

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADER
INTERACTIONS WITH LEGISLATORS IN THE 2013
SESSION AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION
POLICY IN MONTANA

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my young daughters, Ella Lynn Kathaleen and Madelynn Paige Lougheed. Both were born during my doctoral journey and shared their mommy with the dissertation and doctoral processes. I hope that through this process you have both learned that the desire to research and explore is a valuable pursuit and that all things are possible with hard work and the support of a wonderful team.

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ABSTRACT

Politics and education continue to become more intertwined, and the need for educational leaders to effectively engage in political participation increases. Although limited discussion exists in the literature about the political participation of school leaders (Crow & Weindling, 2010; Milstein & Jennings, 1972) and political engagement is called for in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), few studies have examined the types of activities educational leaders engage in politically nor the effectiveness of those activities in influencing policy outcomes. This study examines, through the lens of stakeholder theory, the historical context of the relationship between politics and education, the current status of the relationship, and the reasons for school leaders' hesitancy to engage in political affairs. It also examines the considerations of the legislature and their perceptions on effective engagement, to better understand and consider future efforts of educational leaders to influence policy. The quantitative study includes electronic surveys of school leaders, legislators, and education stakeholders to identify effective methods of political engagement, using descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation, and open coding of open response questions to answer the following research questions: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session? Responses were also compared with prior study results, legislator responses, and to one another for inter-rater reliability and triangulation. The most effective activities school leaders engaged in were specific conversations with legislators regarding education issues, and both written and in person testimony. The results demonstrate a need for school leaders to align their engagement efforts more closely with activities deemed effective by legislators, though there were significant differences in the activities reported during the 2013 session. Conclusions include the need for school leaders to overcome barriers to engagement, for increased stakeholder participation and policy community engagement, and for further research.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Difficult decisions about how, if, and when to engage in political participation are presented to educational leaders with increasing frequency as political decisions continue to impact education in America. Cooper et al (2011) posit in *The Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*, “An enterprise whose total costs are over \$340 billion annually is unavoidably political.” While few in education would argue this truth, being politically engaged and making attempts to influence policy and politics around education is new to most educational leaders. For decades, sparse research broached the subject of the appropriateness of the engagement of school leaders in political arenas. Garcia (1997) (as qtd in Garcia, 2000), reminds that “the idea that politics and public education are intimately related was unthinkable as recently as 1980.”

As political actions and influence through such legislation and oversight as No Child Left Behind, the Common Core State Standards, and Race to the Top continue to blur lines between politics and education, it seems time to abandon the ironic relationship written about by Gibbons (1984). Gibbons describes the strange truth that even through billions of public funds are spent annually in the support of education, “education and politics have traditionally refused to recognize their interdependence and mutual influence” (p. 15). If educational leaders recognize that politics and education are in fact inseparably intertwined, then it seems apparent that educational leaders would be well served to become more politically engaged to influence policy that dictates much of what

is done in education. It is critical that educational leaders are involved in order to be present at the bargaining table, and in the rooms where decisions are made politically, at least insomuch as that the decision makers have been informed as to the thoughts and preferences of the educational leaders. This is also necessary so that educational leaders can avoid being subjected to unrealistic expectations being legislated upon them, often made by those without experience in schools. Ideally, increased engagement from educational leaders could open opportunities for educational leaders to assist in crafting the very policies that direct their day to day work – the same sorts of policies that are being made without them and are subject of much complaint by school leaders at present.

To do so, educational leaders need to become more astute at influencing decision makers, particularly state legislators. According to Gibbons (1984), decisions related to education are no longer made by legislative leaders alone, or by state level office holders, but rather “most legislators are highly involved in educational policy making” (p. 2). This is likely because education is increasingly a key campaign issue at each level of government. The influence of school leaders on policy makers has not been studied to identify the effectiveness of certain engagement activities, which may contribute to the absence of school leaders in the literature, in the committee rooms, and in the offices of decision makers.

Problem

The identified gap in the literature, coupled with the increasing role of federal and state involvement in education oversight, indicates a need to study effective engagement

of educational leaders in political arenas. Considering the effectiveness of mechanisms and how they potentially influence policy outcomes is necessary to inform school leaders about how to engage in political processes effectively. There is some discussion in the literature about school leaders and political participation (Crow & Weindling, 2010; Milstein & Jennings, 1972). Additionally, political engagement is called for in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Yet, few recent studies have examined the political participation activities school leaders engage in and how effective those activities are at influencing legislative outcomes. It is vitally important to examine the legislator considerations as well, in order to understand their perspectives on effective engagement and to guide the future efforts of school leaders who wish to influence education policy. This study contributes to the filling of the gap in the literature.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the political activities in which superintendents, those serving in a dual principal/superintendent role, principals, and educational agency leaders engaged in during the 2013 legislative session in Montana. Secondly, the study investigates which political activities engaged in by educational leaders are perceived by legislators to be effective in influencing legislators' opinions and decisions related to educational issues. The study also compares the 2013 engagement activities with study results from prior to the 2013 session (Lougheed, 2014) in order to uncover changes in engagement activities that could be determined as contributory to the

success experienced by public education stakeholders during the 2013 legislative session. Results from this comparison may provide insight into the effective engagement mechanisms that account, at least in part, for the success of public education in the 2013 legislative session.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of interactions of educational leaders and legislators does not fit simply into a theoretical framework. This is not surprising when one considers the discussion in the literature about the same issue: that the study of politics and education paired together has had a difficult time finding a place to land. Thus, more than one theoretical framework must be used to inform this study and result in a comprehensive base for research. After a review of the literature and potential frameworks, stakeholder theory, micropolitics, and policy communities were deemed the most relevant theoretical lenses through which to examine the questions in this study.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory, articulated primarily by Freeman (2010, 2001), is the initial lens for considering the questions in this study. The theory, which originated in business, is applied to education and education policy and referenced in educational leadership texts. The theory posits that stakeholders, “groups and individuals who have a stake in the success or failure of a business” (Freeman et al, 2001, Kindle Locations 131-132) “adopt as a unit of analysis the relationship between a business and the groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by it” (Kindle Locations 248-251), and that

stakeholders ought to be involved in processes that impact them. If the term “education” or “school” is substituted for business, the theory draws forth ideas of many stakeholders involved, including teachers, administrators, parents, school board members, students, policy makers at the state, local, and national level, their staff members, state level education leaders like those Offices of Public Instruction, state level advocacy group leadership, all the way to the White House and beyond, to name a few. Ehrensall and First (2008) further discuss the applicability of stakeholder theory in education, applying Freeman and Reed’s (1983) definition of stakeholders in education to include “government agencies, public interest groups (including adversary groups), unions, local community, employees, parents and pupils” (as qtd in Cooper et al, 2008, p. 81). The application of stakeholder theory in this study requires consideration of many stakeholders, including education policy community members, legislators, agency leaders, and school leaders.

While much of the research about stakeholder theory is at least a decade old, and much of the research about education and policy older than that, recent research about the application of stakeholder theory in education suggests that efforts that are “successful” related to education and educational reform include practitioners as stakeholders in all aspects of the policy making and reform process (Fullan, 1993; Honig, 2006, as qtd in Grossman, 2009). This is also important in conjunction with policy community research, as Grossman (2009) explains:

...not all actors who hold formal positions within systems of education have equal access to relevant decision-making channels. The literature on school change has long demonstrated the hierarchical nature of the policy-

making environment and highlights the relative lack of power of school level petitioners. (p. 657)

Thus, this study seeks to investigate how stakeholders at the practitioner or school level can most effectively engage the legislature, engage in the process as stakeholders, and change the uneven power balance as highlighted by Grossman (2009). One of the additional motivators for this engagement by school leaders ought to be the potential to influence policy outcome in education in ways that are more favorable for teachers and students.

Freeman's theory further asks scholars and others applying the theory to as "how we could redefine, redescribe, or reinterpret stakeholder interests so that we can figure out a way to satisfy both, or to create more value for both" (Freeman et al, 2010, Kindle locations 459-461). This is a logical consideration for education reform through policymaking, and aligns with many changes implemented in the 2013 legislative session in Montana, which provides the backdrop for this study.

For the purposes of this particular study, stakeholder theory validates the idea that it is important to investigate political participation not only by the leaders of individual educational units (schools or districts), but also the leadership of the various groups that represent educational stakeholders in Montana. These include groups representing teachers and their union, administrators, school boards, rural education, and others. It also serves to explain from a theoretical construct why it is important to consider various entities in the evaluation of what is effective in terms of influencing education policy.

Micropolitics of Education

Micropolitics occurs within the many actions undertaken by stakeholders as they work to influence education policy. The concept provides a framework through which one can consider exchanges and interactions between the stakeholders involved in politics and education. In 1982, Hoyle explained micropolitics as "those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (as qtd in Scribner et al, 2003, p. 88). Iannaccone (1975) coined the related term "micropolitics of education," which occurs both around and within schools, and is "the interaction and political ideologies of social systems of teachers, administrators, and pupils within school buildings" (p.43). A 2006 work by Malen combined the ideas of Hoyle (1986), Ball (1987), and Blase (1991), defining micropolitics as "the overt and covert processes through which individuals and groups in an organization's immediate environment acquire and exercise power to promote and protect their interests," and also as a way in which conflict is managed and resources are divided (p. 147). Micropolitics can be observed when elements of power are used by educational leaders to influence legislators, in communicating the needs and wants of schools and their leaders, to gain influence and preference, and to further interests being advocated. Iannaccone's work from 1975 also brings to light the applications of micropolitics in education as being "concerned with the issues of the interaction between professional and lay subsystems" (p. 43, as qtd in Iannaccone, 1991, p. 466). Those subsystems are often inhabited by stakeholders, which is part of the background for nesting micropolitics within stakeholder theory.

This study embeds micropolitics within the application of stakeholder theory. Within the varied stakeholder groups, including school leaders, public education agency stakeholders, and others, micropolitics occurs in a variety of ways. It certainly occurs in the legislature, within the parties themselves, within the education committees, and within other subgroups of legislators. The micropolitical activities within the subgroups of stakeholders has an impact in both covert and overt ways. Therefore, it is necessary to include micropolitics as a framework in this study. It also assists the researcher in considering resources utilized by educational leaders to attempt to influence policy and policy makers.

Policy Community

This study is further informed by research surrounding the concept of policy community. Fundamentally, a policy community is defined by Pross and Kingdon as “a group of organizations and/or individual that considered to be the key policy actors in a specific field of government activity or policy area” (Pross, 1985, p. 253; Kingdon, 1984, p. 123). Kirst and Wirt (1996) further elaborate, describing a policy community as:

... a constellation of intellectual ideas and social understandings that influence the policy choices of decision makers within its domain. The concept of policy community implies that individuals within a community share internal norms, values, frameworks of communication, and may engage in concerted political activities (p.14).

Kirst and Wirt further propose that educational leaders may need a policy community of their own, or to engage in multiple communities because education often spans multiple policy issue divisions. Engaging in any policy community, especially multiple communities, requires a commitment of time, resources, and the will to engage

in building and maintaining the community. An independent policy community which included school leaders and other stakeholders would also require a coherent agenda and message, as well as adaptability to current political challenges, climate, and educational needs. Kirst and Wirt (1996) explain that “an important variable of success in influencing policy through a community is coherence among members policy views. Policy communities learn and change their views about appropriate policy solutions and develop new policy paradigms” (p. 14). This could prove to be a difficult undertaking depending on the stakeholders involved in the policy community.

The publication of the *Essential Truths* (MASBO et al, 2012) document, coauthored by a number of educational stakeholder groups in Montana with a long history of advocating on opposite sides of some educational issues, alerted many stakeholders both inside and outside of education in Montana that a change had occurred in this area of the field. The publication was distributed not only to legislators, but also amongst school leaders and general teacher union membership. Some political decision makers expressed disbelief and wonder at the emerging alliance, as it appeared that all of the public education stakeholder groups were, as Kirst and Wirt describe as essential, presenting and supporting the same, coherent objectives and agenda for the upcoming legislative session. Further, it became apparent in the late fall of 2012 that a bipartisan contingent of legislative leaders would join in supporting public education stakeholders to enlarge the emerging policy community, which would then make its membership inclusive of members of the policy making body itself. The possibility that educational leaders and legislative members were engaging in the same policy making community

was further exemplified through the authorship and crafting of Senate Bill 175 (Generally revise public education funding, 2013), which defines the parameters for a new funding mechanism for public education in Montana. Coleman and Skogstad (1990) used the term ‘policy community’ to refer to the “set of actors, public and private, that coalesce around an issue area and share a common interest in shaping its development” (as qtd in Skogstad, 2005, p. 4), which seemed a valid description of the events in Montana’s public education community just prior to the 2013 session, and continued to be true as the session progressed. Thus, policy community and its implications in the 2013 session are important to consider in the context of this study, whose purpose is to determine what the most effective engagement methods were in the 2013 session, particularly to determine if the policy community efforts were effective and if so, to what extent, in influencing policy outcomes.

The idea of a policy community also encompasses the framework of stakeholder theory, in that a variety of stakeholders, from the ground level (teachers) to the policy making level (legislators) are included in the political processes that guide education. The inclusion of all stakeholders is important to facilitate buy in and an inclusive policy community. The inclusion of the various school leadership bodies as well as legislators in the emergent policy community in Montana seems to have considered and overcome this limitation. This background is essential to consider in relation to the research question because the emergence of a policy community in Montana during the 2013 legislative session that influenced the methods of engagement for both legislators and school leaders related to policy making decisions.

Thus, the author concludes that stakeholder and policy community theories serve as the theoretical bases for this study, and that they are intertwined to a certain extent as well. The micropolitics theory also contributes to the study and is important for consideration at the secondary level.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions are proposed: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session?

Significance of Study

Examination of political participation activities engaged in by Montana's educational leaders, and how that participation influenced the outcomes of education policy in the 2013 legislative session, is important as education continues to be more closely governed by policy decisions at the state and federal level. Cooper et al (2008) assert that the public is growing more accepting of the interaction of politics and education. This may facilitate greater acceptance of educational leaders that are more visibly involved in political activities. While the public may be recognizing this shift, the actions of educational leaders have not kept pace with the change. The lack of current research on the political participation of educational leaders is evidence of this. There are many studies on effective political participation, but far fewer on the political

participation of any subgroups related to the field of education; a review of the literature indicated no such similar research in effective engagement by educational leaders with the exception of a study of the state of New York circa 1972 (Milstein & Jennings).

Results from this study may be of interest to educational leaders in Montana. However, findings from this study may have implications for educational leaders from other states and regions, particularly those with citizen legislatures. Utilizing the recommendations for practitioners that emerge from the study results may increase the effectiveness of educational leaders who are engaged in activities to attempt to influence education policy.

To study the relationship and effective mechanisms of issue advocacy by educational leaders, and to determine how the engagement of educational leaders influenced policy outcomes in 2013, it is necessary to examine the historical context of the relationship between politics and education, the current status of the relationship according to recent research, and the reasons for school leaders' hesitancy to engage in political affairs. It is also necessary to examine the considerations of the legislature, the concept of a policy community, and to apply lenses of micropolitics and stakeholder theory to better understand and consider future efforts of educational leaders to influence policy. The 2013 legislative session in Montana provides the perfect backdrop to perform this study, as marked changes occurred in how educational leaders interacted with legislators. Specifically, the actions of the executive representatives of public education stakeholders and their members changed as a result of unique policy proposals and the emergence of a public education policy community. Two prior studies conducted

by the author, one performed prior to the session (Lougheed, 2014) and one performed during the session (Lougheed, 2013), provided some meaningful insights about the interaction of education and politics in Montana, and also established a foundation for consideration of the research questions posed in this study.

Definition of Terms

Political Participation: There are many definitions of political participation offered in political science research. A report by Conge (1988) considered several potential definitions and discussions of each. For the purposes of this study, the definition of Barnes et al (1979) will apply: “political participation” is defined as “all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system” (as qtd in Conge, 1988).

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the recency and frequency of the literature available to inform the study. The literature in educational politics specific to the political engagement of school leaders is quite limited. Johnson (2003) posited that the shift away from the study of education and politics could be related to the relationship between the Politics of Education Association (PEA) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA), as well as changes in the political environment nationwide as it

relates to education. Johnson asserts, “there is a sense that the politics of education is a field without a country” (p. 42).

Though there may not be a clear “country” for this research, the need is growing greater for educational leaders to consider and identify effective and efficient mechanisms through which to influence education policy by participating politically.

A second limitation of the study is that it is being performed in one state, Montana, which has a citizen legislature and meets semi-annually. Thus, the sample size is relatively small. The inclusion of open-ended questions and qualitative analysis in the survey adds to the strength of the data and conclusions. The limited sample size impacts the generalizability of the results and recommendations beyond other states with similar legislative governance structures until the study is replicated in other arenas. However, the study results are likely generalizable to other states with citizen legislatures, which include Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, New Hampshire, and potentially apply to 36 other states who do not have full time legislatures but some sort of hybrid model (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009).

An additional limitation of the study is the utilization of a self-reporting survey, which may include inconsistency between reported actions and reality. There may be potential for school administrators and agency stakeholders to misreport engagement activities, as well as for legislators to express answers deemed to be correct versus true. The anonymous research design is an attempt to answer these concerns.

Finally, the reach of the word “influence” is difficult to define as far as how much “influence” as reported by legislative respondents translates into action or a change in

action. For the purposes of this study, influence refers to which engagement activities would potentially change the thinking of the legislative respondent or lead them to think deeper or inquire further about a particular issue related to education. This is another area that warrants future research and discovery as discussed in later chapters.

Summary

Examination of political participation activities engaged in by Montana's educational leaders and how those relate to effective political participation activities is important as education continues to be more closely governed by policy decisions at the state and federal level. Cooper et al (2008) assert:

Americans increasingly recognize that public schools operate in a highly political environment because politics is the process of meeting educational needs through socially determined and legitimated avenues, which affects the governance of educational systems and the production of policies. Politics is important because education is nationally absorbing, highly value-laden, and is a major focus of federal, state, and local governments. (p. vii)

Stakeholder theory is an appropriate lens to utilize when considering how school leaders should engage with the legislature and seek to influence educational policy.

Gibbons (1984) purports that "survival in the political world will depend on action and awareness" (p. 12). Educational leaders will need to be more actively engaged if they are to maintain any meaningful degree of influence in a political system that is consistently increasing its hold on public education through policy. Policy community research also should be considered to determine its influence in the session, as well as the influence of micropolitics on the influence activities engaged in by school leaders.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of the literature related to the interaction of school leaders with legislators includes examination of the historical context of the relationship between politics and education, its current status, consideration of the reasons why school leaders are hesitant to engage in politics, and consideration of the role and viewpoint of the legislators whom school leaders seek to influence. After reviewing literature related to those topics, the literature related to the theoretical frameworks of stakeholder theory and micropolitics is considered, and the literature as a whole evaluated for strengths and weaknesses.

Historical Context and the Current Relationship Between Politics and Education

Since its creation, public education has been a descendant of politics. Its very existence was ensured through political processes, by politicians. However, it would be several decades before education would take notice of the extent of the influence of politics over itself. When this occurred, a need for activism by school leaders was announced, and a seminal article by Eliot (1959) advocated inquiry into educational politics. This article was later referenced by many others, including Scribner, Aleman, & Aleman (2003). In this work, the authors assert that "if all the significant political factors are revealed, the people can more rationally and effectively control the governmental process" (p. 1036). The authors further considered "how, why, and under what historical

context the politics of education field evolved” in order to “better understand its relevance to contemporary educational administrators and policy leaders” (p.10). Additionally, the article traced the progression over time of the study of politics and education. They began in the days of Plato and Machiavelli (p. 11), traveled through the establishment of the common school in the colonies (p. 12), through various reform movements and other landmark events in education, to the present. Highlighted benchmark events included the civil rights movement, teacher unionization, and the integration of the principles of scientific management in schools, all of which were considered events that led to the increase in studies considering interactions between education and politics during the 1960s. It was in this time that the study of politics and education as a field commenced. The Politics of Education Association (PEA) was established as part of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), which provided a landing place as well as a yearbook for publication of research in the field. The handbook and organizations still exist today. At the time, the Association grounded its theory mostly in political science, and yet considered itself “as an academic hybrid,” yet “the politics of education had difficulty establishing an identity” (Scribner, Aleman, & Aleman, 2003, p. 16).

The field then entered a turbulent period similar to adolescence, and many events converged which stifled the increase in research and as a result, the field “failed to progress as expected” (p. 17) and thus had to consider a “grab bag and partial theories and contrasting methods” (Wirt and Kirst, 1982, as qtd on p. 17). Though an improvement from years prior, the PEA’s publications, including thematic yearbooks and

bulletins, did not protect the fledgling field from the change rapidly occurring around it, and thus the field became what Scribner et al referred to as “at risk” (Scribner, Aleman, & Aleman, 2003). Johnson (2003) explains that some of the shift in the research around education and politics can be traced to changes in the status of affairs between AERA and the PEA, as well as to changes that occurred in politics on the national level, asserting that “there is a sense that the politics of education is a field without a country” (p. 42).

The 1970s and 1980s were periods of drastic change in terms of the involvement of politics in education. Local control decreased, and state and federal officials became more involved in education. In a study conducted during this period, Milstein & Jennings (1973) highlighted many uncertainties that plague education policy making, such as uncertainty over “the extent to which the men who sit in formal legislative bodies are sympathetic to the needs of education; and to the ability of educators to present the needs of education in the most effective manner” (p.54). Many of these concerns remain relevant today. Since that time, the involvement of state and federal decision makers in schools has increased. In 1984, Gibbons stated, “in the educational arena, state legislators exercise a dominant role in the building and enforcing of state policy” (p. 4). As this continues to be true today, the opportunities and need for school leaders to try to influence policy by interacting with state policy makers has increased.

Though the need to engage and opportunities to engage have increased, many of those opportunities have been missed for a variety of reasons. Reasons provided in the research include that the engagement of school leaders in politics is perceived as not appropriate, the limited time, knowledge, and resources of school leaders to effectively

engage with policy makers, and a lack of training and education of school leaders about political engagement. Though these obstacles exist, Gibbons (1984) asserts: “the growing opportunity for political persuasion of state legislators by informed educators exists. Educator participation in state policy-making is needed” (p.4). School leaders need to try to engage in the decision making process, in order to provide consistent and correct information, and increase the role and voice of the school leader in education policy decision making. Policy in education touches the day to day life and livelihood of educational leaders in many ways, including funding, licensure, class size, retirement, and many others – including, to some extent, what is taught. It seems logical, therefore, that educational leaders must not only increase their engagement but engage effectively, in order to yield policies that are most effective for schools and their stakeholders. This study seeks to inform practitioners about how to make that idea reality.

While much about the interaction of politics and education is uncertain, one thing that is certain is that the relationship between the two is messy, and though the term seems to lack a scholarly robustness, is often the precise word used to describe the relationship in the literature. The “mess” is reported to be a contributing factor in not only the lack of current research related to politics and education but also to the lack of understanding by many educational leaders about how to influence policy. One article about the “mess,” entitled “Emergence of the Politics of Education Field: Making Sense of the Messy Center” by Scribner, Aleman, & Maxcy (2003), contends that because the study of politics and education is partially an educational field, partially a behavioral field, and partially a field of political science, it has struggled to emerge and sustain as an

independent research field. This is one of many identified components the authors cite as causal for the decline in the quantity of politics and education research in the past twenty years. Further, the authors contend that difficulty cementing roots, changes in what society expects public education to be and do, the evolution of public schooling, and changes politically have also contributed to the messiness.

Messes can be difficult to clean up and contain, and it is not likely that politics and education will ever really “fit” neatly in one field. Despite this, educational leaders would be well served to figure out what part of the literature and research about the two fits into the field of education, especially as politics and policy continue to integrate with education further. The greater the role of politics at the state and national level in education, the more crucial it becomes to perform more research in the combined fields in order to inform school leaders about decisions that influence their work. This means that school leaders will have to work within the “messy center” and recognize that the “interplay is central to the field” (Scribner et al, 2003, p. 33).

Funding is the tie that binds politics and education. Gibbons (1984) posits, "the amount of money that is allocated for education is politically determined. Educators are not as skilled at participating in these decisions as they might be" (2). Legislators are deeply involved in the processes and decision making that determine these appropriations, but the involvement and effectiveness of school leaders in this proves is an unanswered question. Because politics and education funding are closely related, it would seem that educational leaders would desire to be involved in policy making. Yet, shifts have occurred that have led researchers away from even investigating the topics, let

alone looking at ways to change the methods of school leaders who interact with legislators in order to increase effectiveness. The increasing oversight of politics over education and greater interaction would seem to suggest that greater attention ought to be paid to the interrelatedness of politics and education, but other factors influence the distance that seems to exist between education and politics.

School Leaders and the Hesitancy to Engage in Political Affairs

As outlined previously, funding has historically tied politics and education together. While there are numerous reasons that educational leaders are absent from politics related to education, one of the most commonly cited reasons is that educational leaders do not feel confident about how to interact politically, or do not have the knowledge necessary in order to do so. Educational leadership programs may also be partially to blame for this, and may need to partner with those more knowledgeable about political interactions in order to better prepare educational leaders.

Additionally, the legislature contributes to the complexity of the problem of school leader engagement. Milstein & Jennings (1973) explain: "Educational interest groups in the past have generally been able to impress legislatures of the special nature of education. Today, they find these bodies less receptive to their demands" (p.55). They further suggest that "educational interest groups will have to modify their influence strategies when dealing with state legislatures" (p.55). Yet there is insufficient information about how those strategies ought to shift. One premise of this study is that strategies utilized by educational interest groups and educational leaders ought to shift in

a way that matches the preferences of the legislators educational stakeholders are seeking to influence, in order to maximize the influence of school leaders. Thus, this study is necessary to determine how educational leaders ought to shift by examining what worked in a legislative session that yielded better results for the desired legislative agenda of school leaders, and the perceptions of legislators about what was effective.

For decades, educational leaders have been hesitant to engage politically, and there is little doubt that "education has paid a price for reluctance" (Gibbons, 1984, p. 16). One does not have to travel far in education circles to hear a plethora of complaints about the negative influences of policy and politics in schools. These complaints are not new. A study by McDonnell in 1988, highlighted in the April 2013 UCEA Research Utilization Brief, stated "we have no guarantee that research knowledge will prevail in a political environment, but the price of not speaking may be to accept solutions from those least familiar with schools" (p. 96, as qtd in Browne-Ferrigno, 2013).

There is no shortage of examples of political solutions imposed in schools by policy makers who are not as familiar with the day to day operations of schools and the impact of those policies as educational leaders, at the federal, state, and local levels. Often, complaints about politically imposed solutions include a lack of funding for education, which is not a new phenomenon. In 1985, Gibbons spoke to the "irony in the fact that more public money is spent for education than for any other single function of state or local government and yet education and politics have traditionally refused to recognize their interdependence and mutual influence" (p. 15). In 1962, Bailey, Frost, Marsh, and Wood asserted, "...education is one of the most thoroughly political

enterprises in American life...The amount of money state governments make available for general aid to public schools is determined politically" (viii, as qtd in Gibbons, 1984, p. 16). While adequate funding is certainly not the only politically determined policy that impacts education, it is significant in many of the conversations both in research and in day to day operations in schools.

In addition to funding, tension between education and politics arises due to joint governance as well. Because school districts themselves are governmental units, school board members and superintendents are engaged politically to a certain extent whether they like it or not. The relationship between superintendents and their boards and communities is often very political (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; 1991, Burlingame, 1981, Garcia, 2000), and the fragility of those relationships influence the willingness of school leaders to engage politically. Though this is true, school leaders still need to engage politically and figure out how to navigate the interconnectedness of politics and education. Many of these issues plagued education forty years ago, and then we have added forty years of education and political issues on top of the already existing issues. In 1962, Bailey, Frost, Marsh, and Wood warned: "failure to understand the political machines of state government has resulted in an inability of those interested in education to cope with problems of adequate public support" (as qtd in Gibbons, 1984, p. 16). Thirty years later, not enough has changed. School leaders and their constituents, namely students, stand to lose if school leaders are unable to modify their approach to the politics of education.

Considering the Legislature and Building a Policy Community

If school leaders can become better informed and overcome hesitancy in engagement, the next question remains, as posed by Gibbons (1984): "How can local school administrators be more effective at providing appropriate resources for state legislators? How can district school administrators have a greater influence on state educational policy decisions?" (p. 8). Gibbons (1984) previously explained, "...conflict and competition have increased the volume and complexity of the information legislators must sift through in their policy development process" (p. 2), and "legislators are confronted with an entire system of political demands coming from diverse sources with often conflicting or competing solutions. Pressures on legislators to act are incessant, concentrated, and simultaneous" (p. 7). School leaders must determine how to engage with legislators in order to not only ensure that they receive accurate, realistic, and timely information about education, but also to inform them of the past and future impact of policies. This may only work if school leaders are viewed as reliable sources of information, and not solely as a group that approaches legislators for money and things related to their own self-interest. In order to most effectively do this, school leaders will need to carefully consider what is useful for legislators. School leaders may also need to work together with other stakeholder groups in education to form policy communities. These ideas are informed by the research of Adrian (1972), who explained that there is a disconnect between the need of legislators for information, who simultaneously have a lack of trust in relationship with those who have the information they need (as qtd in Gibbons, 1984, p. 4). This is particularly complicated in education, because many

believe they know about education and schools because they attended one, yet few legislators have direct experience in schools or school leadership, and are therefore relying on outside sources or advisors to provide them with information on the legislation and decisions they face related to education. Those sources or advisors may also lack experience and inside understanding related to schools or education, and sometimes have an alternate agenda they are seeking to advance. Ideally, school leaders will become trusted sources of information, and one step to developing relationship of trust and becoming a sought after source for information is providing legislators information utilizing their preferred communication methods.

One premise of this study is that consideration of how legislators prefer to be influenced ought to be of consideration for school leaders seeking to influence politics and policy. In 1973, Milstein and Jennings wrote about ways legislators get information that they then utilize to make decisions. This included a discussion of at least seven sources of information, including colleagues, party leadership, agency stakeholders, interest group representatives, constituents, inside and outside groups. The article asserts, “All of these groups and individuals bring influence to bear on legislators as they debate and vote on educational issues. The question of import then is, as a result of these interactions, how do legislators view educational policy making?” (p. 62). The article continues and contends that on the whole, legislators look at education related policy making as very similar to other kinds of policy making. Thus, in order to have maximum influence, educational leaders must be considered valid sources of information for legislators, and ought to figure out how best and most efficiently to engage in the

legislative process in ways that facilitate relationship and influence building. The Milstein and Jennings article further explains that legislators first consider in house sources for information, followed by outside sources such as interest groups (p. 65), which is where educational leaders would like to fit in, but that legislators are also concerned about their membership or constituents at the local level (p. 67), which may influence plans of educational leaders and educational advocacy groups. This insight, especially when combined with the outcome results of this study, will assist school leaders and education advocacy coalitions as well as the policy community in Montana about how to engage effectively and optimally influence legislators because the actors will consider the perspective of the legislative decision makers.

One way that interest groups and educational leaders can effectively influence policy and policy makers is to form a policy community around a common focus and agenda. In 1996, Kirst and Wirt described a policy community as:

... a constellation of intellectual ideas and social understandings that influence the policy choices of decision makers within its domain. The concept of policy community implies that individuals within a community share internal norms, values, frameworks of communication, and may engage in concerted political activities” (p.14).

There are differing perspectives on whether education should fit within a policy community or form its own, related to the literature and conversation about where politics and education fits politically. Kirst and Wirt propose that educational leaders might be best served to have their own policy community, or to engage in multiple communities depending on the issue. Participating in multiple policy communities requires a much greater commitment in time and resources, something that school leaders already run in

short supply. It can be difficult for school leaders to find time to engage in advocating for one issue or contributing to one community, let alone several. This gets more complicated when one considers that a successful education policy community would have membership consisting of multiple school leaders and other stakeholders as well, and those members would need to be able to develop and articulate a consistent, coherent agenda and message, while maintaining a willingness and ability to adapt based on current and changing political climates and realities (current policy, current elected officials, current partisan leadership, current hot button issues, etc.). Kirst and Wirt (1996) conclude that coherence on views and agenda is “an important variable of success in influencing policy through a community is coherence among members policy views. Policy communities learn and change their views about appropriate policy solutions and develop new policy paradigms” (p. 14).

The Milstein and Jennings study of 1972 considered political engagement of educational influence groups in New York, which is likely the most closely related research to the questions posed by this study. In that study, the authors found that some commonalities in interest groups exist, an idea that aligns to the more modern terminology of policy community. They write: “there appear to be patterns of lobbying activities which hold constant across these groups; activities which, on the basis of past experience, they feel will maximize their influence in the policy-making process” (p.58). This study may validate some of those ideas, or lead to new conclusions, and either way the results will better inform school leaders about potential activities that would benefit a policy community.

Theoretical Frameworks for Effective
Political Engagement of School Leaders

Stakeholder Theory

Originally presented in 1984, Freeman's stakeholder theory presents the idea that stakeholders, defined by Freeman et al in 2010 as "groups and individuals who have a stake in the success or failure of a business" (Kindle Locations 131-132) "adopt as a unit of analysis the relationship between a business and the groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by it" (Kindle Locations 248-251) as a means to solve problems. If one alters the context slightly by changing "business" to "education," stakeholders could be defined to include everyone from students to cabinet officials, parents, teachers, school board members, governors, secretaries of education, the President, and many others concerned with education and educational outcomes.

In tandem with stakeholder theory, more recent research asserts that efforts in education policy and reform that are successful must include practitioners (Fullan, 1993; Honig, 2006). This is precisely what Freeman describes, in that various stakeholders at multiple levels, including those at the ground level (teachers) through to the policy maker level (legislators) ought to be involved in the political processes that make decisions that impact education. Inclusion of all stakeholders, or at a minimum as many as is feasible, is important to facilitate the buy in and legitimacy of a policy community. Grossman (2009) describes a definite hierarchy in education policy and contends that currently, educational leaders are not involved in that hierarchy in a meaningful, powerful way. He further explains the cause of this as he asserts, "...not all actors who hold formal

positions within systems of education have equal access to relevant decision-making channels" (p. 657). Some do have access, but are uncertain about how to utilize the channels. If educational leaders can discover, partially through this study, how to engage effectively with the legislature, and if educational leaders are willing to become part of the process as legitimate stakeholders, then this truth can be changed. At the same time, educational leaders can potentially change this, as they begin to influence policy outcomes in ways that make them more palatable and functional for schools.

Stakeholder theorists challenge those who apply the theory to ask "how we could redefine, redescribe, or reinterpret stakeholder interests so that we can figure out a way to satisfy both, or to create more value for both" (Freeman et al, 2010, Kindle locations 459-461). If this could be done in education policy, many within the policy community, education community, and the greater society would have much to gain.

Micropolitics of Education

The theory of micropolitics is embedded within actions taken by stakeholders attempting to influence education policy. Micropolitics provides one framework through which to view the interactions of politics and education. Hoyle (1982) defines micropolitics as "those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (as qtd in Scribner et al, 2003, p. 88). Iannacocone, in his 1975 seminal work, coined the term micropolitics of education, which refers to the politics that takes place in and around schools, and "the interaction and political ideologies of social systems of teachers, administrators, and pupils within school buildings" (p.43). Malen (2006) synthesized the

idea of micropolitical perspective penned by Ball (1987), Blase (1991), and Hoyle (1986) as “the overt and covert processes through which individuals and groups in an organization’s immediate environment acquire and exercise power to promote and protect their interests,” and also as a mechanism to both manage conflict and divide resources (p. 147).

Any time educational leaders interact with education policy, micropolitics is at work, and various elements of power are used for a variety of purposes. These might include influencing legislators, communicating messages and wants, attempting to gain favor and influence, and in attempting to further whatever interest the educational leader is advocating. Iannaccone (1975) also highlights the application of micropolitics of education in a broader context, as “concerned with the issues of the interaction between professional and lay subsystems” (p. 43, as qtd in Iannaccone, 1991, p. 466). The broader context is what facilitates the nesting of micropolitics within stakeholder theory, as it addresses the interactions between stakeholders.

For the purpose of this study, micropolitics is embedded within the application of stakeholder theory. Within the stakeholder groups, which include the superintendents and also the coalition of public education agency stakeholders, micropolitics occurs in a variety of ways. Micropolitics is also certainly at work in the legislative arena, within the two parties themselves, within the education committee, and within various other subgroups of legislators. The micropolitical activities within each subgroup of stakeholders impacts the outcomes in both cover and overt ways. Thus, it is necessary to include consideration of micropolitics as a framework within the study. This framework

assists the study in considering what resources educational leaders utilize in order to attempt to influence education policy and policymakers.

Summary

The literature informing this study includes stakeholder theory, a theory applied to education from business, primarily investigated by Freeman (2010). Nested within stakeholder theory, micropolitics is considered in the actions undertaken by the stakeholders to influence education. The “mess” of the interaction between politics and education is reviewed, in order to explain the difficulty in sustaining a place for politics and education to reside in the literature, and to reveal the gap in the literature to be investigated in this study. The ties between education and politics are delineated, and the justification for considering the state legislature and perspective of legislators is justified through the review of the literature. The literature related stakeholder theory, micropolitics, and policy community is plentiful, but the specific literature or other studies related to how school leaders ought to engage in effectively influencing education policy and politics does not exist.

Political engagement of school leaders is called for in the ISSLC standards, its need is discussed in the literature, and consequences for its absence mentioned in words that induce fear for some and call others to action. What is not discussed in the literature, the gap identified to be addressed by this study, is what school leaders should do politically to participate and engage in ways that are likely to influence legislators in their decision making.

The literature is strong in providing a history that describes the tumultuous relationship between politics and education and the struggles the field has endured. There is sufficient research to frame the study, and a substantial quantity of research related to the theoretical frameworks utilized in the study, particularly in stakeholder theory.

While the literature is strong in discussing the conflicts, reasons for the lack of engagement of school leaders, and the considerations of the legislature, it is weak in providing methods or suggestions about how to engage, and how to influence education politics and policy in ways that most positively impact education stakeholders. There is some related research on the periphery, but none that specifically addresses how school leaders ought to engage most effectively with legislators to attempt to influence outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this triangulated mixed method study was to investigate the political engagement activities undertaken by school leaders during the 2013 session, and determine how effective those activities were by also surveying legislators. Educational stakeholder groups were also included in order to triangulate the responses and include additional stakeholders, as suggested by the grounding theory. Three electronic surveys were administered to the three major stakeholder groups. Descriptive statistics and correlations determine the answers to the research questions: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session? Open ended responses assist in triangulation of the data. The survey design relied heavily on an instrument developed by Andolina et al (2003), the *Index of Civic and Political Engagement*. This instrument was previously validated and provides a framework and menu of engagement activities to determine the participation of school leaders and the effectiveness of those engagement mechanisms according to legislators.

Participants

This study is based heavily on stakeholder theory. Recent research asserts that "successful" efforts involve practitioners (stakeholders) in all aspects of the process

(Fullan, 1993; Honig, 2006, as qtd in Grossman, 2009). Therefore, the subjects of inquiry for this study were school leaders in a superintendent or dual superintendent/principal role in Montana, principals, educational agency leaders, and state legislators. School leaders were identified utilizing the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) membership distribution information, which included all school principals, superintendents, and those in some Montana districts who serve as both. State legislators were identified using the publically available membership rosters located on the website for the Montana Legislature. The educational agency leaders were identified by reviewing the membership of the policy community identified as the Montana Public Education Center (MT-PEC), and then each leader was identified by consulting the website of each respective organization.

Procedure

A triangulated mixed method study was conducted, using electronic surveys administered to all legislators as well as all public school administrators in Montana. The legislative survey was disseminated via the email addresses provided on the LAWS legislative contact website. The school leader survey was disseminated utilizing the distribution list of the School Administrators of Montana (SAM). A third survey was disseminated to the leadership of stakeholder groups directly involved in the public education policy community in Montana. The results of the school leader survey were compared to results of the author's previous study (Lougheed, 2014) to determine if any significant change occurred in political interaction during the 2013 session in relation to

the results gathered prior to the session. Next, the legislative study, revised to include specific questions about activities and their effectiveness in influencing legislative decision making, were considered. Finally, the policy community leadership study included both questions from the school leaders survey as well as open response questions to compare with pilot study results, legislator responses, and also to compare to one another for inter-rater reliability and triangulation. Comparisons using descriptive statistics were utilized to compare the engagement activities of the school and agency leaders with perceived effectiveness indicated by legislators of engagement activities during the 2013 session.

Because the subjects of the study are public figures, approval was granted for an “Exempt” status by the Institutional Review Board at Montana State University per a memo dated August 11, 2014 (see Appendix D). According to the memorandum from Mark Quinn, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Montana State University, the research proposed in this dissertation was determined to be exempt under the category of “research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior” (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

The results were analyzed utilizing a triangulation mixed method design, using concurrent triangulation, where both qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary to interpret the data, and are conducted separately yet concurrently for two reasons: to develop a more complete understanding of a phenomenon, and to corroborate findings.

The engagement index responses from school leaders and education group leaders, as well as the Likert responses from the legislator survey, were analyzed using comparative descriptive statistics. Spearman correlation was analyzed to compare the legislator preferences with school leader and education group leader results, as well as to compare the study results to the previous study results (Lougheed, 2014). The open ended responses were then analyzed for within group and cross group similarities. Analysis began with open coding and the discovery of themes and subcategories as outlined by Creswell (2012). A constructivist approach to analysis was applied, in order to “to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell 2012).

Instruments

Three surveys were administered, crafted with heavy influence from the *Index of Civic and Political Engagement* (Andolina et al, 2003) with additional questions specific to the Montana legislature, educational leader interactions, and the 2013 legislative session. The questions added were the open response questions, which were necessary to elicit further information from respondents about the efforts undertaken specific to the 2013 session and how they were different from previous sessions. Engagement activity questions were also added specific to providing written or in person testimony as allowed by the Montana legislature. The *Index of Civic and Political Engagement* (Andolina et al, 2003) instrument has been previously validated and national norms established by age group utilizing a national survey of more than 3,000 subjects in 2002, which was followed by a reliability test on two occasions after the 2002 midterm elections (Andolina

et al, 2003, p. 1). A previous study based on the same survey was performed by the author in 2012 (Lougheed, 2014), the results of which serve as comparative data for the results section of the study. This survey establishes the baselines of normal levels of political participation for individuals meeting certain demographic criteria. For the purposes of this study, the instrument served to provide a comprehensive list of engagement activities. Comparisons were not made in this study related to the norm results for average participation that the instrument was initially used to determine, though this information could be used comparatively with the data from this study in future research.

Limitations

Limitations of the study are focused in two major areas: the survey instrument and the survey audience. The survey instrument is a self-reporting survey, which may not be as accurate as other instruments. The anonymous research design is an attempt to mitigate this potential impact. The second major limitation of the study is that the survey audience is limited to school leaders and legislators in one state with a citizen legislature, which may impact the generalizability of the study. Finally, the survey is not longitudinal beyond one legislative session, so the continuity of the results from legislature to legislature cannot yet be verified.

Justification of Methods and Framework

The three theoretical frameworks presented intertwine to provide a foundation from which to answer the research questions posed in this study. Stakeholder theory and micropolitics help to explain why it is important to consider so many stakeholders and facets to the legislative influence school leaders are seeking to exert more effectively. The policy community framework is essential to consider in order to determine how the policy community actions also influenced the legislature in 2013.

Further study of this question and the effectiveness of legislative interactions by school leaders in the 2013 legislative session in Montana is essential for a variety of purposes. The preliminary study prior to the session (Lougheed, 2014) can be compared to the engagement measures indicated by school leaders post session in the proposed study to determine what, if any changes, occurred in the 2013 session. This is important because the results may confirm that a policy community emerged in public education in Montana during the 2013 session. Determining precisely which engagement activities were essential in influencing policy outcomes is important for a number of reasons, including advising school leaders and public education stakeholders in how to most effectively utilize the time they have available to engage in legislative interaction and activities to influence policy. Further, studying which activities are most influential is also important to determine activities worthy of continuing in order to maintain the policy community that has been established. This could serve to further the expanded legislative agenda of public education policy community stakeholders in future legislative sessions. This study may provide useful insights to school leaders in other states attempting to

effectively influence policy in their respective states, or to inform those who seek to create public education policy communities in their respective areas.

Summary

The study conducted surveyed school leaders, education stakeholder leaders, and legislators to determine the answers to the following research questions: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session? Electronic surveys, based on the *Index of Civic and Political Engagement* (Andolina et al, 2003), were disseminated under “Exempt” IRB approval during the fall of 2014 and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation, and open coding. The results that follow will inform school leaders in Montana about the effectiveness of their engagement activities during the 2013 legislative session and provide information on effective methods of engagement moving into future legislative sessions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

After consideration of methods and careful planning and design, surveys of three critical stakeholder groups, school leaders, agency leaders, and legislators, were conducted to answer the following research questions: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session? The results were analyzed for demographics, political engagement activities, information specific to the 2013 session, and other considerations unique to each survey before conclusions were investigated, correlated, and compared.

Survey Results

School Leader Survey

The school leader survey was distributed electronically to 700 school leaders across Montana utilizing the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) listserve the week of August 15, 2014. Reminder emails were sent to the same listserve members on August 25, 2015, and September 5, 2014. 170 complete, valid responses were received. This sample size represents a response rate of 24%, and at a 95% confidence level, a confidence interval of 6.54. While the response rate was not as high as desired, it is likely that this rate was related to the timing of the survey (just prior to the beginning of

the school year), and also concerns expressed by school leaders in Montana generally that they are subject to a large number of studies seeking information, which may mean school leaders are less likely to respond.

Demographics. School leader respondents reported demographic information including age, size of district, and their role within their respective district.

Table 1. Demographics of School Leaders by Age

Age Range	Respondents (%)
23-25 years	1
26-37 years	8
38-56 years	65
57+ years	26

Table 2. Demographics of School Leaders by District Size

School Class Designation	Respondents (%)
AA (1000-2000 students)	21
A (130-900 students)	22
B (90-320 students)	22
C (10-140 students)	35

Table 3. Demographics of School Leaders by Role

Role	Respondents (%)
Superintendent	44
Assistant Superintendent	2
Principal	48
Other Building Leader	5
Other District Leader	8

Table 4. Demographics of School Leaders by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Respondents (%)
1-5 years	21
6-10 years	24
11-15 years	21
16+ years	34

The majority of school leader respondents were at least 38 years old (91%). The distribution of respondents between size of districts was relatively even, ranging from 21% to 35%, with a higher representation of school leaders representing class “C”. The specific information on school size data was determined in consultation with the Montana High School Association (2010-2011 Montana High,” 2011). At the time of authorship, the 2010-2011 data was the most recently available information that was applicable to the 2013 legislative session being studied. A variety of school leadership roles were reported, but most respondents were either superintendents or principals (92%). It should be noted that the responses in table three total greater than 100%. This is because some respondents serve a dual superintendent/principal role in certain districts in Montana. The distribution of years of experience was also relatively even, with 55% of respondents noting 11 or more years of school leadership experience. The typical respondent to this study, based on demographic analysis, is at least 38 years old, serving as a superintendent or principal, and has at least 11 years of school leadership experience.

Political Engagement Indicators. Most (93.5%) school leader respondents indicated that they always vote during elections, 5.9% reported that they vote “sometimes” during elections, and less than 1% indicated that they preferred not to answer the question. When asked about encouraging people to vote for or against an

issue or candidate, 12.9% indicated that they “always” do so, 50% indicated that they do so “sometimes,” 22.9% indicated that they rarely do so, 10% indicated that they “never” do so, and 4% preferred not to answer the question. When asked if election records would show that they are currently registered to vote in their election district, 94% of respondents said “yes,” 2% of respondents said “no,” and 4% of respondents preferred not to answer.

2013 Session. Political engagement by school leaders took many forms during the 2013 session. They included activities in response to solicitations for support, mostly through monetary donations, and through other methods of engagement, which are the focus activities for this study.

During the 2013 legislative session, 45.6% of school leader respondents indicated that they were contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. 53.8% of respondents were not contacted, and less than 1% preferred not to answer. Of those who were contacted, 20.6% actually contributed money or worked for a candidate, political party, or organization who supports candidates, 76.9% did not, and 2.4% preferred not to answer the question.

Table 5. School Leader Participation in Political Engagement Activities During the 2013 Session

Engagement Activity	Yes (%)	No (%)
Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government?	73.8	26.2
Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?	15	85
Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue?	4.2	95.8
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?	3	97
Signed an email petition about a social or political issue?	28	72
Signed a written petition about a social or political issue?	25	75
Submitted testimony in person to the state legislature?	27.5	72.5
Submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature?	45.8	54.2
Attended an event where legislators were present?	73.7	26.3
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a polite conversation with a legislator?	62.3	37.3
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a conversation with a legislator focused on an issue related to education?	60.2	39.8

The most frequently engaged in activities were contacting or visiting an official, attending an event where legislators were present, having polite conversation, and having education focused conversation and submitting testimony in writing. All other activities were engaged in at a frequency less than 30%.

Most (64%) respondents indicated that they had participated in engagement activities such as these in sessions prior to 2013. The participation of those new to engagement and advocacy (36%) is important as it is evidence of a marked increase in the number of participants in engagement activities. Those respondents who said they had not participated prior to the 2013 session were queried with an open ended response as to what prompted their engagement in the 2013 session. Analysis of the open ended responses were analyzed using a process of open coding and the discovery of themes and subcategories as described in Creswell (2012). The reasons indicated for becoming involved varied, but included funding (27.8%), encouragement by School Administrators of Montana (SAM) to become involved (22.2%), specific issues addressed in proposed legislation (16.7%), specific contact by a legislator to be involved (5.6%), or requirements as part of one's position in education (11.1%).

When queried about how the 2013 session differed from previous legislative sessions, 78% of respondents indicated that they believed there was a change in how school leaders attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 legislative session. Those who indicated they believed there was a change in the 2013 session were then queried to provide an open ended response as to what they attributed that change. The open ended responses were analyzed using the same process of open coding and the

discovery of themes and subcategories as described in Creswell (2012). Reasons indicated were many, including: efforts were more unified/collaborative (38% of respondents), communication was more effective, both within the school administrator group and between school leaders and legislators (6% of respondents), increased involvement by school leaders (6% of respondents), and increased discussion on current issues (2% of respondents). One response was indicated to each of the following factors potentially responsible for the change in the 2013 session: work of legislators related to educational issues, more agreement on issues related to education by legislators, issues related to education were “high stakes” (i.e. funding), a more reasonable legislature, and work with legislators in advance of the session.

Only two responses indicated that the change was not for the better, one indicating that education appeared weaker than ever before during the session, and one response indicating that the significant change in the 2013 session was not related to anything the school leaders did, but rather was related to the increased polarization between the political parties.

Barriers to Participation. Some (43%) respondents indicated that they encountered barriers to participating in the 2013 legislative session. Respondents who indicated that they encountered barriers were then asked in an open response question to indicate what barriers were encountered. An analysis of the open ended responses from those who indicated that they had encountered barriers were analyzed using a process of open coding and the discovery of themes and subcategories as described in Creswell (2012). Emergent themes for barriers encountered included political issues, logistical

issues, and issues related to particular legislators. For the purposes of this study, political issues were those related to partisanship, or partisan ideologies strongly held that impacted the responsiveness of legislators. Logistical issues were those primarily related to barriers that limited access to legislators or the capital in some way.

Specifically, subcategories coded related to political issues included legislators that were unwilling to listen or consider another viewpoint, particularly those legislators supporting privatization of education (26% of respondents), and issues related to polarization of the legislature or partisan politics (8% of respondents). Logistical issues indicated by respondents included lack of time available to engage (25% of respondents), issues related to distance from Helena (8% of respondents), lack of knowledge or experience as to how to engage (4% of respondents), and event scheduling issues, particularly related to trying to schedule events to coincide with a legislative schedule that is subject to change (1% of respondents). Finally, barriers to participation related to particular legislators included legislators being unresponsive to communication (7% of respondents), legislators with a lack of knowledge or misinformed knowledge of public education (3% of respondents), and legislators using various avoidance techniques (3% of respondents).

Stakeholder Group Leadership Survey

The education stakeholder group leadership survey was distributed electronically to the identified leaders of the public education stakeholder groups identified as members of the Montana Public Education Center (MT-PEC). This group is composed of the

leadership of the Montana Education Association (MEA-MFT), School Administrators of Montana (SAM), Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), Montana School Boards Association (MSBA), Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC), and the Montana Rural Education Association (MREA). The mission of MT-PEC, according to their website, is “to set the record straight with objective, verifiable information regarding the innovations, high performance and efficiency of Montana’s public schools” (MT-PEC Home). As a collective, the groups represented in MT-PEC encompass more than 1,500 school board members, 12,000 teachers and other professionals serving public schools in Montana, 200 superintendents, 800 principals, and 300 school business officials (MT-PEC Home).

Surveys were sent to publically available email addresses of the leaders of the groups that compose MT-PEC as listed above on September 5, 2014. Reminder emails were sent to the same addresses on September 16, 2014. At that time, 83% response rate of the target respondents (five leaders) was achieved. At a 95% confidence level, this represents a confidence interval of 19.6.

Demographics. Stakeholder group leadership reported demographics including age, role, and years of experience. The majority (80%) of respondents were between the ages of 38-56, with 20% indicating an age of 57+. All respondents identified their role as president, CEO, or executive director of their respective public education organization. 20% indicated between 11 and 15 years of experience related to education, while 80% of respondents indicated 16+ years of experience related to education.

Political Engagement Indicators. 100% of respondents to this survey indicated that they always vote in elections, and 100% reported that election records would show that they are currently registered to vote in their election district. 60% indicated they “always” encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate, while 20% indicated that they do this “sometimes” and 20% indicated they “rarely” do this.

2013 Session. During the 2013 legislative session, 80% of respondents indicated that they were contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. 60% reported that they did work for or contribute money to a political candidate, political party, or organization that supported candidates.

During the 2013 legislative session, all respondents indicated that they had participated in the following engagement activities: contacted or visited a public official at any level of government, submitted testimony in person to the state legislature, attended an event where legislators were present, attended an event where legislators were present and had a polite conversation with a legislator, and attended an event where legislators were present and had a conversation with a legislator focused on education. 80% indicated that they had participated in these activities: contacted a newspaper or magazine to express an opinion on an issue, signed a written petition about a social or political issue, and submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature. 40% of respondents indicated that they participated in the following engagement activities: called in to a radio or television talk show to express an opinion on a political issue, took part in

a protest, march, or demonstration, or signed an email petition about a social or political issue.

All of the respondents indicated that they had participated in political engagement activities such as those reported above prior to the 2013 session. 80% of respondents indicated that they believed there was a change in how school leaders and other education stakeholders, including themselves, attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 session. Those who indicated they believed there was a change in the 2013 session were then queried to provide an open ended response as to what they attributed that change. The open ended responses were analyzed using the process of open coding and the discovery of themes and subcategories as described in Creswell (2012). When asked about what they believed was different, respondents cited more collaboration (60%), cooperation (20%), effective use of electronic communication (20%), and more unity (20%). 100% of respondents indicated that they believed that their efforts led to a more successful legislative session for education in 2013. When asked why the respondents believed that the 2013 legislative session was more successful, responses included unity of the public education community (60%), less infighting (20%), and 40% of respondents indicated that the passage or defeat of particular pieces of legislation (specifically mentioned SB 175, SB 191, SB 348) as indicators of success.

Barriers to engagement in the 2013 session from the perspective of the stakeholder group leaders included extreme viewpoints (Tea Party, Privatization, anti-education factions) (80%), and other logistical factors (unanticipated votes, hearings that could not be attended, schedule conflicts) (20%).

Legislator Survey

70 legislator surveys were sent electronically on September 28, 2014. 77 legislator surveys were mailed via USPS the week of October 3, 2014. Reminder emails were sent electronically to the same recipients on October 12, 2014. Reminder postcards were mailed to all mail respondents the week of October 12, 2014. 3 legislators had no valid email or mailing addresses listed on the Legislature Information Pages.

16 responses were received electronically and 19 were received via mail. This represents an overall response rate of 23%. At a 95% confidence level, the confidence interval of the combined responses is 14.46. Because the responses were returned using different methods, the results are reported separately, and then compared to rule out statistically significant differences before being further analyzed.

Demographics. 15 legislators responded to the survey electronically. 80% of the electronic respondents indicated that they were members of the State House, and 20% of the respondents indicated membership in the State Senate. 19 legislators responded to the survey by mail. 53% indicated that they were members of the State House, and 47% were members of the State Senate.

Table 6. Demographics of Legislators by Age

Age Group		Respondents (%)
26-37 years	Electronic	7
	Mail	11
	Total	9.2
38-56 years	Electronic	40
	Mail	26
	Total	32.4
57+ years	Electronic	53
	Mail	63
	Total	58.4

Both mail and electronic responses indicate that the majority of legislators responding to the study were 57 or older (58.4%). The next highest population was between 38 and 56 years (32.4%), and the smallest reporting group of legislators were the youngest, ages 26-37 (9.2%).

Table 7. Demographics of Legislators by Years of Experience

<u>Years of Experience</u>		<u>Respondents (%)</u>
1-2 years	Electronic	50
	Mail	11
	Total	28.8
3-4 years	Electronic	7
	Mail	32
	Total	20.6
5+ years	Electronic	43
	Mail	58
	Total	51.1

The majority of respondents indicated both by mail and electronic response that they had at least 5 years of legislative experience. Demographically, the typical survey respondent, whether electronic or by mail, was 57 years or older with 5 or more years of legislative experience.

Political Engagement Indicators. Of the electronic respondents, 87.5% indicated that they always vote in elections, one indicated that they “sometimes” do (6.25%), and one respondent (6.25%) indicated that they preferred not to answer the question. 75% indicated that prior to an election, they always encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate, and 18.8% indicated that they do so “sometimes.” 80% indicated that they are registered to vote in their election district, 13% indicated that they were not, and 7% indicated that they preferred not to answer this question. 62.5% of the respondents

indicated that they were contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates, 25% indicated that they were not contacted, and one (6.25%) indicated that they preferred not to answer the question. Further, 68.8% of respondents indicated that they worked for or contributed money to a political candidate, political party, or an organization that supported candidates. 18.8% indicated that they did not, and one (6.25%) indicated that they preferred not to answer the question.

Mail respondents responded similarly, with 94.7% of the respondents indicated that they always vote in elections, and one (5.3%) indicated that they vote “sometimes.” 78.9% indicated that prior to an election, they always encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate. 15.8% indicated that they do this sometimes, and one (5.3%) indicated that they rarely do so. 79% indicated that they are registered to vote in their election district, 11% indicated that they were not, and 11% indicated that they preferred not to answer this question. All of the respondents indicated that they were contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. Further, all respondents indicated that they worked for or contributed money to a political candidate, political party, or an organization that supported candidates.

Respondents then rated various political engagement activities on a Likert scale of the influence each action would likely have on the decision making of the legislator. To determine the influence ratings, the same procedure was followed as in the previous study (Lougheed, 2014). The middle column was omitted on the Likert scale (may or may not

influence my decisions), and then the lower two responses (definitely would not influence my decisions and not likely to influence my decisions) were collapsed into the “Not Influential” rating percentile, and the upper two responses (could potentially influence my decisions and would definitely influence my decisions) were collapsed into the “Influential” rating percentile. The results are presented in Table 8.

After respondents had completed the rating section about the influence of certain engagement activities on their decision making, an open ended question was posed about what other activities might influence their opinion about an issue or potential action to be taken on a bill. Activities mentioned by electronic respondents included a letter to the editor, conveying personal experiences, presenting research about policies attempted elsewhere, handwritten letters, and some sort of personal contact from district constituents. Only personal contact from constituents was indicated more than one time. Two mail respondents provided responses. These included walk and knock in their legislative area, work with school boards, and set up opportunities to meet with legislators prior to the session.

When asked if they believed there was a change in how educational leaders attempted to influence education policy and legislators during the 2013 session, 71% of electronic respondents indicated that they believed there was a significant change. Those respondents who indicated that there were differences noted from previous sessions were asked in an open ended format to identify to what they could attribute this change. The answers provided were then analyzed through the process of open coding and discovery of themes as outlined in Creswell (2012). The responses provided several examples of

what was perceived to be different, including more work with legislators on a bipartisan basis, clearer focus, a higher quantity of engagement (indicated twice), working on educational issues in the interim, including children in their lobbying efforts, and being willing to prioritize their efforts to the most important issues.

Similarly, 53% of mail respondents indicated that they believed there was a change in how educational leaders attempted to influence education policy and legislators during the 2013 legislative session. Those who indicated that they believed there was a change provided a variety of reasons why they believed there was a change. Those responses were analyzed using open coding and the discovery of themes as outlined in Creswell (2012). Coded responses included six suggesting the change was related to having widespread and particularly Republican support of the education bill, including its key author and sponsor, Senator Llew Jones, who was the proponent and “legislative champion” of the school funding bill. Four respondents indicated that the coordinated efforts of the education community working together was a major change in this session, without regard to school size.

Respondents provided a variety of answers when asked in an open ended response what political activities educational leaders engaged in during the 2013 session that were successful in influencing their decision making related to education. These included meeting with legislators about issues (mentioned four times), being personally engaged, meeting with legislators prior to the session, and providing information based on evidence.

When asked what political activities educational leaders were engaged in during the 2013 session that were ineffective, the answers provided were again varied. They included carrying signs, having too many people in Helena, and not presenting the needs of the taxpayer. There was also a scene described in one answer where it was perceived that the educational leadership group had crowded the halls with angry people that were threatening legislators. There were no answers to this question that could be coded as similar.

Finally, an open ended question was posed as to what was the most effective way for educational leaders to influence education policy. 68.8% of electronic responders legislators provided an answer to this query. These responses included a focus on personal contact with legislators (one on one, developing relationships), embracing change, not asking for money, less partisanship, showing results, having honest discussions, and reaching out to all legislators, not just those on education or funding affiliated committees. Only one thematic grouping of multiple responses emerged in the open coding, which was personal contact with legislators. This was indicated four times.

Similarly, 68.4% of mail respondents answered the open response question that inquired about what they believed to be the most effective way educational leaders can influence education policy. 10.5% of respondents indicated that having one on one discussion with legislators was the most effective way to influence policy. Other suggestions for effective influence included seeing both sides of an issue, being collaborative and accepting of change, having local teachers contact legislators, providing evidence about effectiveness of programs and their impact on student performance,

including legislators in the discussion early and making them part of the team, testifying at hearings, and keeping legislators informed about the facts related to education.

Table 8. Influence Ratings of Political Engagement Activities Determined by Legislators.

Engagement Activity	Response Type	Not Influential (%)	Influential (%)
Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government?	Electronic	15.38	23.07
	Mail	15.79	36.84
	Total		28.6
Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?	Electronic	42.86	14.28
	Mail	5.32	31.58
	Total		22.9
Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue?	Electronic	50.1	7.14
	Mail	42.11	21.05
	Total		14.3
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?	Electronic	50	7.14
	Mail	73.68	5.26
	Total		5.7
Signed an email petition about a social or political issue?	Electronic	57.14	7.14
	Mail	63.16	15.79
	Total		11.4
Signed a written petition about a social or political issue?	Electronic	42.86	14.29
	Mail	47.37	21.05
	Total		17.1
Submitted testimony in person to the state legislature?	Electronic	14.29	42.86
	Mail	10.53	73.67
	Total		57.1
Submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature?	Electronic	21.43	42.85
	Mail	15.79	68.42
	Total		54.3
Attended an event where legislators were present?	Electronic	14.29	35.71
	Mail	21.05	42.11
	Total		37.1
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a polite conversation with a legislator?	Electronic	21.43	42.85
	Mail	26.32	47.37
	Total		42.9
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a conversation with a legislator focused on an issue related to education?	Electronic	7.14	50
	Mail	10.53	63.16
	Total		54.3

Comparison of Mail and Electronic Responses

A Spearman Correlation between the influence ratings of political engagement activities reported by mail-in and electronic respondents was .94, indicating a very strong correlation. Thus, the responses between the mailed-in results and electronic results were combined for further analysis and comparison. The most influential activities (submitting testimony either in person or in writing, attending an event where a legislator is present, attending an event where a legislator is present and having a polite conversation, and attending an event where a legislator is present and having an education focused conversation) were consistent without regard to the mechanism used to respond to the survey.

Comparison of School Leader Engagement and Its Political Influence

A Spearman Correlation was calculated between the list of legislative engagement activities reported by school leaders, ordered from the highest percentage engagement to the lowest, and the legislative respondents ratings of influence of those same activities. The correlation was .28, a weak positive monotonic correlation. However, it should be noted that the same correlation in the study prior to the legislative session (Lougheed, 2014) was .02, an even weaker positive monotonic correlation. Thus, legislative engagement activities conducted by school leaders in the 2013 session increased in correlation to those deemed effective by legislators at an interval of .26, which is movement toward alignment. However, the overall correlation is still low, indicating that there remains a disconnect between the activities school leaders engage in, and those

rated as most influential by legislators. Specific information about engagement activities and influence ratings follows in the table.

Table 9. Influence Ratings of Political Engagement Activities Engaged in by School Leaders and Rated as Influential as Determined by Legislators Post-Session

Engagement Activity	Engagement by school leaders (%)	Legislators rating activity as influential (%)
Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government?	73.7	28.6
Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?	15	22.9
Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue?	4.2	14.3
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?	3	5.7
Signed an email petition about a social or political issue?	28	11.4
Signed a written petition about a social or political issue?	25	17.1
Submitted testimony in person to the state legislature?	27.5	57.1
Submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature?	45.2	54.3
Attended an event where legislators were present?	73.7	37.1
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a polite conversation with a legislator?	62.3	42.9
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a conversation with a legislator focused on an issue related to education?	60.2	54.3

While the responses of legislators indicate a clear set of influential activities, the engagement of school leaders does not align to those preferences at the optimal level. This is evidenced by the results of the Spearman Correlation, but is also clearly delineated in the comparison of the results presented in Table 9. The activity school leaders engage in the most, contacting or visiting elected officials, ranks 6th in influence. The most influential activity rated by legislators, submitting testimony in person, ranks 6th in engagement levels by school leaders. There is also a gap noted in the percentage of school leaders who attend events where legislators are present (73.7%) and those who have an education focused conversation with a legislator at the same event (60.2%). The relationship with the influence rating is inverse. Legislators rate the attendance and education focused conversation as the most influential of these three activities (54.3%), yet the engagement of school leaders in this set of activities decline as the conversations are incorporated in the event attendance. Many of the other activities, those rated between 5.7% and 22.9% on the influence rating, seem to be less beneficial and when the activities are evaluated in terms of most influence, school leaders have to consider the limited time they have available. Thus, activities falling in this range would likely not be as worthy of investment of the time allowed.

Comparison of Pre-Session and Post-Session Responses

School Leaders Study Comparisons

Demographics. Comparative demographic information about school leaders is presented in several tables, comparing pre-session results (Lougheed, 2014) with results from this study.

Table 10. Age Demographics of School Leaders Pre and Post Session

Age Range	Pre-Session Respondents (%)	Post-Session Respondents (%)
23-25 years	2.4	1
26-37 years	2.4	8
38-56 years	45.2	65
57+ years	40.5	26

Table 11. Years of Experience of School Leaders Pre and Post Session

Years of Experience	Pre-Session Respondents (%)	Post-Session Respondents (%)
1-5 years	11.9	21
6-10 years	21.4	24
11-15 years	16.7	21
16+ years	45.2	34

The demographics of the school leaders were very similar between the pre-session and post-session information. In both sets, the overwhelming majority of school leader respondents were in the 38-56 years and 57+ years categories. The distribution of years of experience were also relatively similar, with the largest group in both occurrences reporting 16 or more years of school leadership experience.

Legislator Study Comparisons

Demographics. Comparative demographic information about legislators is presented in several tables, comparing pre-session results (Lougheed, 2014) with results from this study.

Table 12. Age Demographics of Legislators Pre and Post Session

Age Range	Pre-Session Respondents (%)	Post-Session Respondents (%)
26-37 years	7.3	8.8
38-56 years	36.6	32.4
57+ years	56	58.8

Table 13. Membership Demographics of Legislators Pre and Post Session

Chamber	Pre-Session Respondents (%)	Post-Session Respondents (%)
House	68.7	64.7
Senate	29.3	35.5

Table 14. Demographics of Legislators by Years of Experience Pre and Post Session

Years of Experience	Pre-Session Respondents (%)	Post-Session Respondents (%)
1-2 years	43.9	29.4
3-4 years	15.4	20.6
5+ years	38.5	50

Demographics reported are very similar between the pre and post session cohorts. In both instances, the majority of legislators were 57+ years of age. House members represented the majority of respondents in both groups, which is logical since the House has a larger membership than the Senate ($n = 100$ versus $n = 50$). Some interesting differences arise in Table 12. Notably, the pre-session respondents with the highest

representation were those legislators with 1-2 years experience, compared to the 5+ years of experience legislators in the post-session study. It is likely that the timing of the study, with the pre-session study occurring prior to their first session of service for most in the 1-2 year reporting group from the pre-session, may have made them more likely to respond to the survey. It is also important to note that Montana has term limits, which impacts the years of service of legislators.

Conclusions

Upon careful review, the similarities between the demographics of the pre and post session groups, both for school leaders and legislators, supports the use of the data as comparative sets. Thus, the activities engaged in by school leaders prior to the 2013 session and those reported after the 2013 session are compared to the respective influence ratings by legislators reported at the same intervals in engagement percentages in Table 15 below.

Table 15. Engagement Activities and Influence Ratings Pre and Post Session

Engagement Activity	Engagement Pre- Session (%)	Influence Rating Pre- Session (%)	Engagement Post- Session (%)	Influence Rating Post- Session (%)
Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government?	81	56.1	73.7	28.6
Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?	16.7	31.7	15	22.9

Table 15 Continued

Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue?	7.1	29.2	4.2	14.3
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration?	2.4	36.6	3	5.7
Signed an email petition about a social or political issue?	11.9	11.9	28	11.4
Signed a written petition about a social or political issue?	14.3	26.8	25	17.1
Submitted testimony in person to the state legislature?	23.8	63.7	27.5	57.1
Submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature?	28.6	46.3	45.8	54.3
Attended an event where legislators were present?	81	24.4	73.7	37.1
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a polite conversation with a legislator?	64.3	43.6	62.3	42.9
Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a conversation with a legislator focused on an issue related to education?	54.8	58.5	60.2	54.3

Significant differences of note between the pre-session engagement information and the post-session engagement data include an increase in the submission of written testimony to the legislature (28.6% to 45.8%), and an increase in those school leaders attending an event where legislators are present that engaged in an education-specific conversation (54.8% to 60.2%). While there are many other differences observable in the table, these are the most significant as they relate to the top rated activities for influence according to the legislators.

Several significant changes in the influence ratings by legislators are revealed in this comparison. Specifically, the influence of merely contacting a public official notably declined in influence from pre-session to post-session (56.1% to 28.6), as did taking part in a march, protest, or demonstration (36.6% to 5.7%). Other influence ratings fell from pre-session to post-session, but these are the most significant both in terms of numbers and for informing school leaders about engagement activities. Significant positive changes from pre-session to post-session include increased influence of written testimony, and attending an event where legislators were present.

Consistent in both pre-session and post-session influence ratings, the most influential engagement activities were submitting testimony in person (63.7% and 57.1%) or in writing (46.3% and 54.3%), attending an event where legislators were present and having a polite conversation (43.6% and 42.9%), and attending an event where legislators were present and having a conversation focused on education (58.5% and 54.3%). One activity, contacting or visiting a public official, was rated as one of the highest influence

activities pre-session but was not rated in the most influential activities in the post-session analysis (56.1% to 28.6%).

Uncontrolled Factors That Might Have Influenced Data

Several uncontrolled factors may have influenced the data. First, the timing of the survey, conducted just prior to the fall election, may have effected legislator response rates as some were busy running for reelection, and others were “lame ducks” who may have been less likely to respond to surveys. The time of survey administration may also have influenced the response rate of school administrators, who were surveyed in the time period surrounding the beginning of the school year. Further, some responses in the open ended questions in the legislator survey implied that some legislators did not delineate between school leaders and teachers/stances presented by the teachers’ union membership.

Response Rates and Confidence Intervals

The school leader survey response rate was 24%, with a confidence interval of 6.54 at a 95% confidence level. The stakeholder survey response rate was 83%, with a confidence interval of 19.6 at a 95% confidence level. The combined response rate of legislators, including those responding electronically and by mail, was 23%. At a 95% confidence level, the confidence interval of the combined responses is 14.46.

Weaknesses of the Data

The most significant weakness in the data is the response rate and confidence intervals related to the legislative survey respondents, as reported above. The confidence level of the stakeholder survey is also a weakness, though it is also linked to the limitation of the small population size of the stakeholder group.

Summary

The study results showed that the most effective methods for engagement in the 2013 legislative session involved direct contact or presentation to legislators, either through discussing education issues with legislators in person or providing legislative testimony. The differences between the 2013 legislative sessions and other legislative sessions included increased involvement by school leaders, in a more cohesive and organized manner that also included many first time participants attempting to influence legislators. These factors contributed to a high success rate and positive outcomes for the public education community from the 2013 session.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The results of the study are utilized to answer the research questions: 1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana? and 2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session? The results and answers are analyzed in the context of the literature, as well as the contribution the research and answers make to the literature. Implications for practitioners are reviewed at the school, state, and university levels, and discussion of future research considers the applications beyond this study.

Conclusions

1) What were the most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana?

The most effective methods of legislative engagement and interaction utilized by educational leaders during the 2013 legislative session in Montana were direct conversations with legislators, particularly at events where both the school leaders and legislator were present, and testifying before the legislature, either in writing or in person.

This was determined by review of the legislator responses and the comparative analysis, which indicates that these methods are the most influential. The influence of these activities was consistent in both the pre-session and post-session surveys, indicating that these activities are the most effective and that school leaders wishing to influence the legislature ought to prioritize these engagement activities above all others. Though there

are barriers for school leaders in engaging in these activities, including logistical issues, partisan politics, and unresponsiveness by the legislators, the influence ratings suggest that it is in the interest of educational leaders to seek to overcome those barriers in order to engage in education related conversation with legislators and to provide testimony on education related legislation, either in writing or in person.

2) Was there a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session?

Results from the comparison between the pre and post session study, triangulated from the stakeholder groups survey responses, as well as legislator survey responses, confirm that there was a difference between engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session and those reported after the session. Specifically, 78% of school leader respondents, 80% of the agency stakeholders, and 62% of legislators indicated that they believed there was a change in how school leaders engaged in the 2013 legislative session. The post session study indicated a marked increase of political engagement, including the engagement of school leaders (36% of school leaders respondents) who had not previously been engaged in political influence activities. Study results also show that there was an increase in direct contact by school leaders to their legislators, and the efforts to do so were more coordinated through the work of SAM and MT-PEC. This was indicated in survey question responses and triangulated in open ended responses from multiple stakeholder groups.

There was a significant difference between the engagement activities reported prior to the 2013 session and those engaged in during the 2013 session. More school

leaders were involved, and those who were involved engaged in more coordinated responses and with more direct contact with legislators. This was indicated and triangulated in quantitative responses and open ended responses from all three surveyed groups. Quantitatively, the Spearman Correlation comparing legislative influence ratings and school leader engagement activities, which was .02 in the pre-session pilot study, increased to .26. While this correlation is still low and school leaders ought to focus on aligning their engagement efforts to increase it, the change of .24 from pre session to post session is significant.

Reasons for the changes expressed in open ended responses included more involvement by school leaders, more coordinated/collaborated efforts by school leaders, more effective use of electronic communication, increased unity, and more direct contact. Additionally, 36% of school leader respondents indicated that they had not participated in political engagement activities such as those that were subject in the survey prior to the 2013. This in and of itself is a significant change because of the increase in engaged, new participants it represents. This also validates the influence of the policy community in public education in Montana, which, through MT-PEC, coordinated and encouraged the increased involvement and changes in involvement, according to the school leader and stakeholder leader respondents.

The end result of the changes in engagement both in quantity and method were more favorable outcomes for education in the 2013 session. Major finance reform and various other critical education bills were passed in the session, and bills that could have been incredibly detrimental were defeated. The efforts of the newly established policy

community, now formalized as MT-PEC, and the increase in engagement as well as the increased alignment in engagement activities had a direct impact on the success of public education bills in the 2013 session. The proof of the success of these efforts in the 2013 legislative session is further evidenced by the session summary, published by SAM, which expressed that the alliance of MT-PEC had “collaborated in new and exciting ways” and “succeeded in passing SB 175 into law and...defeated privatization and other legislation that would have harmed the interested of students in our public schools had they passed” (“2013 Session Final Voting Record Originally Published May 31, 2013, Narrative Updated February 2014”). When reviewing the final voting record on bills tracked by SAM, the success rate in passing bills supported by SAM and defeating those opposed was nearly 100% in the session. Survey responses indicate that there were marked and observable changes in legislative engagement by school leaders. The results of the session’s legislative outcomes were overwhelmingly positive. Thus, the evidence supports the inference that the changes in legislative engagement by school leaders did have an impact on the session, and on the legislative outcomes.

Contributions to Research Literature

There are several major connections of the research to the literature. First, it is important to note that although the literature highlights hesitancy to engage, and open ended responses in the survey data reveal some of those ideas among school leader respondents, there was no resistance to receiving information from school leaders nor any sentiment expressed in regards to the political engagement of school leaders being in any

way inappropriate. In this vein, it seems marked progress has occurred since Gibbons' (1985) work suggested that education and politics were not willing to admit that they were dependent on one another.

This study confirmed the idea that school leaders can influence education policy, particularly if attention is paid to the engagement activities that are most influential. This is critical when one considers that Milstein & Jennings' (1973) sentiments that educational interest groups are finding legislators "less receptive to their demands" (p. 55). Though responses from school leaders regarding barriers to participation would support this to an extent, the discrepancies between the activities engaged in by school leaders and those rated as influential by school leaders, and the weak correlation between the two, leads to the question of whether legislators truly are less receptive to the demands of education, or if education also bears some responsibility for not advocating in the proper manner. This supports what Milstein & Jennings went on to say in the literature: "Educational interest groups will have to modify their influence strategies when dealing with state legislatures" (p.55). Some modification from prior to the 2013 session made an impact on the results of the session for education. Further modification is needed in order to align the activities or "influence strategies" with those rated most influential.

In 1984, Gibbons reported, "education has paid a price for reluctance" (p. 16) to engage politically. Unfortunately, the price has continued to rise over the decades since then, and this is not a price we can continue to pay, particularly as McDonnell highlighted in 1988: "...the price of not speaking may be to accept solutions from those

least familiar with schools” (as qtd in Browne-Ferrigno, 2013). Educators can look to local, state, and federal policies, regulations, and programs to confirm that this is fact. This study shows that education stakeholders do not have to accept solutions from those least familiar with schools. By utilizing the appropriate engagement strategies, education stakeholders can, both independently and through their policy community, influence the decisions being made about their work.

Literature of the 1970s and 80s discussed many of the same obstacles to engagement reported by survey respondents. Milstein & Jennings (1973) highlighted many uncertainties that plague education policy making, such as uncertainty over “the extent to which the men who sit in formal legislative bodies are sympathetic to the needs of education; and to the ability of educators to present the needs of education in the most effective manner” (p.54). These concerns remain relevant today. Since that time, the involvement of state and federal decision makers in schools has increased. In 1984, Gibbons stated, “in the educational arena, state legislators exercise a dominant role in the building and enforcing of state policy” (p. 4). As this continues to be true today, the opportunities and need for school leaders to try to influence policy by interacting with state policy makers has increased. This study’s contribution to the literature is the “how” that was missing in the previous literature about influence strategies and dealing with state legislators.

The results of this study fill a gap in the literature in regards to which activities school leaders ought to engage in to most effectively utilize the limited time they have available for advocacy and to influence legislators. This study also presents a framework

to gather information about legislator preferences in order for school leaders and other stakeholders, such as educational agencies, to effectively design their advocacy efforts. Utilizing the legislator preferences identified in the results, school leaders and educational agency leaders can work to align their time and efforts in the activities that are most influential.

Implications for Practitioners

The implications from this study vary from respondent group and audience. For school leaders, the results indicate that although there was an increase in school leader involvement in the 2013 session from prior sessions, and more school leaders became involved, there is still a lack of alignment in what school leaders are doing to advocate with legislators and what is most likely to influence legislators. Specifically, school leaders need to attempt to overcome the barriers to testifying either in person or electronically. School leaders should not devote their valuable and limited time to those activities rated as less influential by legislators. Finally, school leaders should engage legislators in conversation specific to education when they are at gatherings where legislators were present, and continue to close the gap between the high number of school leaders who attend meetings where legislators are present, and the markedly lower number who engage those legislators in education related conversation. Personal contact and forging of relationships with legislators facilitates these conversations, and the opportunity for school leaders to testify either in person or in writing exists for every bill

presented in the legislature. School leaders must seek to overcome logistical and political barriers in order to participate in these engagement activities and influence policy.

For stakeholder group leaders, the results indicate that they should continue to work together as a policy community, engaging more stakeholders in the consistent message that served them so well in the 2013 session. Stakeholder groups should also encourage their membership to be engaged and share information about what is influential, and also assist their membership in knowing how to engage in those actions, as they have indicated a higher level of participation in the engagement activities rated as influential than their school leader constituents. Prior research confirms that educational leaders have a hesitancy to engage in politics for a number of reasons, and thus stakeholder group leaders need to encourage their members to do so, provide opportunities in which they can engage, and ensure that their members have the knowledge and tools necessary to engage, utilizing the methods preferred by legislators. This study also provides tools and the framework by which stakeholder groups could survey legislators with each new incoming elected cohort, or at established intervals, to ensure that the preferred engagement methods remain consistent so that they are delivering their message in the most effective manner possible.

For educational leadership faculty in universities, particularly those instructing future school administrators, the implications from this research are in how to convey the necessity and methods of political engagement. This study provides information to share about which engagement activities are influential, and also presents an opportunity to ensure that when training school leaders, attention is paid not only to informing school

leaders about *what* political engagement activities matter, but also in instructing, modeling, and encouraging school leaders in the *how* to do so.

Discussion on Future Directions of Research

Further study in this field and research should include replicating the study in another session, and also in other states, particularly those with a non-citizen legislature. The goal of continued research along this research line would be to provide generalizable principles to school leaders of how to most effectively influence educational politics and policies and maximize the limited time and resources available. A replication of this study with another sample would be ideally conducted during the 2015 session. This would allow for a more longitudinal look at the research questions and would also potentially show consistency in influential participation methods. Consideration of a survey model that could narrow the definition of influence as it relates to the decision making of legislators would also be an important addition to future research. A model that would inquire about which activities might lead legislators to stray from their caucus on an educational issue, for example, could be critical in identifying what influence really means and which activities truly lead legislators to think or vote differently.

Replication of the study in a state with a professional legislature would also be important in order to determine if preferences and influence remain the same in a different legislative structure. The results of a comparative study such as this would also facilitate the generalizability to a wider scope.

If the survey were to be replicated, some procedural adjustments would optimize the potential for results. Recommended adjustments would include providing information to legislative respondents about the difference between school leaders and teachers, as some of the respondents did not appear to delineate between the actions of teachers and school leaders and their membership groups. Additionally, the procedure should be adjusted to optimize the timing of surveying legislative respondents. One recommendation would be to conduct the survey during or immediately after the legislative session. Because the survey was administered during the election cycle, some respondents were busy seeking reelection, and others were lame duck legislators. These factors could have influenced their likelihood to respond, and therefore the response rate.

Summary

Gibbons (1984) proclaimed, “survival in the political world will depend on action and awareness” (p. 12). Educational leaders need to be more effectively engaged if we are to maintain meaningful influence in a political system that is consistently increasing its hold on the day to day activities of public education. Milstein & Jennings (1972) wrote that “educational interest groups will have to modify their influence strategies when dealing with state legislatures” (p.55). Evidence contained in this study suggests how those influence strategies ought to shift to be most effective in influencing legislators. Results from this research fill an identified gap in the literature about what engagement activities most influence legislative decision making educational issues. This study also informs school leaders about how to engage legislators most effectively

given the limited time and resources available. Opportunities for future research to expand the impact and influence of the results of this study are plentiful, and constitute a promising line of research that is necessary to pursue as the worlds of education and politics become deeper entwined. Gibbons (1984) wrote over 30 years ago about “the price paid by education for its reluctance” to engage in politics. The results and implications of this study provide information to guide school leaders about engagement so that another 30 years of paying that price can be avoided. Our schools and our children are counting on us to engage on their behalf.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL LEADER SURVEY

2013 Engagement Activity - School Leaders

- Q1 You are being asked to participate in a research study of the political participation of educational leaders in Montana during the 2013 legislative session and how potential political engagement activities influenced legislative decision making. This may help us obtain information about the current political engagement of school leaders, and its effectiveness in influencing education policy. You have been identified as a possible subject for this survey because you are currently an educational leader working at a school in the state of Montana. 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. This study consists of one survey of up to 20 questions. It is estimated that completion of the survey will take between ten and twenty minutes. Consenting participants will be asked to indicate responses for up to 12 questions, and provide answers for up to 8 open ended questions. There are no foreseen risks to participation or any known probability of adverse effects. The results of this study could provide guidance to educational leaders in effective political participation practices. There are no negative effects for declining to participate. This research is non-funded, doctoral research. There is no cost to participate. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have while completing this study. Should you have questions about the research, contact Kala Lougheed, (406)253-2615. If you have question about the rights of human subjects, contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406)994-4707 or via email at mquinn@montana.edu. Records from this study will not be coded with any sort of identifying information beyond demographic responses. No identifying information will be retained nor revealed. By clicking on "I agree" below, you certify that you have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risks of this study, and that you agree to participate in the research. Further, you indicate that you understand that you may later refuse to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like a copy of the consent for your records, please contact Kala Lougheed at (406)253-2615.
- I agree (1)

Q2 Thank you for considering participation in this study. The following is a description of the survey and potential risks, so that you can provide informed consent to participate. The purpose of this study is to identify which political activities educational leaders in Montana were engaged in during the 2013 legislative session, and how comfortable they were during times of political engagement. You will not be asked any information about your political party preferences, as the scope of this study does not consider that information as relevant. Your answers are confidential, non-identifiable, and your age, experience, position, and district size are the only requested demographic information. The risks of participation are minimal. There is no consequence for non-participation. Participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any questions, and you can stop at any time.

Proceed (1)

Q3 Please indicate your age group.

23-25 (1)

26-37 (2)

38-56 (3)

57+ (4)

Q4 Please indicate your school size.

AA (1)

A (2)

B (3)

C (4)

Q5 Please indicate your current role. Check all that apply.

Superintendent (1)

Assistant Superintendent (2)

Principal (3)

Other building leader (4)

Other district leader (5)

Q6 Please indicate your years of experience in school leadership.

1-5 (1)

6-10 (2)

11-15 (3)

16+ (4)

Q7 Please rate the frequency at which you engage in these activities.

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)	Prefer not to answer (6)
During elections, I vote... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prior to an election, I encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate.... (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Would election records show that you are now registered to vote in your election district?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q9 During the 2013 legislative session...

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Prefer not to answer (3)
I was contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worked for or contributed money to a political candidate, political party, or an organization that supported candidates. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

legislator focused on an issue related to education? (either a current problem or legislative consideration) (11)							
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Q11 Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session? No Is Selected

Q15 What prompted you to participate in the 2013 legislative session?

Answer If Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session? Yes Is Selected

Q16 Do you believe there was a change in how school leaders attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 legislative session?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you believe there was a change in how school leaders attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 legislative session? Yes Is Selected

Q17 What do you believe was different than in previous sessions?

Q18 What, if any, barriers did you encounter as you attempted to engage in the 2013 legislative session?

Q19 Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results or the dissertation, please email the author at kalafrenchlougheed@gmail.com

Portions of this survey were adapted from the National Civic Engagement Indicators Project Questionnaire. Used with permission from The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. 2003.

APPENDIX B

EDUCATION AGENCY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

2013 Engagement Activity - Agency Stakeholders

Q1 You are being asked to participate in a research study of the political participation of educational leaders in Montana during the 2013 legislative session and how potential political engagement activities influenced legislative decision making. This may help us obtain information about the current political engagement of school leaders, and its effectiveness in influencing education policy. You have been identified as a possible subject for this survey because you are currently leading an education stakeholder group in Montana. 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. This study consists of one survey of up to 20 questions. It is estimated that completion of the survey will take between ten and twenty minutes. Consenting participants will be asked to indicate responses for up to 12 questions, and provide answers for up to 8 open ended questions. There are no foreseen risks to participation or any known probability of adverse effects. The results of this study could provide guidance to educational leaders in effective political participation practices. There are no negative effects for declining to participate. This research is non-funded, doctoral research. There is no cost to participate. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have while completing this study. Should you have questions about the research, contact Kala Lougheed, (406)253-2615. If you have question about the rights of human subjects, contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406)994-4707 or via email at mquinn@montana.edu. Records from this study will not be coded with any sort of identifying information beyond demographic responses. No identifying information will be retained nor revealed. By clicking on "I agree" below, you certify that you have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risks of this study, and that you agree to participate in the research. Further, you indicate that you understand that you may later refuse to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like a copy of the consent for your records, please contact Kala Lougheed at (406)253-2615.

I agree (1)

Q2 Thank you for considering participation in this study. The following is a description of the survey and potential risks, so that you can provide informed consent to participate. The purpose of this study is to identify which political activities educational leaders and educational stakeholders in Montana were engaged in during the 2013 legislative session, and how comfortable they were during times of political engagement. You will not be asked any information about your political party preferences, as the scope of this study does not consider that information as relevant. Your answers are confidential, non-identifiable, and your age, experience, position, and district size are the only requested demographic information. The risks of participation are minimal. There is no consequence for non-participation. Participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any questions, and you can stop at any time.

Proceed (1)

Q3 Please indicate your age group.

- 23-25 (1)
- 26-37 (2)
- 38-56 (3)
- 57+ (4)

Q5 Please indicate your current role related to education in Montana.

Q6 Please indicate your years of experience in work related to education.

- 1-5 (1)
- 6-10 (2)
- 11-15 (3)
- 16+ (4)

Q7 Please rate the frequency at which you engage in these activities.

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)	Prefer not to answer (6)
During elections, I vote... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prior to an election, I encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate.... (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Would election records show that you are now registered to vote in your election district?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q9 During the 2013 legislative session...

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Prefer not to answer (3)
I was contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worked for or contributed money to a political candidate, political party, or an organization that supported candidates. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

legislator focused on an issue related to education? (either a current problem or legislative consideration) (11)							
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Q11 Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session? No Is Selected

Q15 What prompted you to participate in the 2013 legislative session?

Answer If Have you participated in political engagement activities such as those listed previously prior to the 2013 session? Yes Is Selected

Q16 Do you believe there was a change in how school leaders and other educational stakeholders, including your stakeholder group, attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 legislative session?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you believe there was a change in how school leaders attempted to influence education policy during the 2013 legislative session? Yes Is Selected

Q17 What do you believe was different than in previous sessions?

Q17 Do you believe your efforts led to a more successful legislative session for education?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you believe your efforts led to a more successful legislative session for education? Yes Is Selected

Q18 Why do you believe the 2013 legislative session was more successful for education?

Q18 What, if any, barriers did you encounter as you attempted to engage in the 2013 legislative session?

Q19 Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results or the dissertation, please email the author at kalafrenchlougheed@gmail.com

Portions of this survey were adapted from the National Civic Engagement Indicators Project Questionnaire. Used with permission from The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. 2003.

APPENDIX C

LEGISLATOR SURVEY

2013 Engagement Activity - Legislators

- Q1 You are being asked to participate in a research study of the political participation of educational leaders in Montana during the 2013 legislative session and how potential political engagement activities influenced legislative decision making. This may help us obtain information about the current political engagement of school leaders, and its effectiveness in influencing education policy. You have been identified as a possible subject for this survey because you are currently serving as a legislator in the state of Montana. 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. This study consists of one survey of up to 20 questions. It is estimated that completion of the survey will take between ten and twenty minutes. Consenting participants will be asked to indicate responses for up to 12 questions, and provide answers for up to 8 open ended questions. There are no foreseen risks to participation or any known probability of adverse effects. The results of this study could provide guidance to educational leaders in effective political participation practices. There are no negative effects for declining to participate. This research is non-funded, doctoral research. There is no cost to participate. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have while completing this study. Should you have questions about the research, contact Kala Lougheed, (406)253-2615. If you have question about the rights of human subjects, contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Mark Quinn, (406)994-4707 or via email at mquinn@montana.edu. Records from this study will not be coded with any sort of identifying information beyond demographic responses. No identifying information will be retained nor revealed. By clicking on "I agree" below, you certify that you have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risks of this study, and that you agree to participate in the research. Further, you indicate that you understand that you may later refuse to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like a copy of the consent for your records, please contact Kala Lougheed at (406)253-2615.
- I agree (1)

Q2 Thank you for considering participation in this study. The following is a description of the survey and potential risks, so that you can provide informed consent to participate. The purpose of this study is to identify which political activities educational leaders in Montana were engaged in during the 2013 legislative session, and how comfortable they were during times of political engagement, and how effective their activities were in influencing the decisions of legislators. You will not be asked any information about your political party preferences, as the scope of this study does not consider that information as relevant. Your answers are confidential, non-identifiable, and your age, experience, position, and district size are the only requested demographic information. The risks of participation are minimal. There is no consequence for non-participation. Participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any questions, and you can stop at any time.

- Proceed (1)

Q3 Please indicate your age group.

- 23-25 (1)
- 26-37 (2)
- 38-56 (3)
- 57+ (4)

Q5 Please indicate your current role.

- State House (1)
- State Senate (2)
- Other State Office (3)
- Federal Office Holder (4)

Q6 Please indicate your years of experience in the legislature.

- 1-2 (1)
- 3-4 (2)
- 5+ (3)

Q7 Please rate the frequency at which you engage in these activities.

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)	Prefer not to answer (6)
During elections, I vote... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prior to an election, I encourage people to vote for or against an issue or candidate.... (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Would election records show that you are now registered to vote in your election district?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q9 During the 2013 legislative session...

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Prefer not to answer (3)
I was contacted personally to work for or contribute money to a candidate, political party, or organization that supports candidates. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worked for or contributed money to a political candidate, political party, or an organization that supported candidates. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 Consider the activity in the first column. Utilizing the scale at right, indicate how much influence the activity in the first column typically would have on your legislative decision making on issues related to education.

	Please indicate if the activity at left would indicate your decision making.				
	Definitely would not influence my decisions (1)	Not likely to influence my decisions (2)	May or may not influence my decisions (3)	Could potentially influence my decisions (4)	Would likely or definitely influence my decisions (5)
Contacted or visited a public official at any level of government? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Called in to a radio or television talk show to express your opinion on a political issue? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signed an email petition about a social or political issue? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signed a written petition about a social or political issue? (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Submitted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>testimony in person to the state legislature? (7)</p>					
<p>Submitted testimony in writing to the state legislature? (8)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Attended an event where legislators were present? (9)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a polite conversation with a legislator? (exchanged introductions, pleasantries, but did NOT specifically discuss education) (10)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Attended an event where legislators were present AND had a conversation with a legislator focused on an issue related to education? (either a current problem or legislative consideration) (11)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 What other political engagement activities might influence your opinion about an issue or potential action you might take on a bill other than those listed above?

Q11 Do you believe there was a change in how educational leaders attempted to influence education policy and legislators during the 2013 legislative session?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you believe there was a change in how educational leaders attempted to influence education policy and legislators during the 2013 legislative session? Yes Is Selected

Q15 What do you believe was different from previous sessions?

Answer If Do you believe there was a change in how educational leaders attempted to influence education policy and legislators during the 2013 legislative session? Yes Is Selected

Q19 Did the differences in the 2013 legislative session influence your decision making?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Did the differences in the 2013 legislative session influence your decision making? Yes Is Selected

Q20 How did those differences impact your decision making?

Q17 What political activities did educational leaders engage in during the 2013 legislative session that were effective in influencing your decision making?

Q18 What political activities did educational leaders engage in during the 2013 legislative session that were ineffective?

Q17 What do you believe is the most effective way that educational leaders can influence education policy?

Q18 What do you believe is the most effective way that educational leaders can influence legislators?

Q19 Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results or the dissertation, please email the author at kalafrenchlougheed@gmail.com

Portions of this survey were adapted from the National Civic Engagement Indicators Project Questionnaire. Used with permission from The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. 2003.

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
For the Protection of Human Subjects
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Kala Lougheed and William Ruff
FROM: Mark Quinn, Chair *Mark Quinn*
DATE: August 11, 2014
RE: "Effective Engagement: A Study of Educational Leader Interactions with Legislators in the 2013 Session and its Impact on Education Policy in Montana" [KL081114-EX]

The above research, described in your submission of August 11, 2014, is exempt from the requirement of review by the Institutional Review Board in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46, section 101. The specific paragraph which applies to your research is:

- (b) (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- (b) (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
- (b) (3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
- (b) (4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available, or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
- (b) (5) Research and demonstration projects, which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
- (b) (6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the FDA, or approved by the EPA, or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA.

Although review by the Institutional Review Board is not required for the above research, the Committee will be glad to review it. If you wish a review and committee approval, please submit 3 copies of the usual application form and it will be processed by expedited review.