintendent and trust him or her to carry out board policies. It is important to develop

a strong sense of trust between the board and superintendent while holding him or her accountable for the accomplishment of district goals.

Board Communications. Effective school board governance is dependent upon effective communications with both the internal and external communities. Internally, school boards need to foster and maintain open communication channels between the board and district staff without crossing the boundary into micromanagement. Adequate information is necessary to make informed decisions, and boards need to make sure that they have all the information needed to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to run a school district smoothly.

Externally, the board must ensure that community members have effective ways to provide input to the board. Boards can do this by providing time during school board meetings for community input; as well as scheduling events like listening tours, focus groups, and public surveys. Board members are cognizant that they are elected to office to represent the community, and it is crucial that community interests are represented in board decisions. Boards must also make efforts to communicate outwardly to the public so that the public understands board decisions, policies, strategic plans, and the need for additional financial resources.

Board Meetings. School board members have no individual power outside of school board meetings. This makes the processes and contents of school board meetings pivotal to effective governance. School board members must exhibit a demeanor that promotes trust. That means treating each other respectfully, honestly, and being willing to keep an open mind to other board members' opinions and points of view. It means

holding open discussions that fully explore both positive and negative outcomes of decisions while working toward consensus. It also means making decisions that prioritize students' needs that are aligned with the district's strategic plan, and use district resources in a responsible manner.

Board Training. Expert panelists recognized the role that board training plays in supporting these three main components of effective board governance, and is the fourth component of effective school board governance. Board training, whether conducted in-house or outside of the district, must provide both new and experienced board members with up-to-date information about how to run and participate in effective board meetings; how to develop and foster effective board communications both internally and externally; and how to understand and exercise the board's governance role.

Building Trust. Each of the components of effective school board governance depends upon the board's capacity to build trust: trust among themselves, trust with the superintendent, trust with district staff, and trust with the community. In their comments, board members in the current study emphasized trust as it related to creating a strong and trusting relationship between the board and the superintendent. In addition, while the board exercises its role by making policies, it must trust administration to implement them. Additionally, experts commented on the importance of building trust with other board members, with the staff, and with the community in order to enhance their effectiveness.

The lack of trust was also identified among the obstacles to effective school board governance. Comments especially referenced the destruction of trust by a board chair

who takes action without consulting with and obtaining the consent of the full board. By acting without full board support, the trust relationship can be destroyed with other board members, school staff, and with the community.

### Implications for Research

Research about school board governance has been conducted in order to determine what, if any, impacts school boards may have. There is a growing dissatisfaction with public education and every aspect of our public schools continues to be examined with an eye toward making improvements. Charter schools and private school voucher systems are gaining popularity politically with those who look to replace our current public systems with something else. School boards have been criticized as being out-of-date and no longer effective at governing our public schools. However, research has shown that effective school boards do have an impact in the districts they serve. Impacts have typically been measured by looking at observable results such as high student test scores (Delegardelle, 2008; Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997; Lorentzen, 2013; Togneri & Anderson, 2006). Lee and Eadens (2015) observed school board meetings for evidence of the processes, content, and cultures that high, medium, and low performing boards produced and these quantified observations were correlated with district student achievement scores and reported. These studies have demonstrated that the practices, processes, and products of school boards do matter even though their influence is more distal than proximal (Delegardelle, 2008; NSBA, 2011) to student learning.

The current research adds to this previous research by building on the premise that school boards do matter. However, instead of looking for outside evidence of effectiveness, this study looks inward. Current school board members know best what works, and those who have been doing the job for several years are in the best position to reveal the insights, lessons, and disasters that they have accumulated through experience, training, and reflection. This Delphi study began with open-ended questions for which the expert panelists were encouraged to share their own opinions and experiences about effective school board practices and the obstacles they faced. Interestingly, the practices they chose to share aligned well with the practices past studies have identified based upon outward evidence. This study validates the notion that knowledge and wisdom grow from experience, and experienced school board members have much to share.

### Implications for Practice

This study provides support to the position that school board members are their own greatest resource. In this evidence dominated educational environment, the role of experience is often overlooked. School boards are somewhat unique in that their membership changes regularly with each annual school board election. School boards, and even state school board associations, should look within their own ranks when mentoring and training new board members and facilitating the growth of experienced board members.

Some school board members do not, cannot, or will not attend training. This study lends support for training to occur from within, on site, in any way possible. It is through discussion, interaction, and reflection that board members build their own

practice and boards would do well to be deliberate about creating opportunities to strengthen the skills and dispositions of their own school board team members in partnership with the superintendent.

This study proposes a new model of effective school board governance in which training is a main component. The content of the training should focus on the three key areas of: understanding the board's role, developing effective communication systems, and developing effective board meeting processes and routines. Local school boards, along with state school board associations like the Montana School Boards Association, can provide valuable training and opportunities for board members to gain knowledge and to share their experiences, both positive and negative.

Current school board training often focuses on the legal aspects of being an effective school board member. This includes the legal duties of school board members, creating policies that align with state and federal laws, and lawsuit-proof hiring and firing practices. This study supports the inclusion of these topics for training, but suggests more attention should be given to the development of board 'soft skills' by focusing on the internal processes necessary to create trusting, open, and collaborative school board cultures.

Additionally, school boards can deliberately improve their own effectiveness through self-evaluation and reflection. While some boards may choose to do this more informally on an occasional basis, others may choose regularly scheduled written self-evaluations and more formal discussions resulting in setting board goals for

improvement. Whichever method a board should choose, this reflection provides an invaluable opportunity for growth.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results of this Delphi study, several recommendations for future research are indicated. First, the current study findings produced a robust set of effective school board governance practices as identified by the expert panelists, however this study also sought to identify agreed upon obstacles to effective governance. While 30 effective practices were identified and agreed upon by panelists in round 2, only six obstacles were identified as agreed upon challenges and only two obstacles were agreed with at a high level. Further investigation is indicated to explain why board members had difficulty agreeing upon obstacles. This could possibly have been due to a misunderstanding of the research question. Some board members may have interpreted the question as asking about the obstacles that their board was currently facing, while others may have interpreted the question more hypothetically, i.e. would this be an obstacle if it were to occur? Also possible, challenges and obstacles may be more situational to individual districts producing more variety of opinions. In any case, additional research investigating agreed upon obstacles to effective governance is warranted.

A second recommendation would be to extend this study to examine differences in school board practices in districts of different sizes. Although most of Montana is considered rural, it makes sense that school boards in larger districts consisting of eight to 11 board members might operate differently from smaller districts of only three trustees.

Communications, board meetings, strategic planning, and the board's role may look very different in the most rural of districts. Little research exists that could be used to guide the unique needs school boards serving either large or small districts.

A third recommendation for future research would be to replicate this study to include an equal representation from all sizes of school districts including Independent Elementary districts. Conclusions about any differences of opinions or practices between groups could then be more easily identified and explained.

### Conclusion

School board governance matters. Increased accountability for improved student outcomes remains a central feature of the recent reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and continues the pressure felt by school boards in Montana and around the nation for improved public schools. Past research has demonstrated that effective school boards are associated with higher student achievement (Delegardelle, 2008; Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997; Lorentzen, 2013; Togneri & Anderson, 2006). However, this research has been less clear about what those effective practices are. Previous research has focused on outward verification of effectiveness usually in the form of high student academic achievement (Land, 2002; Lorentzen, 2013; NSBA, 2011). The current study set out to determine whether school board members themselves are in the best position to decide which school board practices contribute to effective school board governance.

Using a Delphi methodology, expert panelists in Montana provided information in the form of narratives and lists about their perceptions of effective school board practices

as well as their encountered obstacles. Qualitative analysis techniques were used to create a set of effective practices and a set of encountered obstacles. Further refinement was accomplished using two additional rounds in which panelists provided feedback, reconsidered their responses and provided additional comments. From this data, a model of effective school board governance was developed. This model, formed from school board members themselves, aligns well with past research based upon outside sources of judgment.

However, some importance deviations from past recommendations are also noted. Data from the current study places an increased emphasis on the actual operations of school boards, such as on the types of discussions that are held, as well as on the mechanics of productive and collaborative school board meetings. The literature emphasizes more theoretical processes and practices with less attention given to the practical mechanics of the workings of school boards.

The power of school boards occurs when acting collectively as a group in a school board meeting and this study supports focusing improvement efforts in making that time more effective. School board members may gain knowledge and experience individually, but it is only through working together that they shape and guide the cultures that are needed to improve our public schools for the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

Subject Consent Form

**Subject Consent Form for Participation in Human Subjects Research at Montana State University**

Project Title: Effective School Board Governance Behaviors of Montana School Board Members: A Delphi Study

Dear Trustee,

You are being asked to participate in a research study investigating effective governance behaviors of school boards in Montana. Your expert opinion, based upon your experience as a trustee, is of critical importance to this research.

As a recipient of the Montana School Boards Association Gold or Silver level of recognition in the School Board Academy, you have been identified as a possible participant. Participants from all district sizes (AA, A, B and C districts) are being sought. This will help develop a better understanding of any similarities or differences between board operations that may occur in smaller or larger districts.

Participation is voluntary and you can choose to not answer any questions you do not want to answer and/or you can stop at any time. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete three online questionnaires (each questionnaire is a 'round') about every two weeks (January-February).

During the first round of the study, you will be asked to answer two open-ended questions along with some basic demographic information. In the remaining two rounds of the study, you will be asked to rate and rank round one statements derived from your comments, along with those of other panel members. You will also be asked to comment about the importance of these statements.

This Delphi process is used as an anonymous discussion format in order to reach agreement between panel members about research questions. In order to assist in understanding the information received in the three online surveys, one representative from each class school district (AA, A, B, C and Independent Elementary districts) will be invited to participate in a short face-to-face or telephone interview.

The identities of the panel participants will be kept confidential throughout the study. Each panel member will be assigned a pseudonym that ensures anonymity during

the panel discussion. The intention of the use of pseudonyms is simply to remove the influence of peer pressure and group dynamics from the research. You do not have to answer every question. All results from this study will be reported using pseudonyms.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participation in this research. While this study is of no direct benefit to you, you may gain personal insight by seeing how your opinions and comments compare to those made by other expert trustees. A possible benefit to society includes contributing to a better understanding of effective school board behaviors and practices. Study results may also guide future school board training made available to trustees.

If you should have any questions regarding this research project, please contact me, Jill Rocksund, by email at: [jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu) or by phone at: 406-892-1822.

Additional questions about the rights of human subjects can be answered by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406) 994-4707 [[mquinn@montana.edu](mailto:mquinn@montana.edu)].

**Q1: Multiple Choice**

Authorization: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. (Please print a copy for your records if desired.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Agree

\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree

APPENDIX B

EMAIL FROM MTSBA INTRODUCING THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Email from MTSBA Introducing the Opportunity to  
Participate in this Research Study

December, 2016

Hello Trustee!

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project (in January) designed to investigate what sitting school board members in Montana consider to be effective school board practices. This project also will investigate how those practices differ between districts of different sizes.

This research has been approved by the Montana State University (Bozeman) Institutional Review Board and the Montana School Boards Association.

The online survey format consists of 2 open-ended questions that have been designed to develop a set of effective board practices for school districts in Montana, along with a better understanding about how those practices differ, and what hinders us in being effective as boards in Montana.

As a veteran trustee, I know that we are infrequently consulted about what makes our board effective or about the roadblocks that prevent us from being effective. We know that ‘one size does not fit all’ when it comes to our school districts in Montana and this research study will help us understand those differences better.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire using Survey Monkey in January. Upon completion, the survey results will be shared with you and you will be asked a few short follow up questions about the responses given by trustees statewide.

Trustees from classes AA, A, B, and C will be asked to participate. All responses will be confidential and results will be reported as group responses.

Lance Melton will be sending an email on my behalf inviting you to participate in the study. His email will contain a link to a short survey that should take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. However, your participation is strictly voluntary. The link included in Lance Melton’s email will also include more information about the study and the survey process.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have, also!

Thank you for the important work you do by serving the students, families, and communities of Montana!

Sincerely,  
Jill Rocksund  
Montana State University Graduate Student  
Columbia Falls School District Trustee

[jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu)

APPENDIX C

EMAIL REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANTS SENT BY  
RESEARCHER VIA MTSBA

Email Request for Participants Sent by Researcher via MTSBA

From: Jill Rocksund, MSU Graduate Student and Columbia Falls School Board Member  
To: Experienced Montana School Trustees  
Date: January 16, 2017

Dear Trustees,

Please add your voice to the current Montana School Board Governance study! (This survey will remain open until January 23<sup>rd</sup>.)

Your opinions are needed and appreciated! This first round survey should take about 10-15 minutes and a few more participants are needed to get a good representation from all the district class sizes (AA, A, B, C, and Independent Elementary districts).

The survey requests your opinions about 2 questions: effective school board practices and about the challenges your school board faces (and that's pretty much all!) As a participant, you will also have a chance to see the opinions of other fellow trustees from around the state (anonymously in round 2).

Please respond by sending me an email of interest, and I will send you the link to the survey.

Preliminary results prove very interesting! (The survey has been approved by MTSBA and the Montana State University Institutional Review Board.)

Have a great day!

Jill Rocksund

APPENDIX D

EMAIL SENT TO PARTICIPANTS REPOSNDING TO MTSBA

EMAIL FROM RESEARCHER

Email sent to Participants Responding to MTSBA Email from Researcher

Hi \_\_\_\_\_!

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project!

You will be receiving an email from SurveyMonkey very shortly. More details are included about the study in that link.

Thank you for your school board service and assistance with this study! I believe it will give us interesting and important information about school board governance in Montana from a trustees' perspective.

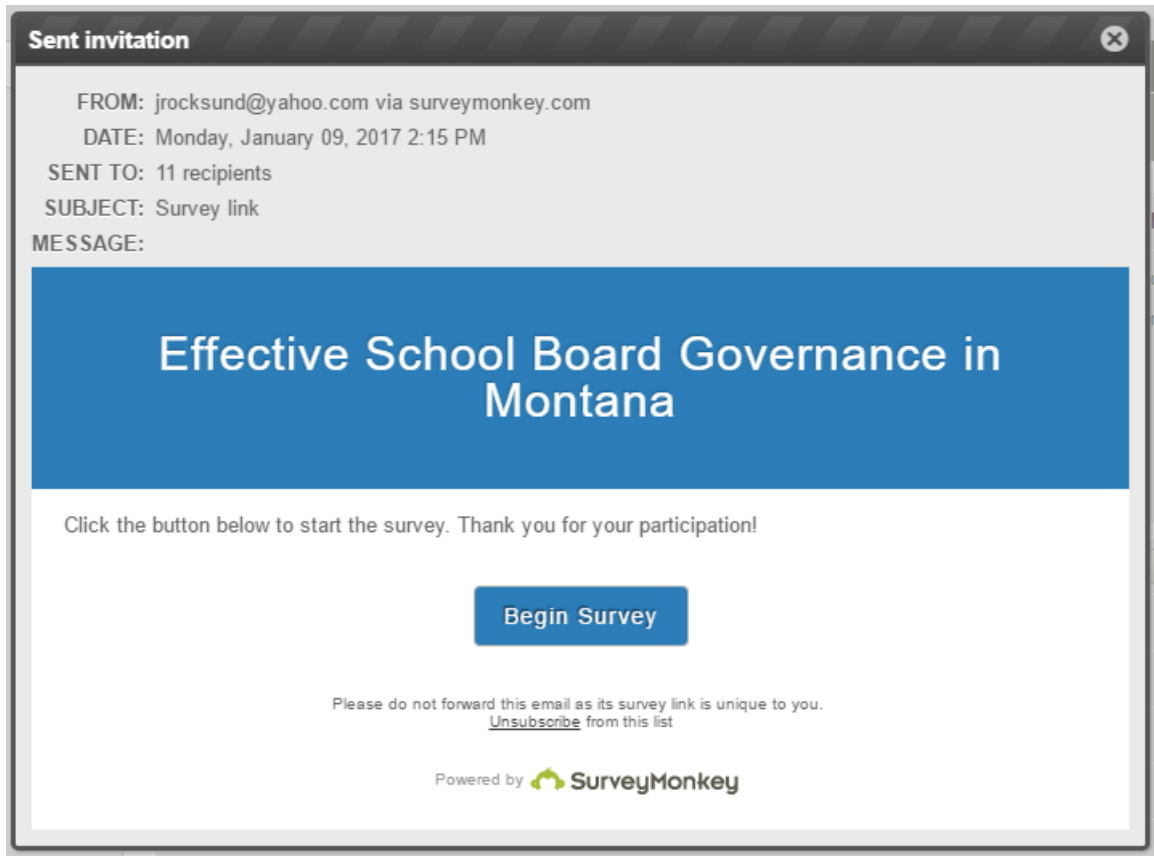
Sincerely,

Jill Rocksund

APPENDIX E

LINK TO ROUND 1 SURVEY SENT TO PARTICIPANTS  
FROM RESERACHER VIA SURVEYMONKEY

Link to Round 1 Survey Sent to Participants from Researcher via SurveyMonkey



APPENDIX F

ROUND 1 SURVEY

## Appendix F – Round 1 Survey

### Effective School Board Governance in Montana

#### Welcome and Introduction

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

Hello! My name is Jill Rocksund and I have served for 24 years as a school board member in Montana. I am conducting this study as a part of my doctoral research project and my faculty adviser is Dr. Art Bangert of the Montana State University Department of Educational Leadership.

Our schools are the center of community life in Montana and school boards are responsible for their governance, but school board members themselves are rarely consulted about what they do to operate most effectively.

The purpose of this survey is to identify which effective school board practices are most often identified by current school board members in Montana. This study will also investigate any differences between larger and smaller sized school districts and the obstacles to effectiveness that school boards encounter.

Past research has shown that school board practices, processes, and behaviors do indeed influence student outcomes. This study will provide information about these practices and will be based upon the opinions of 'insiders' – school board members themselves.

This survey is being completed by Montana trustees who have received the MTSBA Marvin Heintz award (gold level) or the silver level of certification in the MTSBA School Board Academy.

Completing this survey should take about 15 to 30 minutes. It contains 2 open-ended questions and 9 demographic questions.

The results of this survey will be analyzed and shared with you within about 3 weeks. This survey will be available starting January 9, 2017 and will close on January 23, 2017.

There are 3 parts to the survey:

Part 1: The first part of the survey explains the purpose of this research and the informed consent required by MSU research studies.

Part 2: This part of the survey asks the 2 open-ended survey questions.

Part 3: The third part of the survey asks for demographic information.

\*\*\*\*\*

You may stop and return to the survey without losing your previous answers via the original email link.

Let's get started!

Next

## Appendix F continued

## Effective School Board Governance in Montana

## Part 1

**Subject Consent Form for Participation in Human Subjects Research at Montana State University**

Project Title: Effective School Board Governance Behaviors of Montana School Board Members: A Delphi Study

Dear Trustee,

You are being asked to participate in a research study investigating effective governance behaviors of school boards in Montana. Your expert opinion, based upon your experience as a trustee, is of critical importance to this research.

As a recipient of the Montana School Boards Association Gold or Silver level of recognition in the School Board Academy, you have been identified as a possible participant. Participants from all district sizes (AA, A, B and C districts) are being sought. This will help develop a better understanding of any similarities or differences between board operations that may occur in smaller or larger districts.

Participation is voluntary and you can choose to not answer any questions you do not want to answer and/or you can stop at anytime. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete three online questionnaires (each questionnaire is a 'round') about every two weeks (January-February) .

During the first round of the study, you will be asked to answer two open-ended questions along with some basic demographic information. In the remaining two rounds of the study, you will be asked to rate and rank round one statements derived from your comments, along with those of other panel members. You will also be asked to comment about the importance of these statements.

This Delphi process is used as an anonymous discussion format in order to reach agreement between panel members about research questions. In order to assist in understanding the information received in the three online surveys, one representative from each class school district (AA, A, B, C and Independent Elementary districts) will be invited to participate in a short face-to-face or telephone interview.


The identities of the panel participants will be kept confidential throughout the study. Each panel member will be assigned a pseudonym that ensures anonymity during the panel discussion. The intention of the use of pseudonyms is simply to remove the influence of peer pressure and group dynamics from the research. You do not have to answer every question. All results from this study will be reported using pseudonyms.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participation in this research. While this study is of no direct benefit to you, you may gain personal insight by seeing how your opinions and comments compare to those made by other expert trustees. A possible benefit to society includes contributing to a better understanding of effective school board behaviors and practices. Study results may also guide future school board training made available to trustees.

If you should have any questions regarding this research project, please contact me, Jill Rocksund, by email at: [jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu) or by phone at: 406-892-1822.

Additional questions about the rights of human subjects can be answered by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406) 994-4707 [[mquinn@montana.edu](mailto:mquinn@montana.edu)].

## Appendix F continued

1. Authorization: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. (Please print a copy for your records if desired.) 

- Agree  
 Disagree

Prev


Next

## Effective School Board Governance in Montana

## Part 2: Research Questions

\* 2. What practices or processes do you believe school boards should use to provide effective school district governance?

(Use as much space as you need to answer this question. You may identify as many practices as you believe contribute to effective board governance in the text box below. Why are they effective? Please elaborate as much as possible.)

click in the lower right corner to expand the text box on your computer (tablets will not expand) 

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Appendix F Continued

Effective School Board Governance in Montana

**\* 3. What are the obstacles that interfere with a school board's ability to govern effectively?**

(Use as much space as you need to answer this question. You may include as many obstacles as you believe interfere with effective board governance in the text box below. Why are they obstacles? Please elaborate as much as possible.)


click in the lower right corner to expand the text box on your computer (tablets will not expand)



Effective School Board Governance in Montana

Part 3: Demographic Information

**\* 4. How is your school district classified (by the Montana High School Association)?**




Class AA

Class A

Class B

Class C

Other - i.e. Independent Elementary

**\* 5. How long have you been a member of your school board?** 

Less than 1 year

1 to 3 years (one term)

3 to 6 years (two terms)


6 to 9 years (three terms)

9 to 12 years (four terms)


more than 12 years (more than four terms)

## Appendix F Continued


## Effective School Board Governance in Montana

\* 6. How many school board training events have you participated in during the past year? 


- None
- 1 to 3
- 3 to 5
- More than 5

7. As a member of the MTSBA School Board Academy, which level have you achieved? 

- Gold Level (Marvin Heintz Award)
- Silver Level
- Not sure

\* 8. Are you currently the board chairperson? 

- Yes
- No

\* 9. How many years have you served as board chairperson? (Either now or in the past) 


- Never served as chairperson
- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- more than 6 years

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## Appendix F Continued

## Effective School Board Governance in Montana


## Practices and Processes Effective School Board Governance

\* 10. What is your gender? 

- Male
- Female

\* 11. What is your age? 

- 18 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 60
- over 60

\* 12. What is your highest education level? 

- GED or equivalent
- High School graduate
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree (MD, J.D, etc)
- Doctorate's degree
- Technical degree or certification

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Appendix F Continued


Effective School Board Governance in Montana

Thank You!

Thank you for completing this survey! You will receive survey results within about 3 weeks along with a request for your feedback about these results (round 2).

13. Please provide any additional comments you may have in the box below.  
(Thanks!)--Jill 

---

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

APPENDIX G

REMINDER TO COMPLETE ROUND 1 SENT FROM  
RESEARCHER VIA SURVEYMONKEY

Reminder to Complete Round 1 Sent from Researcher via SurveyMonkey

**Sent reminder** ✕

FROM: jrocksund@yahoo.com via surveymonkey.com  
DATE: Wednesday, January 25, 2017 12:40 PM  
SENT TO: 4 recipients  
SUBJECT: It's not too late to participate in the Montana School Board Governance research project!

MESSAGE:

## Effective School Board Governance in Montana


The window for responding will be open until Friday at noon! The survey is easy and should probably take about 10 minutes. I'd love to add your voice to the results!

Thank you!  
Jill

Click the button below to start or continue the survey. Thank you for your time.

[Begin Survey](#)

Please do not forward this email as its survey link is unique to you.  
[Unsubscribe](#) from this list

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

APPENDIX H

ROUND 1 THANK YOU NOTE SENT FROM RESESARCHER  
VIA SURVEYMONKEY

Round 1 Thank You Note Sent from Researcher via SurveyMonkey



APPENDIX I

EMAIL SENT TO ROUND 1 PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCING ROUND 2

Email Sent to Round 1 Participants Introducing Round 2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for participating in the Round 1 of the ‘Effective School Board Governance in Montana’ research project!

This email introduces Round 2. The Round 1 responses submitted by all participants have been analyzed for content and key words. A total of 100 statements were identified for Question 1 (about effective school board practices) and 84 total statements were identified for Question 2 (about obstacles to effectiveness). These statements will be presented to you in Round 2. The survey has 2 parts.

After combining duplicate responses, 50 statements remain for Question 1 (Part 1) and 45 statements for Question 2 (Part 2). Part 1 statements are grouped into 12 categories and Part 2 statements are also grouped into 12 categories.

In Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 survey responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice/process is.**

You will rate each item on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 = Highly Effective and 1 = Highly Ineffective.

- 7= Highly Effective
- 6= Effective
- 5= Slightly Effective
- 4= Neither Effective nor Ineffective
- 3= Slightly Ineffective
- 2= Ineffective
- 1= Highly Ineffective

In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

In Part 2, you will rate each item on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

- 7= strongly agree (that this is an obstacle)
- 6= agree
- 5= slightly agree
- 4= neither agree or disagree
- 3= slightly disagree
- 2= disagree
- 1= strongly disagree (that this is an obstacle)

The entire survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.

In about 2 weeks during Round 3 (the final round), you will be provided with information about your responses as well as the median responses of the entire expert panel. The end result will be a set of highly agreed upon statements that describe effective school board practices and a set of highly agreed upon obstacles- according to school board members in Montana.

You will be receiving the link to the Round 2 survey by email directly from SurveyMonkey. (Please let me know if you do not receive the link.) **This survey will be open until February 15<sup>th</sup>.**

Again, thank you for participating and adding to our knowledge about effective school board governance in Montana!

Sincerely,

Jill Rocksund

Contact me at: [jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu)

APPENDIX J

ROUND 2 SURVEY

## Appendix J Round 2 Survey

## Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

### Introduction to Round 2

Dear Trustee,

This cover page introduces Round 2 of the Effective School Board Governance in Montana research project.

In Part 1, you will read through 50 statements taken from your Round 1 survey responses and rate them according to how effective you believe each practice/process is. You will rate each item on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 = Highly Effective and 1 = Highly Ineffective.

In Part 2, you will read through 45 statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively. In Part 2, you will rate each item on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

- The entire survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.
- You may re-enter the survey using the original email link if needed.
- The window for completing Round 2 will be **open until February 15th** (about 1 week).
- You may return to previous pages to review or change your responses, but you must select a response to move forward in the survey. You cannot return after clicking "Done".

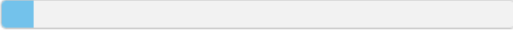
Again, thank you for participating and adding to our knowledge about effective school board governance in Montana!

Sincerely,

Jill Rocksund

Contact me at: [jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu)

**Click "Next" to begin the survey**

1 / 16  6%

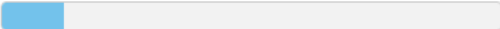
**Next**



Appendix J Continued

\* 2. Strategic Planning 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic planning so that all board and staff members are able to assess where the district is heading and whether efforts are being effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2 / 16  13%


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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Page 2

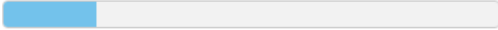
In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and **rate them according to how effective you believe each practice is.**

**\* 3. The Board/ Superintendent Relationship** 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* 4. Board Discussions** 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3 / 16  19%

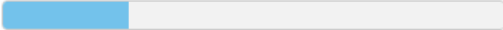
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Appendix J Continued

\* 6. Communications with the Community 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Actively seek community involvement for engagement and support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep the public informed through adherence to open meeting laws	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4 / 16  25%


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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Page 4

In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice is**.

**\* 7. Board Training** 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Stay up-to-date and informed by reading and attending training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing, required training for all school board members throughout their service to include school finance, school law, and the role of the board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School board members attend teacher training sessions to learn about best practices and problems of practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced training for those aspiring to serve as a board chair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5 / 16  31%

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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice is.**

**\* 8. The Board's Role**

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Understand the board's role as leaders; not micromanagers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish policy then trust the staff to carry out the policies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a clear purpose for the district that is defined by the board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work as a team with staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6 / 16  38%


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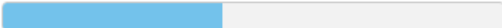
Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Page 6

In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice is.**

\* 9. Communications 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a good line of communication between superintendent, principal(s), and the board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interact with other school leaders to discuss issues facing other districts around the state	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit the schools in your district on a regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7 / 16  44%


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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Page 7

In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice is.**

**\* 10. Board Meetings** 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Annual or semi-annual board retreats for conversation and planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agenda includes discussion topics that contemplate the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustees should share the responsibility for participation in working committees that communicate regularly with the board as a whole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use Roberts Rule's of Order	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have an effective and competent board chair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduct board business with genuine transparency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8 / 1650%

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Appendix J Continued

In Round 2 Part 1, you will read through statements taken from your round 1 responses and rate them according to **how effective you believe each practice is.**

\* 11. Board Interactions 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be opened minded,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 12. Accountability 

	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Slightly Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Slightly Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Monitor administrative operations and act only when the policies and procedures aren't working effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Board needs to hold itself accountable through self evaluation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9 / 16  56%

Appendix J Continued

\* 13. at Legal Issues 

	Strongly Disagree (that this is an obstacle)	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree (that this is an obstacle)
State and Federal mandates that require more funding from local taxpayers but don't allow for local control of those funds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal and State Education Offices that dictate curriculum, testing, and funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Union contracts that require boards to keep underperforming staff and restrict how exemplary staff can be rewarded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher tenure can be an obstacle when dealing with less effective staff members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conducting all business in open meetings during difficult or delicate situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School elections that occur in May result in new trustees not able to make informed decisions about budget, contract renewals and policy issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

\* 14. Financial Issues 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Local school boards have relatively little control over funding to improve and innovate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding laws that don't allow communities to provide more financial support if desired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uncertainty of funding from the legislature makes long term planning difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of GAAP, we can't carry over general fund budget in anticipation of next year's needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 15. Personal Issues 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Difficulty separating the role of parent vs. trustee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individuals who are on the school board to advance their own personal gain or agendas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


11 / 16  69%

Appendix J Continued


Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

**\* 16. The Board / Superintendent Relationship** 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor communication between board members and the superintendent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* 17. Lack of Information** 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of good preparatory information from administrators prior to discussion or decision-making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of communication between board members and from the chairperson to other board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advice from MTSBA does not necessarily fit district circumstances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12 / 16  75%


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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

\* **18. Board Dysfunction** 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A school board that does not work as a team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting sidetracked by new issues before dealing with other current issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Micromanagement by some trustees that move us away from the important issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appearing to be the rubber stamp of administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An attitude of them against us regarding trustees and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13 / 16  81%

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Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

\* 19. Inability to hire and retain quality staff 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of high quality teachers to hire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nepotism and political patronage leading to employment of least qualified applicants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability to attract and retain a quality superintendent (administrator)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 20. Lack of Training 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of knowledge about or use of effective governance/ leadership strategies and tools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of training about team-building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of knowledge of and adherence to school board policies and school law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14 / 16  88%

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Appendix J Continued

Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

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In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

\* 21. Lack of Commitment to the Board 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Board members who are unwilling or unable to devote the time necessary to be an active participant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excessive board turnover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 22. Interactions Among Board Members 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Other trustees who are unwilling to change and are close minded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustees who are unwilling to voice an opinion in opposition to major issues or in evaluating the administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustees who have a lack of respect or trust for fellow board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political disputes between board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being unable to function transparently by not having candid discussions about student needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15 / 16  94%

Appendix J Continued

In Part 2, you will read through statements taken from your Round 1 responses and rate them according to **how much you agree that the statement describes an obstacle** that interferes with a school board's ability to govern effectively.

\* 23. Communications with the Community 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Keeping the community informed about what is going on in the schools and about how education is changing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents and the general public do not understand all that boards must consider in the running of an effective and successful district	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of community understanding about the board's role in hiring/firing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
'Citizen push-back' from those feeling that they are not getting the most out of their educational dollar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disinterested citizens who have no sense of civic responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 24. Social Media 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inability to outpace misinformation that is readily spread via social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16 / 16  100%

APPENDIX K

ROUND 2 REMINDER TO COMPLETE SURVEY SENT  
FROM RESERCHER VIA SURVEYMONKEY

## Round 2 Reminder to Complete Survey Sent from Researcher via SurveyMonkey

**Sent reminder**

FROM: jrocksund@yahoo.com via surveymonkey.com  
DATE: Saturday, February 11, 2017 9:46 AM  
SENT TO: 11 recipients  
SUBJECT: Gentle reminder for Round 2  
MESSAGE:

## Round 2: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Please take a few moments to rate the statements gathered from Round 1. These statements were taken from your responses along with those of others.

Most participants so far have taken about 10-15 minutes to complete this survey. Your opinions are crucial to this research project and your time is greatly appreciated!

Thanks so much!

Jill

Click the button below to start or continue the survey. You may stop and start again at your convenience.

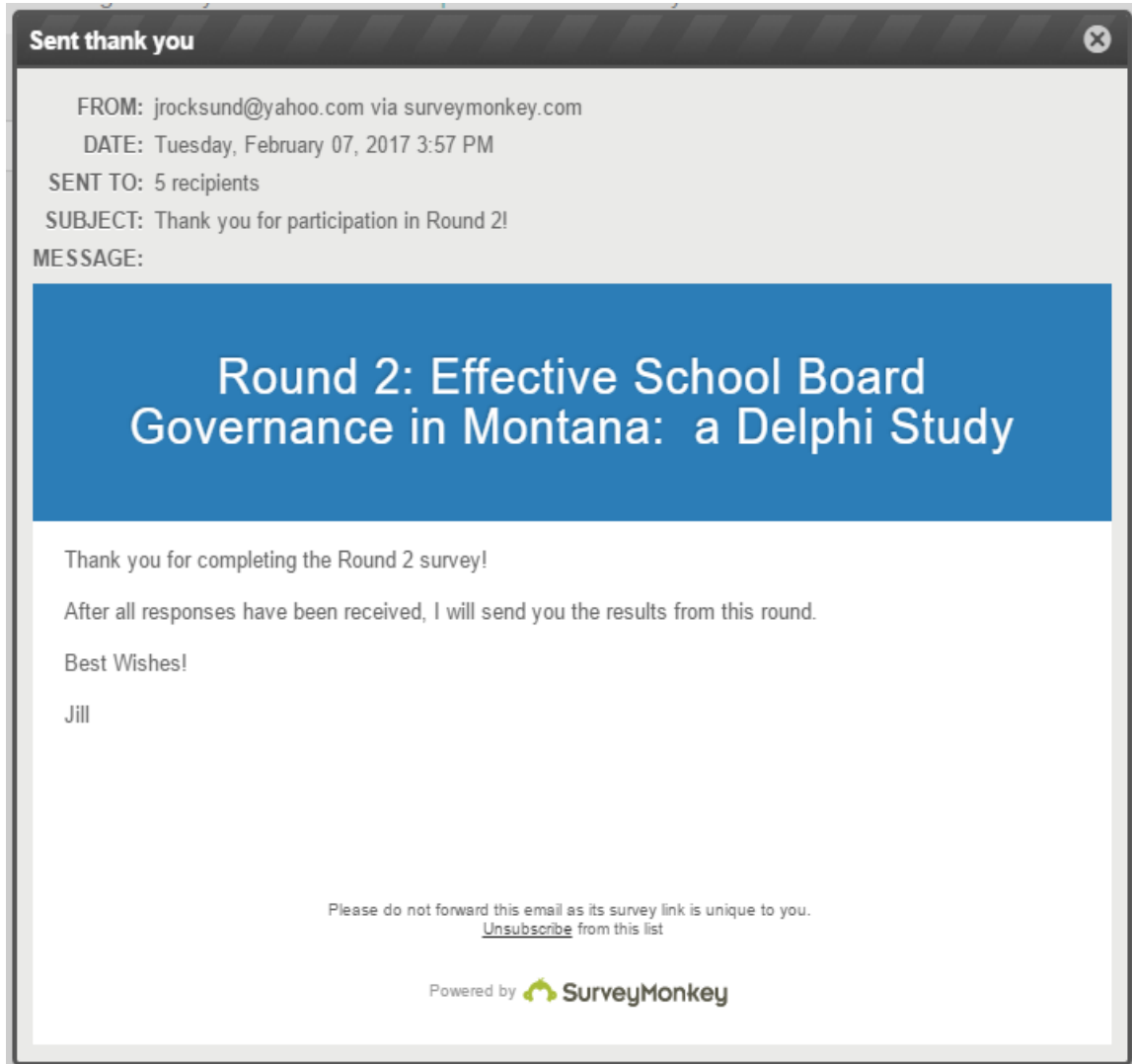
[Begin Survey](#)

Please do not forward this email as its survey link is unique to you.  
[Unsubscribe](#) from this list

APPENDIX L

ROUND 2 THANK YOU SENT FROM RESEARCHER  
VIA SURVEYMONKEY

Round 2 Thank You Sent from Researcher via SurveyMonkey



APPENDIX M

ROUND 3 INTRODUCTION EMAIL

### Round 3 Introduction Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This email presents you with the summary of Round 2 of the School Board Governance research project.

Attached to this email, you will find a Word document that displays a chart of the group responses given to each statement in the Round 2 survey, along with your own responses. Each participant is receiving his or her own Round 3 survey email. The SurveyMonkey platform did not allow for this level of customization and is not being used to display the group responses.

Highly agreed upon statements are displayed in the first section (those items that 80% of the participants rated with either a 6 or 7). There are 30 effective governance practices that were identified along with 6 obstacles to effective governance.

In this round (Round 3), you will review the ratings of these 36 statements and decide whether to keep or change your scores in light of the information presented. You do not have to change any scores should you wish to keep your Round 2 scores. You will also have an opportunity to provide your rationale for keeping or changing ratings if you choose to make any comments.

The statements that had less than 80% agreement are also displayed for your information only.

#### Directions for Round 3

1. Open the attachment and save it to your computer.
2. Review the Round 2 scoring information.
3. Change any scores that you would like to change by entering a new score in the "Your New Score" column.
4. Make comments (if you wish) to provide additional information about your rationale for keeping or changing your scores in the comment boxes provided.
5. Provide any other comments about the statements in the "General Comments" boxes provided at the end of the sections.
6. If you do not wish to change any scores or make any comments, please indicate that on the last page in the final comment box provided.

7. Email your revised Word document back to me at: [jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu](mailto:jill.rocksund@msu.montana.edu)

As a small token of my appreciation for your participation, I will be sending you a gift card code for Amazon.com. I truly appreciate your time and thank you very much!

Please let me know if you experience any difficulties or problems opening, revising, or returning your Round 3 survey.

Sincerely,

Jill Rocksund

Summary of the scores included on the chart:

Your score	your Round 2 rating
Median	the middle score – ½ are above and ½ are below this score
Mean	the average score
Low score	the lowest score selected by any participant
High score	the highest score selected by any participant
IQR	Interquartile range - a number indicating the width of the range of scores between the 25 <sup>th</sup> and 50 <sup>th</sup> percentiles. A smaller number indicates closer agreement.
% Agree 6 or 7	the percentage of participants who rated the statement at a 6 or 7

APPENDIX N

ROUND 3 SURVEY

## Appendix N Round 3 Survey

### Round 3: Effective School Board Governance in Montana: a Delphi Study

Rating scale: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Slightly Disagree; 4= Neutral; 5=Slightly Agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly Agree

Participant P		<b>Part 1: Effective Practices</b> Statements that meet the 80% Agreement Threshold	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7	Your New Score
<b>Policy Making</b>	<b>1.1</b>	Act as policy making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide district operations		6	6.33	5	7	1	95.24	
	<b>1.2</b>	Use the Board Policy service that is provided from MTSBA that includes annual maintenance and a structure that keeps us updated		6	6.24	3	7	1	90.48	
	<b>1.3</b>	Know, study, and adhere to your school board policies for consistency and to avoid favoritism		6	6.10	3	7	1	85.72	
Comments: Policy Making										
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	<b>2.1</b>	Long range strategic planning focused on student needs and community expectations		6	6.10	4	7	0	85.71	
	<b>2.2</b>	Have a thorough understanding of the school's (district's) mission, vision, and values		6	6.24	4	7	1	90.48	
Comments: Strategic Planning										
<b>The Board/Supt. Relationship</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Maintain open communications and trust with the district Superintendent		7	6.48	3	7	1	95.23	
	<b>3.2</b>	Hire a competent superintendent and have a good superintendent evaluation process		7	6.62	4	7	1	90.48	
Comments: Board/Supt. Relationship										

Appendix N Continued

Part 1 (cont.)		<b>Effective Practices: Statements that meet the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7	Your New Score
<b>Board Discussions</b>	<b>4.1</b>	Open dialogue is facilitated and encouraged among the board		7	6.33	3	7	1	90.47	
	<b>4.2</b>	School boards, along with key administrative leadership teams, should regularly engage in thought-provoking discussions about student needs, changes, and challenges to K-12 public education		7	6.14	2	7	1	85.71	
Comments: Board/Supt. Relationship										
<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>5.1</b>	Align decisions made with the goals included in the strategic plan		6	6.10	4	7	1	80.96	
	<b>5.3</b>	Unite behind and support decisions once they are made after discussions and votes have occurred		6	6.14	4	7	1	80.96	
	<b>5.4</b>	Decisions are made that focus on all students' needs		6	6.24	5	7	1	85.72	
	<b>5.5</b>	Operate from a common body of knowledge about the school district		6	6.00	3	7	1	80.96	
Comments: Decision Making										
<b>Communications with the Community</b>	<b>6.3</b>	Allow for public comments without allowing them to become a forum for complaints		6	6.19	5	7	1	80.95	
Comments: Communications with the Community										
<b>Board Training</b>	<b>7.3</b>	Full board-superintendent training should be scheduled throughout the year to build a strong leadership team		6	6.10	2	7	1	80.95	
	<b>7.6</b>	Attend MTSBA's training sessions throughout the year		6	6.24	4	7	1	85.72	
Comments: Board Training										

Appendix N Continued

Part 1 (cont.)		<b>Effective Practices: Statements that meet the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7	Your New Score
<b>The Board's Role</b>	<b>8.1</b>	Understand the board's role as leaders; not micromanagers		7	6.38	5	7	1	85.71	
	<b>8.2</b>	Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff		7	6.43	4	7	1	90.47	
	<b>8.4</b>	Provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable environment where students and staff thrive		7	6.38	5	7	1	85.71	
	<b>8.5</b>	Focus on strategic goals and initiatives as opposed to management		6	5.95	2	7	1	80.96	
Comments: The Board's Role										
<b>Communications</b>	<b>9.1</b>	Maintain clear communication between board members including listening to others		6	6.24	2	7	1	90.48	
	<b>9.2</b>	Establish a flow of communication that allows everyone to stay abreast of the issues, ideas, policies and practices that are needed to smoothly run a school district		6	6.10	2	7	1	85.72	
Comments: Communications										
<b>Board Meetings</b>	<b>10.1</b>	Come to all monthly business meetings and work sessions prepared for discussion by reviewing provided materials		7	6.57	6	7	1	100	
	<b>10.6</b>	Have an effective and competent board chair		7	6.62	5	7	1	95.24	
	<b>10.7</b>	Conduct board business with genuine transparency		7	6.38	2	7	1	90.47	
Comments: Board Meetings										

Appendix N Continued

Participant P

Part 1 (cont.)		<b>Effective Practices: Statements that meet the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7	Your New Score
<b>Board Interactions</b>	<b>11.1</b>	Operate with integrity; exhibiting respect, honesty, patience and tolerance with each other		7	6.52	5	7	1	95.24	
	<b>11.2</b>	Establish a culture that encourages all board members to feel free to ask questions		7	6.43	2	7	1	90.48	
	<b>11.3</b>	Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another		7	6.62	5	7	1	90.48	
	<b>11.4</b>	Create opportunities to bond, build trust, and understand one another's viewpoints		6	6.24	5	7	1	85.72	
	<b>11.5</b>	Be opened minded		7	6.43	5	7	1	90.48	
Comments: Board Interactions										
<b>General comments or observations about Part I: Effective Practices</b>										

## Appendix N Continued

Rating scale: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Slightly Disagree; 4= Neutral; 5=Slightly Agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly Agree

Part 2		<b>Part 2: Obstacles to Effectiveness</b> Statements that meet the 80% Agreement Threshold	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7	Your New Score
The Board / Supt. Relationship	16.1	A superintendent who is not willing to partner with the board		6	5.95	2	7	1	85.72	
	16.2	Board members who are unwilling to trust the Superintendent		6	6.19	3	7	1	80.95	
	16.3	Poor communication between board members and the superintendent		6	5.81	2	7	1	80.95	
Comments: The Board/Supt. Relationship										
Board Dysfunction	18.2	A chairperson who takes action on his/her own without consent of the full board		7	6.10	2	7	1	85.71	
Comments: Board Dysfunction										
Lack of Training	20.1	Board members who are unwilling to seek training or reflect on the board's practice		6	6.19	4	7	1	80.96	
	20.2	Board members who don't understand what you can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do as a board member		6	6.19	3	7	1	85.72	
Comments: Lack of Training										
<b>General comments about Part 2: Obstacles to Effective School Board Governance</b>										

## Appendix N Continued

The statements below did not meet the 80% agreement level at either a 6 or 7. They are listed below for your information only; you do not need to reconsider these items.

Part 1		<b>Effective Practices: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	<b>2.3</b>	Strategic planning so that all board and staff members are able to assess where the district is heading and whether efforts are being effective		6	6.14	4	7	2	76.19
<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>5.2</b>	Able to make decisions and create solutions that meet the needs of the district when faced with guidelines written for urban districts		6	5.29	2	7	2	52.39
<b>Communications with the Community</b>	<b>6.1</b>	Actively seek community involvement for engagement and support		6	5.86	3	7	2	61.91
	<b>6.2</b>	Keep the public informed through adherence to open meeting laws		6	6.00	4	7	1	76.19
<b>Board Training</b>	<b>7.1</b>	Stay up-to-date and informed by reading and attending training		6	6.05	3	7	2	76.2
	<b>7.2</b>	Ongoing, required training for all school board members throughout their service to include school finance, school law, and the role of the board		6	5.76	1	7	2	71.43
	<b>7.4</b>	School board members attend teacher training sessions to learn about best practices and problems of practice		5	4.57	2	7	1	28.57
	<b>7.5</b>	Advanced training for those aspiring to serve as a board chair		6	5.33	1	7	1	57.14
<b>The Board's Role</b>	<b>8.3</b>	Establish policy then trust the staff to carry out the policies		6	6.14	4	7	2	71.43
	<b>8.6</b>	Have a clear purpose for the district that is defined by the board		6	6.05	3	7	2	76.19
	<b>8.7</b>	Work as a team with staff		6	5.71	2	7	1	66.67
<b>Communications</b>	<b>9.3</b>	Have a good line of communication between superintendent, principal(s), and the board		7	6.24	4	7	1	76.19

Appendix N Continued

Part 1 (cont.)		<b>Effective Practices: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
	9.4	Interact with other school leaders to discuss issues facing other districts around the state		6	5.86	2	7	2	71.43
	9.5	Visit the schools in your district on a regular basis		6	5.90	4	7	2	61.91
<b>Board Meetings</b>	10.2	Annual or semi-annual board retreats for conversation and planning		6	5.48	2	7	2	52.38
	10.3	Agenda includes discussion topics that contemplate the future		6	5.86	5	7	1	66.67
	10.4	Trustees should share the responsibility for participation in working committees that communicate regularly with the board as a whole		6	5.86	1	7	1	57.14
	10.5	Use Roberts Rule's of Order		6	5.67	3	7	1	61.91
<b>Accountability</b>	12.1	Monitor administrative operations and act only when the policies and procedures aren't working effectively		6	5.81	3	7	1	71.43
	12.2	The Board needs to hold itself accountable through self evaluation		6	5.86	2	7	2	76.19
Part 2		<b>Obstacles: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
<b>Legal Issues</b>	13.1	State and Federal mandates that require more funding from local taxpayers but don't allow for local control of those funds.		6	5.33	1	7	1	52.38
	13.2	Federal and State Education Offices that dictate curriculum, testing, and funding		6	5.48	2	7	1	61.9
	13.3	Union contracts that require boards to keep underperforming staff and restrict how exemplary staff can be rewarded		6	5.38	1	7	3	61.91
	13.4	Teacher tenure can be an obstacle when dealing with less effective staff members		6	5.57	1	7	2	61.91
	13.5	Conducting all business in open meetings during difficult or delicate situations		4	4.10	1	7	4	38.09
	13.6	School elections that occur in May result in new trustees not able to make informed decisions about budget, contract renewals and policy issues		4	4.19	2	7	3	38.09

Appendix N Continued

Part 2 (cont.)		<b>Obstacles: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
<b>Financial Issues</b>	<b>14.1</b>	Local school boards have relatively little control over funding to improve and innovate		6	5.29	1	7	1	57.14
	<b>14.2</b>	Funding laws that don't allow communities to provide more financial support if desired		6	4.90	1	7	3	52.38
	<b>14.3</b>	Uncertainty of funding from the legislature makes long term planning difficult		6	5.86	3	7	1	76.2
	<b>14.4</b>	Because of GAAP, we can't carry over general fund budget in anticipation of next year's needs		6	5.71	2	7	2	66.67
<b>Personal Issues</b>	<b>15.1</b>	Difficulty separating the role of parent vs. trustee		5	4.62	1	7	2	28.57
	<b>15.2</b>	Individuals who are on the school board to advance their own personal gain or agendas.		5	4.95	2	7	3	42.86
<b>Lack of Information</b>	<b>17.1</b>	Lack of good preparatory information from administrators prior to discussion or decision-making		6	5.62	2	7	2	71.43
	<b>17.2</b>	Lack of communication between board members and from the chairperson to other board members		6	5.52	2	7	2	66.67
	<b>17.3</b>	Advice from MTSBA does not necessarily fit district circumstances		4	4.14	1	7	3	23.81
<b>Board Dysfunction</b>	<b>18.1</b>	A school board that does not work as a team		6	5.90	2	7	1	71.43
	<b>18.3</b>	Getting sidetracked by new issues before dealing with other current issues		6	5.24	2	7	1	52.38
	<b>18.4</b>	Micromanagement by some trustees that move us away from the important issues		6	5.57	2	7	2	66.67
	<b>18.5</b>	Appearing to be the rubber stamp of administration		5	5.00	1	7	2	47.62
	<b>18.6</b>	An attitude of them against us regarding trustees and staff		6	5.62	2	7	2	66.66
	<b>18.6</b>	An attitude of them against us regarding trustees and staff		6	5.62	2	7	2	66.66
<b>Inability to hire and retain quality staff</b>	<b>19.1</b>	Lack of high quality teachers to hire		6	5.19	1	7	1	57.14
	<b>19.2</b>	Nepotism and political patronage leading to employment of least qualified applicants		5	4.76	1	7	2	42.86

Appendix N Continued

Part 2 (cont.)		<b>Obstacles: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
	<b>19.3</b>	Inability to attract and retain a quality superintendent (administrator)		6	5.86	2	7	1	76.2
<b>Lack of Training</b>	<b>20.3</b>	Lack of knowledge about or use of effective governance/ leadership strategies and tools		6	5.71	2	7	2	61.9
	<b>20.4</b>	Lack of training about team-building		6	5.43	2	7	1	61.91
	<b>20.5</b>	Lack of knowledge of and adherence to school board policies and school law		6	5.71	2	7	1	66.66
<b>Lack of Commitment to the Board</b>	<b>21.1</b>	Board members who are unwilling or unable to devote the time necessary to be an active participant		6	5.76	2	7	1	76.19
	<b>21.2</b>	Excessive board turnover		5	5.24	2	7	2	47.62
<b>Interactions Among Board Members</b>	<b>22.1</b>	Other trustees who are unwilling to change and are close minded		6	5.76	3	7	2	61.91
	<b>22.2</b>	Trustees who are unwilling to voice an opinion in opposition to major issues or in evaluating the administration		6	5.67	1	7	2	71.43
	<b>22.3</b>	Trustees who have a lack of respect or trust for fellow board members		6	5.95	2	7	1	71.43
	<b>22.4</b>	Political disputes between board members		5	5.24	1	7	2	47.62
	<b>22.5</b>	Being unable to function transparently by not having candid discussions about student needs		6	5.38	1	7	2	52.38
<b>Communications with the Community</b>	<b>23.1</b>	Keeping the community informed about what is going on in the schools and about how education is changing		6	5.05	2	7	1	57.15
	<b>23.2</b>	Parents and the general public do not understand all that boards must consider in the running of an effective and successful district		6	5.76	3	7	1	66.67
	<b>23.3</b>	Lack of community understanding about the board's role in hiring/firing		6	5.52	3	7	1	61.91
	<b>23.4</b>	'Citizen push-back' from those feeling that they are not getting the most out of their educational dollar		6	5.19	2	7	1	57.15

Appendix N Continued

Part 2 (cont.)		<b>Obstacles: Statements <u>Not</u> Meeting the 80% Agreement Threshold</b>	Your Score	Median	Mean (Avg.)	Low Score	High Score	IQR	% Agree 6 or 7
	23.5	Disinterested citizens who have no sense of civic responsibility		6	5.43	2	7	2	61.91
<b>Social Media</b>	24.1	Inability to outpace misinformation that is readily spread via social media		6	5.43	3	7	2	57.14

***Thank you for participating in Round 3!***

Please leave any additional comments below.

**Comments:**

APPENDIX O

ROUND 3 REMINDER EMAIL

ROUND 3 REMINDER EMAIL

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

I am hoping that you are able to take a few minutes to respond to the Round 2 results presented below. It should only take a few minutes, and I believe that you will find the information interesting!

Thank you!

Jill

APPENDIX P

ROUND 3 THANK YOU

Round 3 Thank You

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_, for taking the time to participate in this project! It really has been interesting, and I look forward to sharing the final results in the near(ish) future!

Best Wishes! (don't forget to use you Amazon gift code-)

Jill Rocksund

APPENDIX Q

TIME TO COMPLETE ROUND 1 SURVEY

## Time to Complete Round 1 Survey

Panelist #	Minutes: seconds		Minutes	
P1	21:55		21.92	
P2	25:44		25.73	
P3	4:12		4.2	
P4				Over a week
P5				Over a day
P6				Over a week
P7	1:04:32		64.53	
P8	24:39		24.65	
P9	7:04		7.07	
P10	15:05		15.08	
P11				Over a day
P12	31:06		31.1	
P13				Over a day
P14	43:06		43.1	
P15	13:02		13.03	
P16	8:39		8.65	
P17	2:34		2.57	
P18	13:04		13.07	
P19	9:24		9.4	
P20				Over a week
P21	6:50		6.83	
P22	7:50		7.83	
P23	7:06		7.1	

APPENDIX R

TIME TO COMPLETE ROUND 2 SURVEY

## Time to Complete Round 2 Survey

Panelist #	Time on survey	
	Minutes: seconds	minutes
1	10:15	10.25
2	51:08	51.13
3	27:46	27.77
4	17:38	17.63
5	11:12	11.2
6	20:48	20.8
7	33:59	33.98
8	19:33	19.55
9	16:01	16.02
10	15:08	15.13
11	12:32	12.53
12	Over a day	
13	16:45	16.75
14	11:10	11.67
15	34:03	34.05
16	25:26	25.43
17	10:46	10.77
18	27:29	27.48
19	24:40	24.67
20	14:16	14.27
21	13:25	13.42
		Average= 19.83 hours or 19 minutes and 50 seconds

APPENDIX S

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM MTSBA

Letter of Support from MTSBA



Jill Rocksund  
917 Vans Ave.  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Dear Jill,

As a follow up to our recent phone conversation, I would like to offer MTSBA's support for your dissertation research project through MSU! (Effective School Board Governance Behaviors of Montana School Board Members: A Delphi Study)

Please let me know how we can help! I would be happy to assist in sending out the initial email to potential participants along with your contact information in order to volunteer to participate.

I look forward to your study results, as well!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Lance L. Melton', is written over a horizontal line.

Lance Melton  
Executive Director, MTSBA