PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICS, POLICY, AND PUBLIC SERVANTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the political, personal, and policy issues that drive citizens to seek unpaid, elected positions on Pennsylvania's public school boards. This research examines whether school board members are recruited to run for office and considers the role of various recruitment agents such as political parties, interest groups, and non-political community organizations. Trends in political and community engagement among school board members, their potential ambition to seek higher office, and the relationship between elected board members and appointed district superintendents are also examined. The study relies upon a unique dataset gathered through a survey distributed to all of Pennsylvania's nearly 4,500 school board members and a series of interviews with current state legislators who began their political careers by serving on their local school boards.

Findings suggest that school board members are enormously engaged in the political and non-political life of their communities. It is also determined that school board members are principally self-starters who do not intend to use their positions as springboards to higher office. These findings are analyzed to help determine the implications for governance at the local level as well as to better comprehend the dynamics of party organizations, interest groups, and other community organizations within Pennsylvania school district politics and elections.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family; especially my wife April Maxwell, my parents, Robert and Lynn Shrader, and my grandparents, Helen and Lester Shrader and Jane and Bill Speece. Additionally, I dedicate this work to my great uncle, Robert Scanlon, whose affection for Temple University helped lead me here. As an academic, I can never repay the debt that I owe to Victor Pilipovich and Donald C. Minyon of the Norwin School District, Dr. W. Merrill Downer of Thiel College, Dr. Kenneth M. Cosgrove of Suffolk University, and the members of my dissertation committee.

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PREFACE

School board politics and governance have been a personal, professional, and academic interest of mine since about the age of 14. During my time as a junior high and high school student in Westmoreland County in Southwestern Pennsylvania, my own local school district was embroiled in a highly controversial, public battle between warring factions seeking control of the Norwin School District Board of Education. The memories of what I observed while watching school board politics play out like political theater remain deeply ingrained in my mind. I began at this time to ask questions of myself, my parents, my teachers, political activists within my community, and school board candidates themselves about what drives common people to leave the comfort of their homes to pursue unpaid positions on public school boards. I also began to consider how and why political party organizations mobilize for local political campaigns in ways that are rather different from what I had seen as a high school coordinator on the Clinton/Gore reelection campaign in 1996. In short, my observations and participation in local school board politics as a grade school student helped put these important questions on my own radar screen, and they never went away. This dissertation is an effort to finally provide sound answers to the questions I developed about school boards and school board candidates during my formative years. I am thankful to have the opportunity to return to these important issues while pursuing my PhD.

Thanks to my father—a lifelong public school teacher—I attended my first public debate for school board candidates—during the 1995 primary election cycle. In the 1997 school board election cycle, I found myself, during my sophomore year in high school,

volunteering for the campaigns of two different candidates for that position. Two years later, during the tumultuous 1999 Norwin area school board elections, my senior AP government class under the direction of my teacher and mentor Donald C. Minyon, had the opportunity to organize that year's school board candidate debate, an event that I watched as a spectator just four years earlier. Additionally, I became immersed in the campaign planning and organization for a slate of candidates running for the five at-large seats available during the 1999 election cycle. Although I have not personally participated in a school board election or regularly attended meetings of a public school board since that time, my experiences during those three election cycles helped spark a lifelong interest in the operation of public school districts in America, the political and electoral process which drives school board elections, and the emergence of candidates and slates of potential candidates for these positions, which are usually unpaid and often unappreciated by the general public.

In order to properly introduce this dissertation and the myriad reasons for writing it, I would like to briefly explain the unique setting of those boisterous election cycles that occurred between 1995 and 1999. What I witnessed during this time sparked my interest in school board politics and ultimately lured me to take to the streets knocking on doors and rounding up votes for school board candidates after the school day concluded, on many weekdays, and on countless weekend afternoons during my senior year of high school. These experiences continue to drive me forward in the study of school board politics, elections, and policy as a PhD candidate.

For roughly a decade, elections for the nine seats on the Norwin School Board could best be categorized as sleepy affairs with relatively predictable outcomes. From

roughly the middle part of the 1980s until the mid-1990s, the school board was dominated by familiar local names, many of whom were professional educators in other districts and happened to live in the Norwin area, parents whose children were currently attending school at Norwin, and/or notable older or retired residents who were viewed as being trusted sages from the local business or labor communities. Elections tended to be fairly quiet, with only the occasional political disturbance upsetting or threatening the seat of an incumbent board member. The political party organizations in the district, which included North Huntingdon Township, Irwin Borough, and North Irwin Borough, largely remained on the sidelines of these contests and generally refrained from even endorsing candidates for school board seats. Instead, school board candidates would be left to court the individual Democratic and Republican committeemen and women who were permitted to back the candidates of their choosing so long as those candidates were registered members of their own political parties (of which I was not a member until. Absent a formal endorsement process, Democratic and Republican committee people were free to endorse and campaign for a candidate at their pleasure. Conversely, these party committee people were also free to decline working on behalf of school board candidates without any recrimination from local party leaders. Unlike other closely managed and monitored campaigns, these school board races could best be described as political free-for-alls.

In speaking with several longtime residents who were politically active during that era, I recall that school board meetings were usually described as being somnolent and uneventful affairs. According to the citizens I spoke with who regularly attended these board meetings, it was not uncommon for most every vote taken by the board to

result in a nine to zero outcome, with the occasional eight to one or seven to two splits being recorded on certain measures. For those who attended board meetings or read about the proceedings of the meetings in the now-defunct *Standard Observer*, a daily evening paper that exclusively served all three communities within the school district, it could easily have been said that the board often served as a rubberstamp for the policies created by the district administration without much internal debate or disagreement.

Although the efficacy of having a school board which rubberstamps the policies of the district superintendent and his or her team of administrators is debatable depending on whether the proposals being enacted truly merited the support of the board, an explosion of political activity in the community disrupted the cooperative spirit that had come to define the workings of the Norwin School Board. During the 1995 school board election, a group of candidates backed by local affiliates of the Christian Coalition and a number of smaller anti-tax groups burst onto the scene with an unprecedented political organization at the precinct level, catching the incumbent board members and the local chapter of the Pennsylvania State Education Association off-guard.

Beginning in 1995, local school board races, which for years had been relatively dull, were transformed into a hotbed of political activity. A bevy of new candidates, backed by the aforementioned conservative groups, alleged that the sitting board members were complacent with approving the majority of the proposals crafted by the district administration rather than independently asserting their control over the district's finances and decision-making. They charged that the board's majority were excessively friendly with the local teacher's union during contract talks and were unwilling to tamp down on local property taxes. Unlike past school board elections, this one featured a

small army of volunteers from these religious-based and anti-tax organizations who mounted an aggressive campaign by canvassing the neighborhoods for votes and loading up all of the district's thirty some polling places with poll workers during the November election. Their organizing tactics more closely resembled what one would expect during a hotly contested presidential or legislative race rather than what was common in a local school board election.

Ultimately, the insurgent group was able to capture two of the five seats that appeared on the ballot that year thanks to victories by conservative anti-tax activist and frequent critic of organized labor, R. James Saunders and Christian Coalition leader Fran Bevan, known by many through her volunteer activities at one of the largest Catholic parishes in the community and in her role as coordinator for conservative third party gubernatorial candidate Peg Luksik's campaign in 1994. Once elected, these individuals used the bully pulpit offered by the public school board meetings to launch blistering attacks against teachers and organized labor, agitate for lowering the millage rates to reduce local property taxes, and crusade against education reforms proposed by Governor Ridge known as Outcomes-Based Education, or OBE. Although they became the board's minority faction, they were able to elevate the issues which mattered most to them and the organizations which supported them, providing a platform from which to carry out a crusade for their own policy preferences.

Two years later during the 1997 election, this combination of Christian conservative groups, anti-tax organizations, homeschool parents, and anti-teacher union activists were emboldened following their success at the ballot box in 1995. Although the lessons of the 1995 campaign should have been fairly obvious to the remaining board

incumbents, organized labor, and those who were stunned by the results of that election, very little planning was done in anticipation of the 1997 school board elections. Dismayed by the thought of having to organize and prepare to face the well-organized political operation of the right-leaning groups and disgusted by the contentious atmosphere during board meetings since the previous election cycle, several incumbents opted for retirement instead of filing for reelection. Following the primary election which contained a large field of candidates, it became apparent that five candidates would face-off for four seats in the fall campaign: a team of three recruits out of the right-wing camp and two individuals—a moderate Republican incumbent and a Democratic newcomer—neither affiliated with the conservative organizations who had managed to squeak through the primary.

Realizing that they had again been outflanked by the conservative movement within the district, the local PSEA chapter and a number of concerned families from the Parent Teacher Association swung into action following the primary with the goal of salvaging two of the four seats in the November election. It was in this election that I, as a high school sophomore, learned the valuable lesson that politics often makes strange bedfellows. In an effort to fend off the right-wing campaign machine, several members of the local teacher's union and the PTA group brokered an agreement between the two other candidates: Democrat Thomas Sturm, a school guidance counselor at the nearby Duquesne City School District and incumbent Republican Richard Hensler, an elder statesman of the local business community. Hensler, who was in his seventies at the time, admitted that he was contemplating withdrawing from the race rather than grinding through a fight with a group of opponents that he believed to be angry people who

vocally opposed much of his own work on the board. The small group of parents and teachers successfully convinced Hensler to remain in the race and guaranteed that if he teamed with Sturm to create a bipartisan fusion ticket, that the parents and teachers involved in the meeting would do all of the necessary organizational work and strategic planning required to pull them both through the general election.

When all was said and done, the conservative coalition captured two of the four seats available that year with the election of Charles O'Donnell, a military veteran and Christian anti-tax activist and Steve Eichelberger, a homeschool parent who admitted on a talk radio program that he would not send his own children to the schools that he was seeking to lead. The other two seats were taken by the bipartisan team of Sturm and Hensler thanks to the effort organized by the parent-teacher coalition that appealed to moderation among the electorate. By the time the new board members were sworn in the next month, the conservative faction had captured four of nine seats in just two cycles, meaning that they only needed to occasionally pick off a single swing vote among the other relatively apolitical members of the school board in order to advance certain elements of their agenda.

For the next two years, the public school board meetings were engulfed with political in-fighting and a sharp right turn on important policy questions as the various factions sparred over the district's mathematics curriculum, labor contracts, allowing home-schooled kids to play on school district sports teams, and property tax rates, which the conservatives claimed were excessively high. The conservative faction was also pushing for mandatory drug testing for district teachers while promising to ratchet-up unannounced, random student locker searches in the high school. They also introduced

numerous motions to reduce incentives that had been offered to encourage teachers on the high end of the district's compensation scale to retire early. Additionally, the conservative members of the board used their connections within the religious right, homeschool, and anti-tax organizations to load the public comment period of each school board meeting with speakers who would use their few minutes behind the microphone to encourage the conservative board members to continue to pursue their right wing agenda. The tactics being employed at the local school board level were reminiscent of the approach used by Newt Gingrich and the House Republicans to gain control first of their own caucus in the early 1990s and then the House majority in 1994: frame the debate, relentlessly attack the opposition, and use the process itself to help dominate the agenda.

The 1999 election cycle saw the battle come to a head as both "factions" within the community were actively recruiting candidates best capable of helping to win as many of the five available seats as possible, especially since the conservative faction and the parent-teacher faction each had two of their own incumbent board members seeking reelection. Similar to their efforts in the 1995 and 1997 cycles, the conservative factions recruited a number of candidates who shared the ideological views of the two incumbent members who would appear on the primary election ballot. On the other side of the coin, the parent-teacher based faction began working behind the scenes as early as the fall of 1998 to cobble together a respectable slate of candidates—led by the somewhat apolitical and non-partisan incumbents Donna Dominick and Fran Ekl—to establish a firm board majority. They were determined to organize early by taking the primary election seriously rather than waiting to pick up the pieces and make do with the candidates that remained once the primary had passed. Aside from the two aforementioned incumbents

(Dominick and Ekl), the other three slots on the parent-teacher slate included Dennis Rittenhouse and Kate Zingarelli, two Democrats who each had several children in the schools and had been a part of the small group who helped coordinate the bipartisan fusion ticket in the 1997 general election. The third spot was filled by Republican Robert Perkins, a well-respected member of the local business community whose father had served as a fire department official for decades. By anchoring the three newcomers to the two well-respected incumbents and selecting individuals who were active in their communities, the parent-teacher group understood the need to recruit candidates and build a slate that could be taken seriously in the eyes of the voters rather than a team simply thrown together out of necessity to fill five slots on a slate of five candidates.

The coordinated campaign of the parent-teacher coalition included numerous campaign tactics commonly associated with races for legislative or county-wide seats such as fundraisers at the local VFW or the homes of individual supporters. Oftentimes, the funds raised were split evenly between the individuals associated with the slate of candidates. This was also the first time that many in the community could recall school board election funds being used to pay for direct mail pieces as well as yard signs and Election Day palm cards featuring the names of all members of the slate of candidates rather than just one or two individual candidate names. The result of the May 1999 primary saw all five members of the parent-teacher coalition, including the two incumbents and three newcomers, win all five seats on both the Democratic and Republican ballots, sweeping out both the conservative faction's incumbents and defeating the newcomers on that slate. Thus, after the turbulent election cycles of 1995, 1997, and the 1999 primary, there would not be a contested general election campaign

that year given the outcome of the May primary. All five members of the parent-teacher organized slate had won all slots on both the Democratic and Republican ballots, a feat that very few suspected would happen given the heated nature of that campaign.

Having closely watched the campaign of 1999 unfold as a student and as a direct participant and volunteer on behalf of several of the candidates, the defeat of the original two incumbent conservative coalition members first elected in 1995 and their new slate of members was both rewarding and surprising given how quickly the pendulum at the local level had swung from the moderate center for many years to the far right before moving during that primary election to a position just slightly left of center. Perhaps the most critical take-away from my own perspective was the fact that local teachers, parents of children in the school system who had grown tired of the constant bickering, and local business leaders who saw that the school system was being enveloped in a constant state of ideological warfare, were able to come together to respond to very drastic shifts in the political atmosphere. From this experience I learned the importance of careful candidate recruitment techniques at the local level and came to better understand the ways in which community-based groups and individual citizens can exercise power and influence over the local election process in the absence of strong political party organizations. In summation, these three local election cycles for members of my own local school board served as teachable moments that would continue to influence how I would think about local elections, local government, candidate recruitment, and electoral strategy both as a practitioner and as an academic.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why School Boards Matter

As noted in the preface, I am extremely fortunate to have had the worthwhile experiences of watching multiple school board elections unfold before my eyes as a high school student, observed numerous contentious policy disputes among school board members from competing political factions, and actively participated as campaign volunteer for several candidates involved in several school board races in my community. These experiences provided me with the motivation and interest to continuing studying and observing school board elections, politics, and policymaking during my professional and academic career. Most importantly, I was fortunate enough to have a father who was not only interested in school board politics, but one who cared enough to take me along with him to school board meetings after a long day at work. His interest in public affairs and his desire to make sure that his son understood the importance of local government and politics helped make me the political junkie and policy wonk that I am today.

My long-standing interest in school boards, elections for school board positions, and the people who serve on them have helped guide the development of this project. Local school boards combine the elements of American politics that are of the greatest interest to me as an academic and practitioner: local government, the power of personality, the impact of individual citizens on the democratic process, the participation of interest groups, and the pursuit of power. As an academic discipline, Political Science has a vital role to play in explaining why and how school board members achieved

election to their positions, which persons or individuals were likely responsible for recruiting them to seek office, whether they are politically ambitious, and to assess how these elected officials have transformed from citizen-candidates to public servants. Unfortunately, the academic literature produced thus far exploring the interaction between these subjects and local school boards is fairly scant. This project examines questions such as these through a survey administered to 4,476 individuals currently serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards and a series of interviews with members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly who began their own political careers as members of their local school boards.

America's school boards are among the most under-examined of the country's political institutions. Likewise, the individuals who govern the nation's public education system are largely unknown actors whose jobs require the dedication of significant amounts of time to positions that are unpaid and in many respects, largely unappreciated by those they serve. Because they are running for positions which exist on a small scale, the individuals dedicating scarce time and financial resources to running for these offices and then governing the school districts must stand before people in their neighborhoods and towns, and directly ask for their votes. Additionally, candidates for public school board seats in states like Pennsylvania run in "off-year" elections which generally feature minimal turnout. This presents a unique challenge for candidates running for school board seats given that "off year" election turnout tends to be considerably lower than election years featuring prominent races for positions such as president, governor, or for other federal positions.

According to Berkman and Plutzer (2005) and Hess and Meeks (2010), over nine out of ten of America's public school board members are elected to office in local or county elections while just four to five and a half percent are appointed to their positions. Board members are charged with performing a multitude of administrative and policy-oriented tasks including the need to "set district policy, approve the budget, and hire and evaluate the superintendent" (Duke, 2010, 61). Despite the expectations and job requirements, board members tend to be "amateurs when it comes to the professional practice of education" (60). School boards throughout the nation, which are dispersed across just under14,000 school districts (Berkman and Plutzer, 1), are charged with developing educational policy, studying and implementing curriculum, negotiating labor contracts, hiring and firing administrators, overseeing immense numbers of educators (although day-to-day management tends to be done by principals), overseeing the instruction of the country's public school children, and performing annual budgeting requirements to manage the district's finances. According to Berkman and Plutzer (2005), school "boards make decisions about everything from after-school programs to teacher salaries, class sizes, and teaching of creationism in the sixth grade" (1).

As of the 2010-11 fiscal year, school boards in the United States were responsible for overseeing over $604 billion in public funds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013, Table 236.10), nearly 50 million students as of 2012 (NCES, 2013, Table 203.10), and over 3.1 million teachers as of 2011 (NCES, 2013, Table 208.30). It is essential to draw attention to this $604 billion (and climbing) expenditure figure because of its sheer size and scope and because this helps demonstrate the magnitude of the financial responsibilities placed on the shoulders of America's public school boards. For the

purposes of making a credible comparison, $556 billion was the size of the Obama administration's proposal for *national* highway infrastructure spending in 2011. Additionally, according to the National Priorities Project real-time budget calculator,[1] the cost of all American military operations in Afghanistan since 2001 is just north of $778 billion as of January 17, 2015. In other words, America's publicly elected school board members are collectively responsible for a significant sum of taxpayer-generated dollars, making them a body of government officials worthy of being examined in a different light.

In most states—including Pennsylvania—school board members may determine whether local school tax rates in the districts they serve will increase or decrease. They often have the power to establish a school district's spending priorities, making critical choices about whether or not the new high school football stadium or neighborhood elementary school will be built, deciding how to fund academic and athletic programs and projects, and determining who will be awarded building contracts. These individuals can affect the content of what America's children learn in the classroom through decisions regarding curriculum choices, textbook selection and the acquisition of instructional materials available to teachers and students alike.

A white paper from the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) found that local public school districts in the United States can be classified as either fiscally independent or fiscally dependent entities. Fiscally independent boards have the legal authority to create their own budgets and thus raise revenue while fiscally dependent boards must rely upon other governmental agencies or bodies to provide revenue. According to this report, among all "local boards of education nationwide, over

[1] https://www.nationalpriorities.org/cost-of/

90% are fiscally independent. This is because school boards in most states are considered independent units of government" (n.d., n.p.).

Although the academic literature does not provide a great deal of information about America's school board members, a 2010 national study conducted by Hess and Meeks and published by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) provides a base-line understanding of who some of these individuals are and creates a rudimentary picture of the circumstances surrounding their most recent campaigns for their positions.

In the national study's foreword, the Iowa School Boards Foundation—one of the project's co-sponsors—defended the premise of studying and analyzing America's school boards, noting that as elected officials, school directors provide a necessary accountability link between the citizenry and the quality of outcomes emanating from the country's public school system. The Foundation argues that "until recently, boards have been excluded from the school reform literature and from consideration as key levers in the school change process. However, the increasing public demand for accountability for student learning now places emphasis on the responsibility of the board, as a governing body, to ensure that student learning results are high and equitable" (Hess and Meeks, 2010, 8). The report acknowledges that America's school boards are not necessarily comprised of educational professionals, yet they "have important and appropriate roles to play in clarifying expectations for improving student learning, holding the system accountable to meeting those expectations, ensuring that the superintendent has the support needed to meet expectations" (8). This provides yet another powerful reason why school boards and the people serving on them warrant much closer examination.

According to the 2010 national study, America's school "boards are more diverse than other elected bodies and are nearly evenly split between men and women" (5). The authors concluded that school boards were relatively similar to the national population as a whole, although those serving on the nation's school boards were more likely than the rest of the population to be a current or former teacher and less likely to be black or Latino. Their key demographic findings tell us the following about America's school board members based on the responses they received:

- 56 percent of respondents were male and 44 percent were female (38). The country's school boards—based on the responses received by Hess and Meeks—have twice as many women as the U.S. Congress and a higher percentage of female representation than in America's state legislatures.
- Almost 81 percent of respondents were white, 12.3 percent were African-American, and just over three percent were Hispanic (38).
- 38.1 percent of board members who responded to the survey reported to having children who are school-age (39) compared with 17 percent of the overall population.
- 69.9 percent of respondents were over 50 years old with just 4.6 percent reporting to be under 40 years of age (39). Meanwhile, just 36 percent of Pennsylvanians are 50 or older.
- 27.7 percent of those who responded reported to have earned a bachelor's degree and 46.5 percent of respondents said that they had earned an advanced degree such as an MA, MS, Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, JD, or DVM (40), which is considerably higher than the nearly 30 percent of Americans who hold a B.A. at minimum.

- Among respondents, almost 50 percent of board members had an annual household income of $100,000 or more (40), which is nearly double the median household income in the United States as of 2009.
- 20.4 percent of respondents identified as liberals, 32.3 percent as conservatives, and 47.3 percent as moderates (41).
- 27.4 percent reported to be retired while 72.6 percent are in the workforce (43). Among the latter, 27.1 percent reported to work in the education field, 18.1 percent in business or commerce, 14.4 percent in nonprofit organizations or government, and 14 percent in professional services, identified by the authors to include law and medicine. A quarter of respondents are current or former teachers, although just about 17 percent report having been affiliated with a teacher's union (42).

School District Governance in Pennsylvania

In Pennsylvania, each of the 499 individual district school boards across the state elects nine individuals as directors.[2] The school board members who are charged with leading these districts are charged with handling a myriad of governmental functions at the local level. Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2013) shows that public school board members were responsible for over $16.7 billion in locally raised tax dollars as of the 2012-13 fiscal year. According to the nonpartisan, Harrisburg-based

[2] The Commonwealth actually has 500 school districts. The Philadelphia School District—which happens to be the state's largest—has an appointed School Reform Commission rather than an elected board. Established in 2001, the School Reform Commission consists of three gubernatorial appointees and two mayoral appointees. None of the representatives who serve on the School Reform Commission are chosen by the voters and are therefore not included in this study.

Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), the responsibilities of public school boards in Pennsylvania are distributed across five categories: planning, policymaking, monitoring, communicating, and advocating. These categories include the following actions:

1. Planning through the creation of strategic plans, setting educational goals and priorities, budgeting, and professional development;
2. Policymaking through board operations and establishing expectations for outcomes;
3. Monitoring by evaluating the performance of the district superintendent, regular assessment of student performance, and by overseeing the district's finances;
4. Communicating procedures, expectations, and policies to staff, parents, students, and the general public through regular reports and public meetings;
5. Advocating for the children who attend the schools by serving as lobbyists or liaisons to policymakers at all levels (10-11).

According to the EPLC, Section 1081 of the Pennsylvania School Code makes only a few references to the specific powers and responsibilities of school boards and superintendents, noting that Pennsylvania state law does not plainly specify the responsibilities of boards and administrators. The School Code states that superintendents are required to serve "as an instructional leader, visiting the schools, observing instruction, giving direction on teaching methods, and reporting any problems to the school board" (13). The second provision states that the superintendent is to interact

"with the board by carrying out 'such other duties as may be required by the board' and having a seat on the board" (13) with the ability to speak on issues, but not cast a vote. The EPLC finds that school boards in Pennsylvania frequently interpret the phrase *"other duties"* to signal their ability to delegate regular district management duties to the superintendent. The powers of Pennsylvania's elected public school boards are enumerated in Article V of the Pennsylvania School Code. According to the EPLC, this list is extensive and includes the following powers and responsibilities:

"• Adopting policies to manage the district.

• Establishing schools and programs.

• Determining the school calendar.

• Adopting the curriculum.

• Adopting textbooks.

• Appointing and dismissing the superintendent.

• Appointing and dismissing all other professional staff.

• Adopting an annual budget.

• Levying and collecting taxes.

• Borrowing money.

• Determining depositories for school funds.

• Entering into contracts.

• Determining salaries of all personnel.

• Purchasing and selling land.

• Determining the location of school buildings.

• Operating school cafeterias.

• *Organizing school safety patrols.*

• *Adopting policies to govern student organizations.*

• *Authorizing staff participation in professional conferences.*

• *Authorizing student field trips"* (13-14).

One would expect to find distinctions among school boards around the Commonwealth when it comes to the amount of power and responsibility being delegated to appointed administrators with some boards likely expressing a great deal of confidence in their district's superintendents that they have hired to lead the school district, thus placing a tremendous amount of responsibility in the hands of that administrative official. Boards such as these are likely to either view themselves as co-partners in governing the district along with the superintendent, or they are likely to accept the recommendations or advice of the superintendent who is "on the ground" each day running the district with great frequency. Other school boards may be more likely to maintain a considerable amount of personal and collective oversight over the district. These boards tend to view the superintendent as a figure hired by the board to carry out their recommendations and policies.

This study improves the discipline's understanding of the public school boards and their membership in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by examining the motivations which drive citizens to seek these positions, the policy and political interests of school board members, their means of recruitment, the history of personal political engagement and activity prior to seeking office, and political ambitions. Explicitly, this study recognizes that the individuals serving on public school boards are important to

understand because of the significance of the responsibilities they bear as per Article V of the Pennsylvania School Code, and because their actions can effect a multitude of stakeholders in each school district such as students, teachers, administrators, parents, and taxpayers.

Research Agenda

This project has the following research goals:

1. To explain the various political, personal, and policy factors motivating individuals to become candidates for public school board positions in Pennsylvania.
2. To explain if and how candidates for school board positions in Pennsylvania are recruited to run for office, examine which individuals or organizations are chiefly responsible for recruiting them as candidates, and explore why some school board candidates are self-recruited.
3. To examine whether individuals serving on Pennsylvania school boards, which I treat as America's "Little Legislatures," an approach pursued by Tucker and Ziegler (1978), whose members have a history of political engagement, public participation, and experience in electoral politics, working in government institutions, or being active participants in a political party organization.
4. To determine if individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have ambition to seek higher political office or offices and to assess whether Pennsylvania's elected school board members are generally ambitious actors who are pursuing political careers or if they are common citizens who become

exceptionally involved and active in local politics as a result of an interest in a policy, political, or personal concern related to the school district's governance.

5. To assess how the factors which motivate individuals to seek school board positions, recruitment factors, their own personal history of involvement in policy or politics, and their level of political ambition may have an effect on governing the school districts, especially the relationship that board members have with their district's appointed superintendent.

This project investigates five main research questions:

Research Question 1—Motivation

What political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?

Research Question 2—Recruitment

Are candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community?

Research Question 3—Engagement:

Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system?

Research Question 4—Ambition:

Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future?

Research Question 5—Governance:

Do factors related to recruitment, and ambition influence how school board members conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent?

Why Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania's cultural, political, and economic diversity as detailed by Cooke (1960), Beers (1980), Madonna and Bresler (1997), Flint (2001), Treadway (2005), Kennedy (2006), Lamis (2008), and Shrader (2011) makes the state a meaningful case for the purpose of exploring the research questions and objectives related to the public school boards and those serving on them. Containing a subset of 499 unique cases, a single state study such as this allows for enhanced conceptual validity that enables "a detailed consideration of contextual factors" (George and Bennett, 2005, 19) to address the research questions and objectives, creates an opportunity to discover and thus explore new and unexpected variables and hypotheses through deductive theorizing, and allows for the careful examination of possible intervening variables.

Table 1 below compares the 50 states and the District of Columbia on a number of different measures the public school systems have within each state. These measures include: the number of children enrolled in public schools in each state, the number of school boards within the states, the average number of students represented by each board, the unit of governance telling whether the boards are chosen locally or at a different level, the method of board selection (appointment or election), whether or not the state's teachers enjoy collective bargaining rights, the total K-12 public education revenue spent in the state in 2009-10, and a column indicating the percentage of

education dollars raised locally in that state as opposed to through state and federal funding streams.

Table 1: Comparing School Districts and School Boards in the States

State	1) K-12 Public School Students	2) Number of Public School Boards	3) Avg. Students Represe-nted Per Board	4) Unit of Governance	5) Selection Method	6) Teacher Collective Bargaining	7) Federal, State, Local Ed. Revenue	8) % of Revenue Raised Locally
AL	755,552	128	5,903	Local	City: Mostly appointed; County: Elected	No	7,239,691	31.4
AK	132,104	34	3,885	Local	Elected	Yes	2,338,215	21.7
AZ	1,071,751	227	4,721	Local	Elected	No	10,069,959	42.5
AR	482,114	310	1,555	Local	Elected	No	5,160,401	32.1
CA	6,289,578	985	6,385	Local	Elected (with exception of Oakland)	Yes	64,130,242	32
CO	843,316	178	4,738	Local	Elected	No	8,852,609	48.1
CT	560,546	169	3,317	Mixed: Local and Regional	Elected	Yes	9,895,487	56.4
DE	129,403	15	8,627	Local	Elected	Yes	1,784,101	29.1
DC	71,284	1	71,284	Federal District	?	?	1,720,917	90.9
FL	2,643,347	67	39,453	County	Elected	Yes	26,056,857	52.3
GA	1,677,067	181	9,266	Mixed: City and County	Elected	No	17,835,791	47.2
HI	179,601	0				Yes	2,564,855	3.5
ID	275,859	114	2,420	Local	Elected	Yes	2,222,539	21.4
IL	2,091,654	892	2,345	Local	Elected (with exception of Chicago)	Yes	28,263,059	59.2

Table 1, continued

IN	1,047,232	290	3,611	Local	274 elected; 16 appointed	Yes	13,641,695	41.7
IA	495,775	371	1,336	Local	Elected	Yes	5,541,140	46.6
KS	483,701	302	1,602	Local	Elected (with exception of Ft. Leavenworth)	Yes	5,487,071	35.6
KY	673,128	176	3,825	Mixed: County and Local	Elected	No	6,873,286	31.3
LA	696,558	68	10,244	Mixed: County and City	Elected	No	8,215,973	37.9
ME	189,077	286	661	Local	Elected	Yes	2,639,779	47.2
MD	852,211	24	35,509	Mixed: 23 county boards, 1 city board	Elected (with exception of Baltimore and Prince George's County)	Yes	13,352,511	50.7
MA	955,563	315	3,034	Local	Elected (with exception of Boston)	Yes	15,570,234	50.9
MI	1,587,067	553	2,870	Local	Elected (with exception of Detroit)	Yes	19,401,180	32.5
MN	838,037	343	2,443	Local	Elected	Yes	10,639,251	28.2
MS	490,526	152	3,227	Mixed: Local and County	Mixed	No	4,443,683	31.2
MO	918,710	524	1,753	Local	Mixed	No	10,157,112	55.8
MT	141,693	454	312	Local	Elected	Yes	1,616,262	37.3
NE	298,500	500	597	Local	Elected	Yes	3,693,930	54.3
NV	437,149	17	25,715	County	Elected	Yes	4,310,014	58.8
NH	194,711	176	1,106	Local	Elected	Yes	2,810,018	55.4

Table 1, continued

NJ	1,402,548	551	2,545	Local	Mixed; Mostly Elected	Yes	25,856,286	54.2
NM	338,122	89	3,799	Local	Elected	Yes	3,760,801	15.6
NY	2,734,955	705	3,879	Local	Elected (with exception of New York City and Yonkers)	Yes	57,146,375	50
NC	1,490,605	117	12,740	Mixed: City and County	114 elected; 3 appointed	No	13,056,767	26.5
ND	96,323	220	438	Local	Elected	Yes	1,256,048	33.9
OH	1,754,191	612	2,866	Local	Elected (with exception of Cleveland)	Yes	22,729,890	45.1
OK	659,911	543	1,215	Local	Elected	Yes	5,699,758	35
OR	570,720	199	2,868	Local	Elected	Yes	6,211,294	39.4
PA	**1,793,284**	**500**	**3,587**	**Local**	**Elected (with exception of Philadelphia)**	**Yes**	**26,408,846**	**53.3**
RI	143,793	33	4,357	Local	Elected (with exception of Providence and Central Falls)	Yes	2,262,193	53.6
SC	725,838	85	8,539	Local	Mixed	No	7,837,314	42.3
SD	126,128	172	733	Local	Elected	Yes	1,300,147	49.4
TN	987,422	136	7,260	Mixed: Local, City, or County	Elected	Yes	8,528,047	41.4

Table 1,
continued

TX	4,935,715	1,043	4,732	Local	Elected (with exception of 5 boards located on military bases)	No	50,045,607	45
UT	585,552	40	14,639	Local	Elected	Yes	4,464,562	36.3
VT	96,858	281	345	Local	Elected	Yes	1,638,396	7.8
VA	1,251,440	134	9,339	Mixed: County, City, and Town	Mixed	No	14,692,849	52.3
WA	1,043,788	296	3,526	Local	Elected	Yes	11,817,488	29.5
WV	282,879	55	5,143	County	Elected	No	3,432,220	29
WI	872,286	426	2,048	Local	Elected	Yes	11,104,749	44.7
WY	89,009	48	1,854	Local	Elected	No	1,708,365	41.2
Ntl. Total	**49,484,181**	**14,137**					**597,485,869**	**43.8**
Ntl. AVG	**970,278**	**277**	**7,164**				**22,980,226**	**41**

Sources:
1-National Center for Education Statistics, Fall 2010
2-Education Commission of the States, 2013
3-Author's calculation based on number of school students divided by number of school districts
4-Education Commission of the States, 2013
5-Education Commission of the States, 2013
6-Education Commission of the States, 2013
7-National Center for Education Statistics, Fall 2010
8-National Center for Education Statistics, Fall 2010

The data contained within this table allows us to place Pennsylvania in perspective. Pennsylvania's 1,793,284 public school students (as of 2010) are spread out across the 500 school districts with an average of 3,587 students per district. This figure is significantly lower than the national average, which is 7,164 students per district. In

this instance, Pennsylvania's seemingly large number of school districts—each with their own school board—drives down the size of the student population per district.

Table 1 above—as well as Table 2 below—demonstrates that Pennsylvania's public schools are funded more by locally raised dollars (in this case, property tax revenue) than the typical American school. Over 53 percent of Pennsylvania's education spending is comprised of revenues raised at the local level while 41 percent of the nation's K-12 spending comes from local sources. This has led the Education Law Center (2013) to conclude that "Pennsylvania is far below average in terms of percentage of state funding" (2) and is "near the bottom in the percentage of state funding for local schools — only nine states contribute a lower percentage of state education funding than Pennsylvania" (2). In the absence of sufficient state funding or additional federal dollars, locally elected school boards must make up the difference to reach the state average of 53 percent of education revenue that is generated locally to ensure that the schools are providing an adequate education for their students. Compiled using the most recently available budget data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Table 2 below indicates that the local share of education revenue required to finance public education in the Commonwealth has increased to nearly 60 percent, up from 53.3 percent in 2010 reflected in the National Center for Education Statistics data.

Table 2: Public Education Revenue Sources in Pennsylvania (2012-13)

Source	Amount	Percentage of Total Education Funding
Local	$16,724,476,657	59.5%
State	$9,296,480,727	33.1%
Federal	$1,172,626,255	4.2%
Other	$897,834,122	3.2%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education data files (2013)

On the other side of the ledger, Pennsylvania is representative of other states across the country in a number of ways. Collective bargaining is permitted for public school teachers in Pennsylvania and 34 other states. Pennsylvania board members are elected rather than appointed, much like 90 percent of all public school board members nationally. Lastly, Pennsylvania board members are elected in local school districts rather than county-based units, as are school board members in a total of 41 states.

Based on the data in Table 1, we learn that 14 other states average between 2,500 to 4,500 students represented per board: Alaska, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington. Additionally, Pennsylvania is one of 13 states in which 50 to 60 percent of revenue for school funding is raised locally.[3]

A total of six states—all either situated in New England and Mid-Atlantic regions—share between four and five of the following characteristics with Pennsylvania schools: 1) elected school boards, 2) boards serving at the local rather than county level, 3) collective bargaining for teachers, 4) between 50 and 60 percent of education funding raised locally, and 5) an average of 2,500 to 4,500 students represented per school board. These states which share the most similar characteristics to Pennsylvania are Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island.

Table 3 below features a county-by-county assessment of Pennsylvania's public school districts, assembled by the author. The table's division by county underscores the type of fragmentation that exists in Pennsylvania's public education system while

[3] The other states are Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

demonstrating the geographic and economic diversity of the Commonwealth. The table indicates how many school districts exist within each of the state's 67 counties, the population of each county, county population of school-age children, a calculation of the average number of students per district per county, and the median household income data for the counties. The table also contains columns indicating the number of persons per square mile and the number of cities (of the first, second, or third class) per county.

Table 3: Public School Districts in Pennsylvania Counties

County	1) County Population (2010)	2) School Districts within County	3) Pop. Age 5-18 (2010)	4) Average Students Per District	5) Cities Within County (city's class next to name)	6) Persons Per Sq. Mile	7) Median Household Income 2006-2010
Adams	101,407	6	18,435	3,072.50		195.5	$56,529
Allegheny	1,223,348	45	194,597	4,324.40	Pittsburgh (2), Clairton (3), Duquesne (3), McKeesport (3)	1,675.60	$47,961
Armstrong	68,941	8	11,443	1,430.40	Parker City (3)	105.5	$42,752
Beaver	170,539	15	28,157	1,877.10	Aliquippa (3), Beaver Falls (3)	392.3	$46,190
Bedford	49,762	6	8,696	1,449.30		49.2	$40,249
Berks	411,442	19	79,497	4,184.10	Reading (3)	480.4	$53,470
Blair	127,089	7	21,599	3,085.60	Altoona (3)	241.7	$42,363
Bradford	62,622	7	11,317	1,616.70		54.6	$40,543
Bucks	625,249	16	117,458	7,341.10		1,034.70	$74,828
Butler	183,862	9	34,068	3,785.30	Butler (3)	233.1	$56,878
Cambria	143,679	14	23,054	1,646.70	Johnstown (3)	208.7	$39,574
Cameron	5,085	1	820	820		12.8	$40,733
Carbon	65,249	6	10,790	1,798.30		171.1	$47,744

Table 3, continued

Centre	153,990	7	21,810	3,115.70		138.7	$47,016
Chester	498,886	14	100,287	7,163.40	Coatesville (3)	664.7	$84,741
Clarion	39,988	8	6,599	824.9		66.6	$40,028
Clearfield	81,642	9	13,255	1,472.80	DuBois (3)	71.3	$37,130
Clinton	39,238	3	6,682	2,227.30	Lock Haven (3)	44.2	$39,354
Columbia	67,295	8	10,895	1,361.90		139.3	$42,788
Crawford	88,765	7	16,299	2,328.40	Meadville (3), Titusville (3)	87.7	$38,924
Cumberland	235,406	9	39,681	4,409.00		431.6	$60,219
Dauphin	268,100	12	49,012	4,084.30	Harrisburg (3)	510.6	$52,371
Delaware	558,979	17	105,936	6,231.50	Chester (3)	3,040.50	$61,876
Elk	31,946	6	5,463	910.5	St. Mary's (3)	38.6	$43,745
Erie	280,566	13	51,705	3,977.30	Corry (3), Erie (3)	351.1	$43,595
Fayette	136,606	8	22,505	2,813.10	Connellsville (3), Uniontown (3)	172.8	$34,796
Forest	7,716	1	894	894		18.1	$35,150
Franklin	149,618	6	27,905	4,650.80		193.7	$51,035
Fulton	14,845	3	2,694	898		33.9	$45,240
Greene	38,686	5	6,307	1,261.40		67.2	$40,498
Huntingdon	45,913	6	7,405	1,234.20		52.5	$41,700
Indiana	88,880	11	14,416	1,310.50		107.5	$40,225
Jefferson	45,200	5	7,824	1,564.80		69.3	$38,406
Juniata	24,636	2	4,667	2,333.50		63	$44,276
Lackawanna	214,437	12	35,596	2,966.30	Scranton (2), Carbondale (3)	467.1	$43,673
Lancaster	519,445	17	101,299	5,958.80	Lancaster (3)	550.4	$54,765
Lawrence	91,108	9	15,780	1,753.30	New Castle (3)	254.4	$42,570
Lebanon	133,568	6	24,059	4,009.80	Lebanon (3)	369.1	$52,356

Table 3, continued

Lehigh	349,497	10	66,159	6,615.90	Allentown (3), Bethlehem (3)	1,012.50	$53,541
Luzerne	320,918	12	52,973	4,414.40	Hazleton (3), Nanticoke (3), Pittston (3), Wilkes-Barre (3)	360.4	$42,224
Lycoming	116,111	11	19,631	1,784.60	Williamsport (3)	94.5	$42,689
McKean	43,450	6	7,514	1,252.30	Bradford (3)	44.4	$40,097
Mercer	116,638	14	21,032	1,502.30	Farrell (3), Hermitage (3), Sharon (3)	173.4	$42,573
Mifflin	46,682	2	8,442	4,221.00		113.6	$37,539
Monroe	169,842	4	34,910	8,727.50		279.2	$56,733
Montgomery	799,874	23	146,216	6,357.20		1,655.90	$76,380
Montour	18,267	2	3,046	1,523.00		140.3	$45,255
Northampton	297,735	10	53,550	5,355.00	Bethlehem (3), Easton (3)	805.4	$58,762
Northumberland	94,528	8	15,299	1,912.40	Shamokin (3), Sunbury (3)	206.2	$38,387
Perry	45,969	5	8,574	1,714.80		83.4	$52,659
Philadelphia	1,526,006	1	268,724	268,724.00	Philadelphia (1)	11,379.50	$36,251
Pike	57,369	3	11,362	3,787.30		105.3	$56,843
Potter	17,457	7	3,153	450.4		16.1	$39,196
Schuylkill	148,289	14	23,757	1,696.90	Pottsville (3)	190.4	$42,315
Snyder	39,702	2	7,252	3,626.00		120.8	$44,713
Somerset	77,742	11	12,350	1,122.70		72.4	$39,194
Sullivan	6,428	1	885	885		14.3	$36,250
Susquehanna	43,356	6	7,594	1,265.70		52.7	$43,457
Tioga	41,981	5	7,130	1,426.00		37	$40,338
Union	44,947	4	7,071	1,767.80		142.2	$45,474

Table 3, continued

Venango	54,984	8	9,513	1,189.10	Franklin (3), Oil City (3)	81.5	$39,812
Warren	41,815	3	7,186	2,395.30	Warren (3)	47.3	$41,286
Washington	207,820	15	34,937	2,329.10	Monongahela (3), Washington (3)	242.5	$49,687
Wayne	52,822	6	8,481	1,413.50		72.8	$45,930
Westmoreland	365,169	19	59,728	3,143.60	Arnold (3), Greensburg (3), Jeannette (3), Lower Burrell (3), Monessen (3), New Kensington (3)	355.4	$47,689
Wyoming	28,276	6	5,053	842.2		71.2	$47,403
York	434,972	16	81,353	5,084.60	York (3)	481.1	$57,494

Sources:
1-U.S. Census Bureau, 2010
2-PA Department of Revenue (these numbers add up to 597 due to districts that overlap county lines)
3-U.S. Census Bureau, 2010
4-Author's calculations derived from dividing school age population per by number of districts in each county
5-*Pennsylvania Manual*, 2009-2010 Edition
6-U.S. Census Bureau, 2010
7-U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006-2010, 5-Year Estimates.

Analysis

The research questions and goals associated with this study were detailed in Section III of this chapter. The first research question has to do with **motivation** and asks what political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania. The second question concerns **recruitment** and asks whether candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or were recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community. The third question

concerns **engagement** and asks if individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system. Likewise, do they have experience working in or for government agencies or departments? Lastly, the fourth question addresses **ambition** and asks if individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future. Taken together, these four general questions provide for a research framework to explain why individuals may seek to serve on locally elected school boards while addressing candidate emergence and recruitment concerning these elected officials.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

School Board Politics: An Overview

It becomes clear from assessing the contemporary literature on the American school board that certain core questions such as those suggested by this research project including school board candidate recruitment, political ambition among school board members, and the history of political activism among school board members remain relatively unexamined. The existing academic literature pertaining to America's school boards can be divided into three general categories: school board elections and politics, administration and management of school districts, and mechanisms for reforming education through school board leadership.

The first is the politics of school board campaigns as detailed by Deckman (2004), Hess and Leal (2005), Moe (2005), Meier and Juenke (2005), and Hess (2008). These pieces address the types of issues that arise in campaigns for public school board seats in the United States with an eye towards interest group participation. For instance, Moe's study assesses and critiques the participatory nature of teacher unions in school board races. Moe notes that in "the 1960s and 1970s, the balance of power within American education underwent yet another dramatic shift, generating a new brand of special interest politics that has been with us ever since" (Moe, 2005, 254) in the form of union politics influencing education policy, school board elections, and school district governance. Likewise, Deckman (2004) surveys Christian conservative candidates who ran for school board seats,

writing that Christian right candidates are well-trained, recruited to seek office, and see their role to be "returning schools to traditional values" (168) based on Christian teaching.

This body of literature is useful for helping explore many of the complex political and policy issues facing the individuals who serve on public school boards, yet does not go very far to explain exactly *why* a citizen within a community may choose to seek a seat on the school board, *how* an organization that is interested in leaving its stamp on the school district goes about finding candidates to carry out their agenda, or what those individuals may aspire to do with their political careers beyond their school board service.

A second category explains the administrative nature of the position as examined by Hussey (2003), Epstein (2004), Eadie (2005), Reimer (2008), and Mayer (2011). The literature in this category is largely explanatory in nature and describes the role of school board members as they relate to school governance. The overarching theme of this particular strand of literature focuses on effective leadership and managerial techniques for board members, superintendents, and other administrators. Pieces like Mayer's aptly named *How Not to Be a Terrible School Board Member* (2011) offers detailed advice to board members, admonishing them not to micromanage their district superintendents, instructing them on how to best handle angry members of the general public, and discussing the negative ramifications of doing political favors for friends and campaign supporters in their official capacity. In one interesting passage, Mayer (a local school board member for nearly three decades) discourages board members from being overly political in their focus, suggesting that school directors should not see "issues through the lens of your political party rather than through the lens of what is best for the children of the district" (118). This

body of literature should perhaps be classified as "best practices-oriented" literature or even as "how-to-guides" for good governance among board members.

A third general category of school board-themed literature examines mechanisms for reforming the way school leadership structures are designed and explains ways school board members and school leadership can improve the education system. Works of this type include Peterson (1985), Blackwell (2006), Reimer (2008), Kowalski (2008), Duke (2010), Maeroff (2010), and Mayer (2011). Particularly, Maeroff's piece is relatively critical of how the public schools are managed and contends that "no local body has control over so much money as the school board. Public schools received $556.9 billion in revenues" (2) from 2006-2007, thus requiring the attention of the best and brightest to serve. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), that figure had increased to over $591 billion in expenditures as of 2013-2014. As of that academic year, school board members were also responsible for the education of 50.1 million elementary and secondary students as well as 3.3 million teachers.

Despite the variety of ways the academic literature treats public school boards, there is a general absence of discussion about who exactly sits on America's school boards. In general, we do not know why these individuals decided to seek school board positions, their level of political engagement or participation, and their political ambitions beyond their school board service. The existing literature is thick on description, but relatively short on political analysis.

Several studies fall outside of the three broad categories of school board literature outlined above. These include Berkman and Plutzer (2005), Hess and Meeks (2010), Arnett (1932), and Alby (1979). In their study of public opinion in the nation's school districts,

Berkman and Plutzer employed a decade's worth of national polling data on education spending preferences arranged in a state-by-state fashion, and then sorted using within-state factors such as demography and socio-economic categories. The purpose of this approach is to "estimate the average opinion for voters of certain 'citizen types'" (xvi) regarding school district financing. Citizen typologies are created to determine the preferences for educational spending for each of the assorted citizen types.

Using data from the late 1980s, the authors demonstrate that 90 percent of America's school board members are elected to their positions—79 percent through at-large elections and 11 percent through district-level elections (92). Their findings show that just four percent of school board members (mostly confined to southern states) are appointed and six percent are chosen through a mixed approach featuring a combination of elections and appointments to fill school board seats. Berkman and Plutzer argue that the method by which board members are selected impacts the level of policy responsiveness between a board and the public in each particular type of district. Therefore, they find that school board elections matter, the characteristics of the individuals serving on these boards may impact the type of policies they approve or reject, and boards generally are responsive to public opinion. They also contend that the people chosen to serve in these positions of power at the local level "respond as well to the pluralistic interplay of particular interests" (157) at the local or community level, which in my view allows for a responsible comparison of school boards to other types of legislative bodies in a forthcoming section of this chapter.

The most comprehensive study was conducted by Hess and Meeks in 2010. This wide-ranging study was completed on behalf of the National School Boards Association

(NSBA) and examined the baseline demographic, economic, and political information of America's school board members. Unlike the Berkman and Plutzer study that looked at how elected and appointed boards respond to public opinion-oriented stimuli, Hess and Meeks sought to enhance the NSBA's knowledge of the individuals represented by that particular organization. Their study was focused more on learning about these board members rather than how school board members perform their jobs, interact with their constituents, or create policy.

This broad study found that 13,809 public school districts operate in the United States today. Over 90 percent of these districts (almost complete congruence with Berkman and Plutzer) are run by elected school boards who account for the expenditure of over $600 billion in public funds and are charged with overseeing some six million employees (12). However, minimal—if any—attention was given to the political background or interests of these school board members, the reasons for their candidacies, or their recruitment to seek this local, unpaid public office. Instead, the focal point was to assess who is serving on America's public school boards, how boards are configured, how board members go about their work, whether or not elected members have run competitive election or reelection campaigns, and how boards interact with the district superintendents who serve at their pleasure.

A second piece of relevant literature examining the beliefs and attitudes of America's school board members is Arnett's national survey of school directors (1932), which sought to "discover and report the social beliefs and attitudes, with regard to some of the fundamental and more vital social, economic, international, educational and other like issues at the fore-front in American life today, held by American school board

members" (6). Oddly enough, this eighty year old study appears to be perhaps the only systematic effort to compile a national profile of America's school directors in a single study outside of the Hess and Meeks NSBA piece from 2010. Arnett mailed letters to 3,200 superintendents of schools across the 48 existing states, securing the willingness of 699 to cooperate with his study. This sample of nearly 700 school district superintendents helped distribute 5,000 surveys to school board members in their districts, of which 1,076 representing all geographic areas were returned.

Board members were asked to complete a 14-question baseline survey as well as a 71 question battery gauging their positions on issues regarding educational policy, philosophy of education, religion, American politics, and their personal political philosophy. Arnett found that board members between the ages of 21 and 35 years of age, those with college level educational experience, and those unaligned with either political party scored higher on the author's "non-conservative" score than others, while older board members with less educational attainment and those aligned with a political party were more conservative than their counterparts. It is difficult to imagine that Arnett's national study could be among the most recent and most comprehensive study of national school board service outside of the 2010 NSBA-backed study, yet I see no signs of its replication over the years on such a scale.

Finally, Thomas Alby's 1979 dissertation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison titled *An Analysis of Motives for Seeking School Board Membership in Selected Communities in Wisconsin* featured interviews with 51 individual school board members in eight school districts in that state. Alby intentionally selected boards representing different economic and geographic constituencies within the state including a rural farm

district, a district within a mill town, a district with a heavily industrialized city, a district within a middle class suburb of a large city, an upper middle class suburban district, a district within a briskly growing industrialized suburb, an upper class suburban district, and a district within an economically diverse city. Alby's dissertation asked why these sitting school board members originally sought their positions, the policy goals that these board members wished to accomplish during their tenure, the personal rewards that board members expected to derive from their service, the main points of frustration experienced by board members during their time in office, and a variety of questions regarding recommendations from the board members for how to make school board service more attractive to a greater number of citizens.

Among the 51 board members interviewed during the Alby study, the most frequently stated reasons for seeking election to the local school board included the desire to address problems that needed correcting, recruitment or persuasion by others, a sense of civic interest and responsibility, and concern about students within the school district (76). The board members interviewed by Alby identified 25 different goals they hoped to accomplish during their school board tenure. The most frequently cited goals included developing better systems for evaluating staff, improving the general curriculum of the district, upgrading the district staff, maintaining the status quo of the school district, replacing the superintendent, establishing minimal competency standards for students, and emphasizing basic educational goals (95). Board members also indicated that the chief personal rewards that they expected to derive from school board service included gaining satisfaction from donating their time to help the community, helping develop better educational programs for children, and working with different types of people who serve

alongside them on the board (198). Lastly, Alby's subjects noted that teacher contract negotiations, increasing levels of government control at the local level, public apathy, criticism and petty complaints from the public, and administrative incompetence (103) topped their list of major frustrations with board service.

Stakeholders in American Public Education

This section will look directly at the individuals, groups, and organizations that are most likely to be effected by the actions taken by local school boards. These specific stakeholders also happen to have the greatest level of interaction with the school boards and school board members. Five specific categories of "stakeholders" discussed in the literature meet these criteria. They include *teachers and teacher unions*, *superintendents and administrators*, *parents* whose children attend the schools, school-age *children*, and *taxpayers*. This section explains why each of these five entities are in fact stakeholders in each public school district as well as how and why they are likely to influence or be influenced by the political choices and policy decisions rendered by those serving on the nation's school boards.

Teachers and Teacher Unions

Teachers and their unions feel the impact of the myriad decisions made by local school boards. These crucial decisions include curriculum choices influencing what they teach and how they teach it, personnel choices determining who is chosen as the district's superintendents and principals that serve as their bosses and supervisors, decisions regarding teacher pay through contract negotiations, disciplinary policy governing student

behavior in their classrooms, and when applicable they are influenced by decisions related to taxation. The decisions made by school boards regarding taxation—whether to increase, decrease, or hold steady local school tax rates—can lead to fluctuations in the amount of money available to teachers for classroom instruction, salaries, benefits, and even their retirement pensions. Because of these particular factors, it is obvious why teachers and the unions they belong to are important stakeholders in America's school districts and in relation to the school boards. Put more bluntly by Terry Moe, "teachers unions have more influence on the public schools than any other group in American society" (2011, 6), helping justify why they are listed here as the first among the five critical groups of stakeholders.

Berkman and Plutzer note that while teachers have a general interest in both state and local education policy, there is a fine-tuned, specific focus among teachers on the policies crafted by local school boards. Although state governments are generally responsible for making policies related to the teacher certification and licensing and setting base-line curriculum standards that are applicable in all school districts within a state, it is widely accepted that "the most crucial decisions about teachers' salaries and benefits are made by the local school district, which negotiates and approves teacher contracts" (2005, 117), with these contracts ultimately being approved or scotched by the local school board. According to Terry Moe, a union detractor who has written extensively about teachers unions and their influence on American education policies and practices, as of 2000, NEA membership had reached 2 million practicing public educators. Additionally, the AFT represents about half a million teachers, primarily in urban centers (2011, 154). Based on 2008 data, Moe's 2011 tome *Special Interest* reports that 79 percent of America's 3.1

million teachers are unionized while 64 percent are covered by collective bargaining agreements (155).

The increasingly large number of teacher union members and their ability to bargain collectively has led Moe to take a critical view of the imprint unions have made on education reform efforts, claiming that "by insisting on bigger budgets, higher salaries, job protections, and other union-favored objectives" (2011, 10), the unions have presented a roadblock to certain reforms and made the cost of funding public education untenable in many districts. While my study is not intended to serve as a critique of union power in the schools as Moe's research has already done, it will address ways that school boards and elected school board members have interacted with teachers who are their employees and constituents, as well as the unions that represent their interests before the boards. Moe argues that teachers unions and those who belong to them have a powerful advantage given "that their members are teachers, and Americans *like* teachers. They admire them, they trust them, they often interact with them personally, and they see them as caring about children and quality education" (22). In short, he suggests that school boards can be seen as having a disadvantage—at least in the public's eye—when dealing with teachers, thus maximizing the bargaining leverage held by teachers and their labor unions in contract negotiations.

As stakeholders, teachers and teacher unions play a critical role in the politics of local elections and have the opportunity to influence elections for public school board seats through campaign donations, grassroots mobilization, candidate recruitment efforts, and collective action to support or oppose certain candidates or slates of candidates for school board positions. As Moe suggests in his 2006 book, *Union Power and the Education of*

Children, a study of California school board races over a decade ago found that teacher "unions are typically the most powerful participants in school board elections" (13) are equally powerful across districts of all sizes, and have generally been successful in helping elect pro-union school board members who are viewed by the teachers as being helpful and powerful allies during times of contract negotiations.

Parents

The second group of stakeholders within the confines of a public school district governed by an elected (or sometimes appointed) school board is parents of students who are presently attending a school within the district. Parents are crucial stakeholders because their children—and thus their families—are affected by the quality of education, services, programs, activities, and happenings within the schools. While not all parents are active participants in the day-to-day activities regarding the education of their children, those who are engaged are likely concerned about the excellence of instruction, the quality of the teachers in the classroom, and are possibly involved in the schools through the organizations their children are engaged in throughout their time as students. As stakeholders, parents may interact with school boards through parent organizations such as the Parent Teacher Association, organizations of parents committed to certain causes within schools such as band or sports parent groups, or even organizations comprised of home or parochial school parents.

According to Hoxby (2011), the very nature of parental responsibility is accentuated by an expected concern for the well-being and success of a parent's own offspring. Parents and the type of parenting they perform have a direct effect on various

factors such as a child's education, nutrition, learning ability, and home environment (91). Citing federal data and statistics from the National Center for Education, Hoxby demonstrates that "family variables" far outweigh both environmental (neighborhood and community related) factors and specific variables related to the schools when it comes to explaining student success. According to Hoxby's federal data, 93.4 percent of the variations in twelfth graders' math scores on standardized tests were connected to family variables. Just 3.8 percent are attributed to neighborhood variables and 2.8 percent to school input variables. In short, "family variables explain 11 to 14 times as much variation in students' test scores as school inputs or neighborhood variables" (98) taken together.

Superintendents

The third group of stakeholders within the school districts is the superintendents. Each school district in the United States has a rather large number of teachers, parents, students, and taxpayers who comprise the other four groups of stakeholders. Superintendents represent the smallest share of the stakeholders with just one being located in each district (as well as an array of assistant superintendents depending upon the size of the district). Whereas the school board tends to resemble the legislative arm of a school district, the superintendent embodies a strange amalgam of the executive and judicial branches, yet unlike the president who oversees the executive branch of the U.S. government, "the superintendent has no veto power over board decisions" (Tucker and Ziegler, 1978, 217) and no judicial review powers comparable to the U.S. Supreme Court. Education policy expert and former *New York Times* education correspondent Gene Maeroff likens the power structure to that of a corporation where the superintendent

resembles the CEO and the school board resembles the corporation's shareholders (2010, 66). Tucker and Ziegler (1978) argue that "the closest approximation to the superintendent is the city manager in the council-manager form of government" (217) in which the elected council hires a professional administrator to manage the city or municipality on a day-to-day basis.

Most school boards in the United States—and all boards in Pennsylvania—are required to approve the final decision to hire personnel within the school district. However, in reality, the superintendent is the only individual in the district that is directly employed by the board to help shape and then carry out policy. The individual chosen as the district superintendent is granted the necessary authority to hire deputy or assistant superintendents to oversee complex and delicate matters like hiring other administrators such as principals and serving as the day-to-day operator of the school district on behalf of the school board. According to Chubb (2001), the school board is directly and chiefly responsible for hiring "a school superintendent to open and operate a system of public schools to serve the children within the board's jurisdiction" (29), noting that "the only leader in the public system expected to truly lead is the superintendent" (29) who has control of the day-to-day functions of the school system. Because of the great responsibility foisted on the shoulders of the superintendent, he or she tends to be the most handsomely compensated employee within the school district, making somewhere between $108,218 annually in districts with 2,499 students or less and as much as $211,867 annually for districts containing over 25,000 students (Maeroff, 2010, 67). Although I believe that Chubb's assessment of the superintendent as "the only leader in the public system expected to truly lead" is an overstatement which overlooks the power and capacity of the school board, it is worth

noting that the superintendent is an individual who is routinely recognized as an influential and powerful figure within the constellation of actors in a public school district.

According to the literature, superintendents are more than just overseers who manage the bureaucracy and report back to the elected board that is capable of both hiring and firing them. The superintendent can also be understood as the guardian of the purse strings. Chubb estimates that in a hypothetical school district that spends about $3 million annually, a typical building principal within the district may control as little as 17 percent of the budget (29). Principals are generally given little overall financial discretion or ability to "build teams of teachers who share a common instructional philosophy or reward teachers for student achievement" (39). Instead, as Evers (2001) suggests, the superintendents tend to retain financial discretion because they ultimately answer to the school board, whose members are elected by the voters (211). In the long run, school board members tend to see themselves as being directly accountable for the district's financial decisions and the educational attainment of the student body. While the superintendent tries to bear responsibility for these choices, the proverbial buck eventually stops with the school board who must face the public at the ballot box. The Harrisburg-based Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC) cites Land (2002), who contends that the superintendent-school board relationship is critical due to increase in "professional management expertise in education, school boards generally have evolved into policymaking bodies that delegate administrative responsibility to superintendents and their staff" (12). As such, the personnel decision made by a school board regarding who will serve as the district's superintendent is one of the most important decisions that a school board can make, thus making the

superintendent's position and role within the system a pivotal point to consider as a stakeholder.

Taxpayers

Taxpayers represent the fourth group of stakeholders who have a direct relationship with the elected school boards. It is important to clarify that while most parents and teachers are taxpayers, the fact remains that not all taxpayers are parents or teachers.

Simply put, the reason for considering the larger group of stakeholders separately from other stakeholders such as teachers and parents is because this group encompasses all of the other voting-age residents in a school district who may not have kids in the school system or who do not teach in the schools, yet are responsible for funding the school district and living with the decisions rendered by the local school board. Included here are retirees who contribute property tax dollars to the schools each year, the single working adult without children, families who send one or more of their kids to parochial or private school, and those who may home school their children, yet still pay local school taxes. This group of stakeholders may have little or no connection to the schools, but because they are citizens, residents, and taxpayers, the individuals within the group are qualified to vote for school board members or even to run and serve on their local board.

A second point regarding these stakeholders is this: not every wage earner or resident pays school taxes, yet they are still served by the school district and considered to be "constituents" of the members of the local school board. They are also permitted to vote in school board elections and run for seats on the board. Even though a citizen isn't a

property taxpayer per se, he or she is still capable of participating in school board politics, attending board meetings, lobbying the board for action, or serving on the board if elected.

According to National Election Study averages presented by Berkman and Plutzer (2005), from 1984-2000, an 11 point gap existed between parents and non-parents when it comes to support for higher levels of funding for schools (44). Likewise, a 12 point gap exists between renters and homeowners, with renters—who are less likely to pay school property taxes directly—coming down on the side of higher spending for local education (45). A 22 point gap exists between blacks and whites in the same time period, with black voters supporting higher spending. The General Social Survey averages from 1985-2002 indicate a 14 point gap between citizens with a college education and those with less than a high school education, with those favoring higher spending having finished or at least attended college (45).

This group of stakeholders will prove to play an important role in this study's research questions. Some candidates for school board seats will inevitably have found their motivation to seek office because of issues pertaining to local property taxes. Likewise, a school board member's ability to influence tax policy at the school district level may also stoke that individual's ambition to take their policy concerns to another policy arena.

Students

The fifth and final group of stakeholders in the local school districts includes the people who the public education system is designed to influence more so than any other: the students who are the true "consumers" of the product guided and managed by school boards, overseen by superintendents, funded by taxpayers, and shaped in various ways by

parents. Hess and Meeks' national survey of school board members and superintendents reveals that America's "nearly 4,000 school boards are responsible for the well-being of 52 million children, the expenditure of $600 billion per year, and the supervision of six million employees" (2010, 12). Taken together, the country's 52 million children within the public school system dwarfs the number of teachers, superintendents, administrators, and school board members. When compared to the other groups of stakeholders it becomes obvious that this group has the least muscle to flex within the education system, although the system is actually designed to benefit them.

The fifth group of stakeholders is thus reliant upon the other sets of stakeholders and actors to address their needs and concerns. They rely upon teachers to provide classroom instruction and a positive learning environment. They rely upon school boards to develop fair and equitable budgets and approve a challenging curriculum that prepares them for college or the workforce. They rely upon parents to provide the nurturing home environment that Hoxby described as being more significant than school inputs or community factors in determining a child's success. They also rely upon taxpayers in the school districts to provide the funds necessary to keep the schools running and to finance the education and extracurricular programs intended to make them well-rounded adults. In addressing the interconnectedness between elected school boards and the students they serve, the Center for Public Education, an initiative of the National School Boards Association, argues that truly effective school boards understand the direct academic impact their actions have on students. The most effective boards "commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision" (Devarics and O'Brien, 2011, 2), "have strong shared beliefs and values

about what is possible for students and their ability to learn" (3), "are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement" (3), and "are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement" (5).

Alsbury's research (2008) indicates that students may be directly affected by the politics surrounding public school boards. Using the Washington Assessment of Student Learning scores for fourth, seventh, and tenth grade students in Washington State, Alsbury tracked eight years' worth of cumulative scores in English and mathematics attained by a cohort of students from 1993 to 2001. He discovered a statistically "significant relationship between *politically motivated* board turnover and defeat and student test scores" (262) as opposed to a lack of a significant association when comparing student test scores in all districts included in the study. According to Alsbury, these results demonstrate that politically-driven school board turnover, or perhaps hyper-charged school board politics, can potentially impact student achievement within a public school district. In his view, school boards—and the politics surrounding the institution and those serving in them can influence educational outcomes for students and families in myriad ways.

Treating School Boards as Legislatures

The prior section discussed the various stakeholders who are most likely to be affected by the actions taken and decisions made by those serving on the school boards. These stakeholders possess the potential to impact those serving on the school boards both in elections and during their tenure as elected local officials. If we compare a local school's governance to a state or federal government structure, the school board would most closely

resemble the legislative branch of government. Based on the functions of school boards and the way these bodies are configured, it makes sense for political scientists and education policy analysts to juxtapose school boards—particularly elected boards—alongside legislatures given their structure, responsibilities, policymaking role, and direct interaction with the voters who allow them to serve.

In addressing the value of studying, analyzing, and understanding American school boards as important local governing bodies, Tucker and Zeigler's research (1978) treats school boards as legislatures which should "be analyzed using the same theoretical assumptions, empirical procedures, and evaluative criteria employed by political scientists to study other legislative bodies" (213). They describe school boards as "little legislatures" which, much like larger legislative bodies in state and federal government, are expected to be responsive to the needs and interests of the public and other institutional actors, and are held accountable directly by the voters through the electoral process. Much like Congressional or state legislative bodies in the United States, these "little legislatures" have the power of the purse strings. According to Tucker and Ziegler, almost 90 percent of America's school boards, regardless of elected or appointed status, have the legal power to levy taxes.

Tucker and Ziegler further build the case for treating America's school boards as legislative institutions by asserting that

> School boards are general deliberative and decision-making bodies that provide a public forum for the articulation of policy preferences and the resolution of policy issues. Finally, as their legislative counterparts at other levels of government, school boards are given the nominal authority to establish district-wide policy and oversee the implementation of that policy by administrative employees of the school district (213).

The authors also contend that local school boards are considerably smaller than national or state legislatures, providing the general public an inordinate amount of access to the body as a whole or to individual members. Due to the way in which school board meetings are structured, board members participate publicly in the decision-making process, often deliberating immediately before the constituents they serve either in non-voting, public "workshop" meetings or the regular public board meetings where votes are recorded. According to Tucker and Ziegler, it is rare to see a traditional committee system resembling that of the United States Congress in use among local school boards (213). Lastly, these scholars conclude that, school district government structures tend not to be an "overwhelming local educational bureaucracy to immerse citizens and board members in jungles of red tape" (213), meaning that when interacting with constituents or handling constituent concerns, complaints, and questions, school board members are unlikely to have to sift through complicated layers of bureaucracy.

Polsby's framework for arena and transformative legislatures provide a distinct opportunity to situate the local legislatures of interest to this study, the school boards, within the academic literature. It also allows for the further explication of the similarities and key structural and political differences between school boards and other American legislative bodies operating at the state and national levels.

In Polsby's view, legislative bodies are classified as either arena or transformative legislatures—or placed somewhere between these two points on a scale based on a power continuum that gauges a legislative body's independence from influences outside of the legislature itself. Polsby (1975) notes that perhaps the most distinct difference between these types of bodies is an "independent capacity, frequently exercised, to mold and

transform proposals from whatever source into laws" (277) on the transformative end versus more highly "formalized settings for the interplay of significant political forces in the life of a political system" (277) embodied by arena legislatures.

Transformative legislatures are generally recognizable based upon their complex structures, the division of labor among members exhibited by something like a regular committee system, common efforts by legislators to advance their own preferences, and a process of socialization that helps cement a member's identity as part of that institution. In Polsby's view, the internal procedures and processes clearly spelled out in the body's rules combined with the complex, yet disciplined structure of the committee system—much like what is observed in the United States Congress—are all hallmarks of transformative legislatures. Polsby claims that legislative professionalization shifts the "emphasis away from the representational values of legislators as amateur citizens embedded in their local communities" (297). This suggests that America's school boards, with their "citizen legislature" quality, simple and non-complex committee structure, and little if any internal division of labor make for poor candidates for consideration as transformative legislatures.

On the other end of the continuum are the arena legislatures. Central to Polsby's definition of arena legislatures is the notion that the actions of these types of legislatures are influenced greatly by social, personal, and political factors rather than those which are organizational in nature. These social, personal, or political elements make arena legislatures permeable and open to influence by factors including eloquence or rhetorical skills capable of convincing other members to decide a certain way on an issue or vote, the prestige of service within the institution, and the individual personalities of those serving (281). Writing about legislative professionalism and the consideration of arena and

transformative legislative bodies, Kousser (2005) contends that various "social stratifications, party divisions, and interest group preferences are played out in the arena" (19) in ways that do not necessarily impact policy outputs, but have a way of greatly influencing the way in which such an institution functions.

Both Kousser and Polsby note that the classic legislative body most closely mirroring an arena legislature is the British Parliament. In Polsby's view, arena legislatures traditionally meet to handle the most significant obligations such as budgets and taxation while also setting constraints on governmental and agency power (282). In arena legislatures, external forces can be counted on to help guide the eventual outcomes, including the role of interest groups seeking certain policies, party politics, legislative recruitment, public debate, the social backgrounds of members, and internal deliberation. Likewise, Kousser contends that one of the most important items to consider when comparing arena and transformative legislative bodies is the fact that unlike their transformative cousins, "arenas do not possess the autonomy to stand up to the executive branch" (19) and are less capable of scrutinizing and opposing proposals of the executive branch. Additionally, Kousser argues that arena legislatures are less capable of enacting innovative policies than transformative legislatures (19), meaning that the actions of arena legislatures are more likely to be constrained by the systems in which they operate.

It is reasonable and sensible to place school boards within the confines of arena legislatures based on what we know of their style, organization, operation, the issues these "Little Legislatures" address, their relationship with the district superintendents (the closest thing we have in this case to an executive branch) and other stakeholders, and the decision-making process they undertake. Polsby's division or continuum of legislative bodies

ranging from arena legislatures to transformative bodies is instructive because it helps us situate America's school boards within the framework of the arena legislature.

An important point emphasized in Polsby's discussion of arena legislatures is the role of *political recruitment* by which candidates are sought after to seek elected offices (19). Given that school boards are arenas rather than transformative legislatures, we must understand how the individuals elected to serve were recruited to run and why they made the determination to seek the offices they now hold. In Polsby's terminology, "the question of where the power actually resides" (19) is expressed in the actions of the legislators, yet we cannot know or comprehend why they take certain actions or make the choices they do without understanding their ambitions for seeking office, the ways they were recruited, who was engaged in the recruitment actions, or the core social and political beliefs of the officeholders. This point is perhaps the strongest justification for the significance and relevance of examining the questions pertaining to what motivates public school board members to seek these positions and whether or not candidates for school board seats are self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within their communities.

Political Ambition and Candidate Recruitment

Central to this literature is Joseph A. Schlesinger's (1966) theory of political ambition. Schlesinger's theory posited that officeholders and office-seekers make strategic decisions about *when* to seek office and *which* office they desire to hold. As they prepare to launch their candidacies for the office they have chosen and at a time that is most

opportune, candidates act in a way which sets them towards the trajectory of accomplishing the goal of winning elections.

In other words, Schlesinger argues that candidates for public office routinely undergo a rational assessment of timing, place, and potential for positive outcomes. First, ambitious candidates are cognizant of the question of timing in the sense that they want to have some assurance that the outlook for their own political party in a particular year appears favorable for them, thus avoiding walking into a buzz saw should their own party be "on the outs" with voters. Second, ambitious candidates are conscious of place, meaning that they have some rationale for choosing to run for one office over another. They want to be certain that the office they choose to seek is one in which they can effectively use as a platform for bringing their own political or policy agenda to fruition. Lastly, the ambitious candidate wants to be certain that their possible victory for the office in which they choose to seek will not become an albatross around their electability or viability should they plan to use that position as a rung on a stepladder that leads to a higher office.

According to Schlesinger's theory, there are limited political opportunities for ambitious politicians as they move up the ladder from local to national office. As an officeholder or ambitious politician begins ascending the rungs on the ladder, the potential increases for encountering other likewise ambitious politicians along the way. Schlesinger states that "as one rises within the office hierarchy, it follows that the higher the office, the more effective electoral tensions become" (194), with these tensions being worked out through the political process.

Central to Schlesinger's work is the contention that politicians generally have "special modes of entry to major political careers in the states" (70), which he refers to as

"base offices." These base offices exist within the political opportunity structure as a springboard for politicos to establish themselves and gain political and policy-oriented knowledge in preparation for moving up the ladder to offices with additional power and influence. Schlesinger notes that base offices at the local level tend to be state legislative, mayoral, county supervisor, or alderman seats that are "good places to look for the apprenticeship or sifting of political leaders" (72). The concept of the base office is akin to either a political apprenticeship or comparable to a lower rung on a ladder which leads to the upper echelon of the nation's political hierarchy.

Schlesinger makes the assumption that "ambition for office, like most other ambitions, develops with a specific situation, that it is a response to the possibilities which lie before" (8) an individual actor. Again, likely office-seekers do not weigh their decision whether to run or not to run for a position on a whim or within a vacuum. These choices are generally made with a grounded, thoughtful examination of the costs and benefits of seeking a certain position. Schlesinger discusses the example of lieutenant governors, offering that individuals who consider seeking the position of lieutenant governor of a state are most likely to press forward with such a campaign because history tells us that in many states, the pool of likely gubernatorial candidates in subsequent elections often include those who have once served as lieutenant governor of that state.

Schlesinger's theory offers a typology of political ambition featuring three distinct categories that one's ambition may take: discrete, static, or progressive ambition. The typology created by Schlesinger in *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (1966) finds that a politician with *discrete* political ambition desires to hold a specific office for the purpose of actually performing the job associated with that position.

Once his term of service—no matter how long the period—expires, he then recedes from political life, knowing he has done the job he initially set out do while moving on to a different career or retirement. According to Schlesinger, this is the most probable form of ambition one can expect from local office holders or higher office holders like presidents or governors who may be constrained by term limits from seeking additional time in office. *Static* ambition is in play when a politician desires a lengthy career holding public office, regardless of whether it happens to be a career in the same office they are first elected to hold or one forged by moving between various public offices. Lastly, Schlesinger explains that *progressive* ambition exists when a candidate or politician desires "to attain an office more important than the one he now seeks or his holding" (8). The level of ambition exemplified by those politicians in the progressive category are the most likely to be found climbing the aforementioned political stepladder.

Schlesinger relied upon a mix of qualitative methods including archival research that led him to extract political biographic data of both winning and losing general election candidates for the presidency since 1792, governor since 1900, and senator since 1914 in all states. He ultimately gathered enough relevant biographical information on all but 121 of the 2,000 individuals nominated for governor or senator and all of those who sought the presidency during the time periods defined in his study.

Schlesinger analyzed these biographical sketches and confirmed that the opportunity structures about which he theorized did in fact provide for a system of promotion and climbing for elected officials and aspiring politicians. Central to his findings was the idea that the "principal flow of public office personnel is from the state to the nation, from state office to the Congress or the Presidency" (195) and that "the states are

the foundation of the national office structure" (195). He also determined that careers in state political offices are generally launched from the base office of state legislator; governors advance to the senate; senators emerge from the U.S. House; and federal officials in general come from law enforcement backgrounds or from state offices.

Local school board positions are often discussed in the political world as "stepping stone" offices that individuals consider seeking prior to considering a higher ranking or more influential position. As such, Schlesinger's concept of "base offices" is an important starting point for an analysis of school board members as ambitious office-seekers who may also be interested in scaling the ladder of public office.

Building on Schlesinger's work, Swinerton (1968) produced an insightful study of the political ambitions exhibited by state executive branch department heads in nine agencies across six states. While Schlesinger merely defined the various categories within his "direction of ambition" typology and theorized about who may be contained within them, Swinerton sought to implement a research design that included the operationalization and application of the Schlesinger's typological categories of the discrete, static, or progressive direction of ambition. Swinerton selected six states to serve as cases based on the fact that each of them had seen recent changes within their political structures by which the number of elected state administrative offices were reduced while the power of the governors of these states increased to provide for the appointment of these once-elected officials. Additionally, these six states ranked above the median score in the Combined Index of the Formal Powers of the Governor based on the criteria of "appointive powers, veto powers, budgetary powers, and tenure potential of the governor" (540).

Unlike Schlesinger's study, which featured a significant amount of archival research and data coding, Swinerton's methodology relied upon personal interviews with the nine departmental or agency heads in these states. Ultimately, Swinerton conducted face-to-face interviews with 50 of 54 potential commissioners in the offices of each subject. Similar to the approach later adopted by Fenno in *Home Style*, Swinerton decided to protect the anonymity of the individual elected officials being interviewed as well as the names of the six states being studied. Swinerton was able to categorize 46 of the 50 respondents due to the answers they provided to four questions posed to each of them in structured interviews. The interviews and the answers to these four structured questions helped the author determine that 14 of the subjects were moving in a progressive ambition direction, 16 were discrete, and 16 were static. He then showed which percentage of respondents in each category of the typology fit in various age brackets, by number of years of public service, by salary incentive, and by earlier political party activity. Swinerton found that those with the most progressive political ambition tended to be under 54 years of age, have put in four or less years in public service, and were active in party politics prior to being appointed to head their agency. Conversely, most of the agency heads with static ambition were over the age of 54, not active in party politics, and had spent more time in public service than their counterparts. Those falling within the discrete category were split down the middle between those over and under the age of 54 and whether or not they had exhibited prior party political activity.

In discussing his work, the author argued that it was important for scholars to appropriately "follow Schlesinger's lead and accept the central place of ambition in politics in order to gain a political perspective on background data which can then be related to

future political offices of politicians" (545). However, he then suggested that future streams of research into the concept of political ambition ought to be sure to link together ambition theory with the actions taken by political actors.

In addition to Schlesinger and Swinerton, Fowler and McClure (1989) examined political ambition in the context of congressional candidate recruitment by the major political parties. I include Fowler and McClure's study here not because of their specific findings, but rather because of their methodological approach and their case selection techniques. Fowler and McClure took into account the significance of a multitude of factors while attempting to explain the ambitions of potential candidates. These attributes included political geography, the influence of money on campaigns and elections, the local ties of prospective candidates, political ambition, a candidate's political knowledge, and the viability or electability of a candidate. Their qualitative approach to studying congressional candidate ambition sought to bring into view the ways in which the level of ambition possessed by political candidates eventually influences the choices facing voters in congressional elections through a study of "how seasoned politicians reason about their ambitions and how their reasoning, and their actions that flow from it, shape congressional elections" (2).

Unlike Schlesinger and Swinerton who primarily focused their research on the political ambition of current officeholders, Fowler and McClure sought to assess the political ambition of the highly political individuals who were considering the possibility of seeking a congressional seat, but eventually decided against becoming candidates. They categorize this group as "the unseen candidates for Congress" (2) which included locally elected politicians and other up-and-coming individuals with political aspirations like party

activists or those who head local party organizations. The reason that this is significant is because as these potential candidates withdraw their names from consideration on the ballot, other candidates step in to actually seek the office in question. Thus, the decision by these "unseen" candidates to decline the opportunity to become full-blown candidates does effect the final choices facing the electorate during a campaign.

Their research concluded that contemporary campaigns for the U.S. House demand both "an extraordinary level of personal political ambition and a local environment that allowed these aspirations to be directed towards" (224) a congressional race. In their study, Fowler and McClure found that personal ambition and external restraints on ambition such as state and local election laws, the community's political traditions, and the power of local political offices and party organizations were mutually powerful predictors of whether or not an individual would become a candidate for office.

Swinerton focused his study on a subset of political actors spanning across six states while Schlesinger's study of political ambition examined actors on an even larger scale. The distinctiveness of the Fowler and McClure study is that the authors opted to base their work exclusively on a single congressional district. Rather than designing a research project aimed at providing them the necessary leverage to generalize about the political ambition of all actors at the congressional level, they produced an extensive, detailed study of the 1984 race for New York's 30th Congressional District. In explaining why they selected this one particular U.S. House district out of 435 potential cases, the authors noted that "a close look at a single congressional district can shed light on the inherent localism of congressional politics" (7) and allow for the scrupulous research necessary to identify

the unseen candidates that "can be discovered only with a detailed understanding of the political life of a specific congressional district" (7).

Kazee and Thornberry (1990) took a slightly different approach to assessing political ambition by focusing the impact of political parties on candidate ambition and by explaining how party recruitment efforts may contribute to a candidate's decision to seek office. They asked whether congressional candidates emerge due to the recruitment efforts of political parties or as a result of "a pool of politically interested citizens having had little or no contact with formal party organizations?" (61) They found that major party organizations at the local, state, and even national levels *did not* engage in extensive, formal recruitment in congressional races. While this may sound somewhat surprising, especially since congressional races were the focus of their study, the lack of formalized or routinized party recruitment efforts was something that I anticipated finding in my own research of school board candidates, whom I believe are just as likely to be recruited by community organizations, neighborhood associations, church groups, labor unions, and parent-teacher organizations as they are local political party organizations.

Kazee and Thornberry conducted 36 interviews with candidates who ran in competitive congressional races in different parts of the country in 1982. They chose competitive over safe districts because they believed that party recruitment efforts would be more likely to occur in competitive—or swing—districts where the parties would be locked in tight contests to take control of the seats. One of the first questions the authors wrestled with was how to properly determine the exact requirements for deeming a district to be "competitive" as opposed to safe or uncompetitive. They found that most candidates— regardless of classification—had prior party involvement, but not all were

driven to run by parties or party leaders. 17 percent of the candidates they interviewed were found to be party recruits, 25 percent were classified as "mixed recruited" candidates, and 61 percent were categorized as self-starters who decided to run independent of party recruitment activities. They found that while 53 percent of these candidates were successful in their efforts to garner the nomination of their party, 75 percent of those who were recruited by a mix of party and other organizations were nominated by their parties compared to 50 percent of party recruits and 46 percent of self-starters (74). Just over five percent of these primary winners went on to win the November election.

Based on their analysis of the interviews conducted with these 36 candidates, the authors concluded that "as a party function, recruitment has not been institutionalized in most of these districts" (75) and that despite this, most candidates did have a history of involvement with their political party or party organization. As a result of their findings, Kazee and Thornberry offered a classification of candidate types. This typology included four categories of candidates: *insiders* with deep contacts with political party organizations; *self-starting partisans* who had been active in the past in their party, but were not recruited for this race by that party; *party-recruited non-partisans* who did not have a legacy of party involvement, yet were recruited by the party; and *outsiders* defined as "self-starting nonpartisans" (75) who lacked a history of being active with a party and were responsible for getting themselves into the campaign. The authors contend that there is a distinction to be made between party recruitment efforts on one hand and the impact of parties on candidate emergence on the other. While the authors suggest that direct party recruitment is not institutionalized and is not found in most of their cases, there is evidence that potential candidates with political ambitions of their own are likely to interact with the

party organizations regardless of whether the party actually recruited them to run. I anticipated finding a similar pattern based on the survey data collected for this project.

Switching gears from the candidate recruitment, emergence, and ambition studies that examined candidates and races based on the levels of competitiveness of the district or the partisan involvement of the candidates themselves, Fox and Lawless (2005, 2010) sought to determine if factors such as race and gender influence whether individuals with emerging political ambition decide to seek public office. Fox and Lawless' (2005) study "of nascent political ambition—the embryonic or potential interest in office-seeking that precedes the actual decision to run for office" (643) was based upon an assessment of nearly 4,000 participants in the Citizen Political Ambition Study. According to Fox and Lawless, the approach to studying political ambition which originated with Schlesinger examines the stages of calculation and consideration which precede the individual's decision to run or not run for office and instead focuses on expressive ambition and a subset of very specific types of candidates. They propose a theory that instead attempts to explain the actual consideration of a candidacy rather than the final decision that a candidate makes when he or she officially declares that they are in fact seeking public office. To carry out their Citizen Political Ambition Study, the authors relied upon a national sample of 6,800 randomly selected individuals from the fields which often see the highest proportion of political candidacies such as law, business, education, community activism, and political activism. Fox and Lawless found that 47 percent of respondents had contemplated running for office while 58 percent would actually consider running in the future. Five percent discussed the possibility of running with party leaders, eight percent discussed potential candidacies with leaders in their communities, two percent had already attempted to solicit

donations from probable supporters, and five percent had taken the time to investigate the process for having their name placed on the ballot. Aside from confirming the presence of all six of the various political and personal considerations, the authors found that "women and blacks are substantially less likely to express political aspirations" (655) than white men. They interpret this to mean that many individuals who happen to be racial or gender minorities rarely even contemplate running for office let alone possess the ambition to personally declare their candidacy for office.

Fox and Lawless (2010) elaborated on these findings with their book *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Central to the development of their theory is the notion that men and women both seek office and then later conduct themselves differently in office as women public officials are far more likely to emphasize cooperation, facilitation of discussion and debate, and coalition building while male officeholders prefer to use their positions to assert their control over the meetings and hearings over which they preside. Fox and Lawless paint a rather pessimistic picture with regards to the possibility of reaching a greater level of gender parity among those serving in elective office, noting that gender is one of the most substantial explanatory factors in determining who is the most likely to eventually become a candidate for public office. Fox and Laweless' research shows that the real predictor of parity among the genders is the overall willingness to run, which women are much less inclined to do.

Introduction of Hypotheses

In order to fully address the research questions while testing for the application of ambition theory and the presence of candidate rec In order to fully address the research

questions while testing for the application of ambition theory and the presence of candidate recruitment strategies, I offer a series of hypotheses addressing the recruitment, engagement, and ambition-oriented elements of this study.

1—Candidate Recruitment and Emergence Hypotheses

H1a: ***Self-recruited*** board members are more likely than their recruited peers to be found in sparsely populated or rural districts and are most likely to emerge in districts featuring weak political party organizations, sedentary community organizations, and generally inactive interest groups.

H1b: ***Party-recruited*** board members are more likely than their self-recruited or non-political group-recruited peers to be found in districts featuring active political party organizations that commonly endorse candidates for school board seats and other local races. These candidates will most likely emerge in districts where people are concentrated and easy to organize such as urban areas or regions of the state featuring the greatest population density.

H1c: Board members who were recruited by ***agents other than political parties*** are more likely than other types of members to be found in suburban, medium-density, fast growing areas. In these areas civic associations, neighborhood or community associations, business organizations, labor unions, parent groups, and other similar organizations are likely to supersede weak, loosely organized, or nearly non-existent political parties.

2—Recruitment and Engagement Hypotheses

H2a: ***Self-recruited*** board members will be more likely than recruited members to have a personal history of involvement or engagement in education or community-related activities rather than in political parties, political organizations, or electoral activities.

H2b: ***Party-recruited*** board members will be more likely than non-party recruits to have a personal history of involvement or engagement in political parties, political organizations, or electoral activities rather than in education or community-related activities.

H2c: Board members who were ***recruited by agents other than political parties*** will likely have a greater history of personal engagement in either education or community-related activities rather than in political or electoral activities. Their level of engagement in education and community-related activities will be greater than those recruited by political party organizations.

3—Ambition Hypotheses

H3a: School board members with ***discrete ambition*** will commit to a short term of service as the duties of holding office conflict with other interests or requirements. They are likely to be older professionals, women, retirees, or parents with children currently in the schools. Members with discrete ambition will likely have a personal history of engagement that is education-related or rooted in community involvement that is apolitical in nature.

H3b: School board members with ***static ambition*** will most likely view their role on the board as an advocate for a specific type of education-oriented policy or cause within the district. Members with static ambition will likely have a personal history of political, educational, or community engagement that is commensurate with the type of organization that initially recruited them to seek office. These officeholders are likely to have become involved in the process out of a sense of civic duty and will likely be an equal mix of men and women.

H3c: School board members with ***progressive ambition*** will seek to gain policy expertise, generate public exposure, build a base of political support, and enhance their own political credentials for a future political career in order to begin ascending the political ladder. These officeholders likely have a personal history of engagement in political, educational, and community oriented organizations and activities. They will likely be young to middle-aged members of the community and are more likely to be men than women.

4—School Board (Legislative) and Superintendent (Executive) Relationship Hypotheses

H4a: ***Self-recruited*** board members and those with ***discrete ambition*** are likely to be evenly split between those who view the superintendent as an employee of the school board charged with carrying out the board's agenda and those who see the superintendent as a "co-partner" in managing the district.

H4b: ***Party-recruited*** board members and those with ***static ambition*** will likely take cues from the district superintendent, viewing the superintendent as a "co-partner" in managing the district rather than as an employee of the board.

H4c: ***Interest group-recruited*** board members and those with ***progressive ambition*** will likely view the role of district superintendent as that of an "employee" of the school board rather than as a "co-partner" in managing the district.

The *dependent variables* in this study are the types of school board members who run for seats on the public school board through either self-recruitment or recruitment by another agent while the *independent variables* of interest are the recruitment agents primarily involved in persuading a candidate to run for office; the political, personal or policy goals of the recruiting agent; and the ambition of the prospective candidate.

The political, economic, social, and geographic diversity among Pennsylvania's 499 school districts with elected school directors provides for a fascinating opportunity to analyze locally elected public officials who are granted a substantial amount of power at the local level as discussed in this chapter. Overall, this project should prove to be a serious addition to the political science literature pertaining to school boards and those serving on them, candidate recruitment and emergence, political ambition, and the politics and policy surrounding our local governmental institutions.

CHAPTER 3

SURVEY CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Review of the Research Questions

This study focuses on Pennsylvania's public school boards, the motivations and ambitions of the individuals who comprise these important local legislative bodies, the history of civic and political engagement among individual school board members, and how the members of these boards perceive their roles as policymakers at the local level. The study contains two distinct components that address the core topics of candidate motivation, recruitment, engagement, and ambition: a statewide survey of sitting school board members in Pennsylvania and interviews with five of the 16 members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly who began their careers in public service as members of a local school board. This section will address these distinct research components. First, the Pennsylvania School Board Survey that was administered to all 4,476 public school board members in the Commonwealth between November 2013 and March 2014. The questions included in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey were designed for the purpose of addressing the central research questions explained in Chapter 1. These research questions are:

- Motivation: What political, policy, and personal concerns drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?

- Recruitment: Are candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community? If not self- recruited, who or what is the recruiting agent chiefly responsible?
- Engagement: Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system? Likewise, do they have experience working in or for government agencies or departments?
- Ambition: Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future?
- Governance: Do factors related to recruitment, and ambition influence how school board members conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent?

Survey Design

The questions included in the survey instrument were written and selected for the purpose of developing a representative profile of Pennsylvania school board members across the Commonwealth. Given that the Pennsylvania School Board Survey would be conducted both through the mail and via internet, the Tailored Design Method (Dillman, 2000) for writing and conducting mixed-mode surveys was frequently consulted during the course of planning and developing the survey instrument.

The questions contained in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey (Appendix A) were generally derived from three places. First, a number of the final survey questions and response options were written by the author. Second, some survey questions and/or response options were derived from or comparable to those asked by Frederick Hess and

Olivia Meeks (2010) in their national school board survey published by the National School Boards Association. Finally, several survey questions and/or response options were derived from or comparable to those asked by Jennifer L. Laweless and Richard L. Fox in their Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study included in *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (2010). In some cases, the specific wording of a question was derived from one of these two sources while the response options were written independently. In other cases, the language contained within a question was written independently, yet the response options were derived from either Lawless and Fox or Hess and Meeks.

The final survey instrument was divided into seven sections. Part 1: Introductory Questions contained four questions related to the number of years the respondent had served on the school board, whether the individual was elected or appointed to the board, why they originally sought a seat on the board, and whether they would describe their district as being rural, urban, or suburban. Part 2: Campaigns and Elections focused on the role of political parties in their initial elections, whether they were recruited to run for their position, which types of organizations may have served as the recruiting agent, whether the respondent ever participated as a member of a slate of candidates, and asked respondents to identify the various types of activities they have engaged in during their campaigns. This section concluded with an open-ended question asking respondents to state which issue is the most important to them as a member of a school board.

Part 3: Organization Activity in Your District queried respondents about the level of activity, clout, and influence that can be found in various political, community, professional, and fraternal organizations in their districts. The questions appearing in Part

4: Personal Experience and Participation, were geared towards assessing whether or not each respondent was active in political, governmental, community, religious, or civic life. Part 5: Public Service contained questions concerning the political and personal ambitions of the respondents as well as how service on the school board may have prepared the respondent for service in a different public office in the future. Part 6: School District Leadership and Policymaking asked how board members perceive their relationship with their district superintendent and whether they believe that the superintendent or the school board is the most essential source of power within the district. Lastly, Section 7 included a series of demographic questions such as the county in which their school district was located, ideological and partisan identification, church membership, marital status, and baseline questions related to race, gender, and household income.

The online survey template was designed using the Survey Monkey tool featuring the "question logic" option. This means that based on a certain response given to a question, the respondent may have received the next immediate question on the survey, or that question could have been skipped. For example, Question 9 asked if respondents had "ever run for election or reelection to the school board as part of a slate of candidates?" If the respondent selected "yes," they were taken to two additional questions about running with a slate of candidates. A response of "no" would have taken them immediately to Question 12 which asked them to select as many choices as necessary identifying the tactics used in their past campaigns for the school board.

As a result of the use of Survey Monkey's question logic option, the total number of responses for each question will not necessarily line up with the total number of survey

respondents. If a hypothetical respondent was to answer all of the possible survey questions they would have completed a total of 43 queries. By way of comparison, the Hess and Meeks study contained a maximum of 75 questions, some of which were designated as questions only to be answered by superintendents or by school board chairs or presidents. Both the first and second wave surveys administered as a part of the Fox and Lawless study contained 47 questions.

Database Construction

The survey was disseminated to all of Pennsylvania's 4,476 school board members in the 499 districts with elected boards. The first step taken to try to obtain these lists was to contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education in Harrisburg. During my discussion with a staff person in this department, I learned that the Pennsylvania Department of Education neither maintains a contact list of the state's school board members with mail and email addresses *nor* an actual listing of the names of these members. Given that Pennsylvania's school board members are publicly elected officials, the Department of Education staffer suggested that I contact the Pennsylvania Department of State, which is the cabinet-level department in Harrisburg that oversees the administration of elections in the Commonwealth.

The staff person in the division of the Department of State which handles queries related to public officials informed me that because school district elections are administered at the county level, I would need to contact the Bureau of Elections in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties on an individual basis to submit formal requests for the names of the school board members serving in each district within that county.

Additionally, the Department of State official could not guarantee that the counties would be able to release actual contact information beyond the names of the board members from that county. I next contacted the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1895 to represent the interests of local school boards before the state government. According to their webpage, PSBA's mission is to advocate on behalf of "excellence in school board governance through leadership, service and advocacy for public education" (PSBA, n.d., n.p.) through a voluntary association of Pennsylvania's school boards and school board members. I reached out directly to acting PSBA interim executive director Stuart Knade in early March 2013 with an introductory email that also explained the purpose of my study as well as a request to meet with him at his earliest convenience to discuss whether his organization could be of assistance with this project.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Pennsylvania School Board Survey was finalized in September 2013. Having never heard back from PSBA, a decision was made in early October 2013 to forgo any additional efforts to procure the PSBA mailing list in the interest of time. Rather than pursuing the route of submitting FOIA requests to each of the 499 school districts with elected boards of education, I visited the webpages of all of Pennsylvania's 499 school districts with elected boards in an effort to collect the names of each of the nine school board members per district.

I captured the mailing address for each school district administration building from each district's official web page. Additionally, email addresses were listed on the web pages of certain school districts, but not the majority of them. As a result of this process, I was able to ascertain the names and district office mailing addresses for about

4,420 of the 4,476 board members statewide as well as the email addresses of 1,000 board members. The roughly 60 missing board member names were determined by viewing archived election results on the web pages of the relevant counties. Although this process was labor intensive, it did allow for the collection of this information within the span of five days rather than waiting possibly for months for the approval of 499 individual FOIA requests submitted to the local school boards.

Conducting the Survey

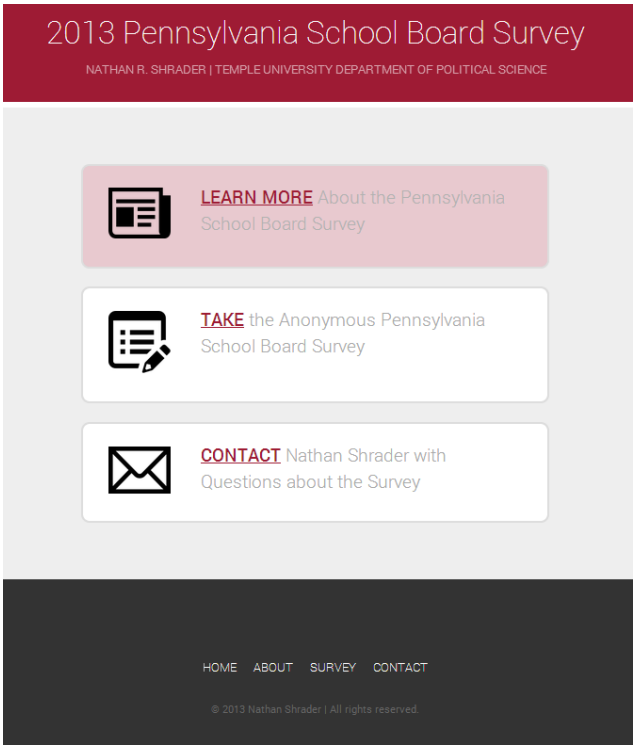
After the survey was finalized in September 2013, I hired Doug Keeling Design and Media of Hadley, PA to create a custom-made web page to house the survey at the site www.paschoolboardsurvey.com. Because of the need to safeguard the possibility of the survey from being viewed and completed by a non-school board member, I asked Mr. Keeling to create an "entrance page" through which any visitors would have to enter the code "2013" to proceed to the actual web site content and the survey instrument itself. This code was only given to the 4,476 school board members via the introductory letter, follow-up emails, and reminder postcard.

Upon entering the "2013" security code, visitors to the web page were greeted by the main page shown below in Figure 1. Aside from clearly presenting the title of the survey as well as my name and university affiliation, visitors were given three clear choices. First, they could click the "Learn More" button which led to a letter of several paragraphs explaining the purpose of the study as well as a disclaimer that the study had been approved by the Temple University Institutional Review Board. This letter included

my personal phone and email contact information for those who would like to ask questions of me prior to completing the survey.

The second option could be selected by clicking the "Take the Anonymous Pennsylvania School Board Survey" button. By selecting this option the user would be sent directly to the Survey Monkey-powered survey instrument. Lastly, users could select the "Contact Nathan Shrader" button, which provided yet another opportunity for users to reach out to me directly with questions or comments. This website—along with the printing and postage necessary for the initial introductory letter and reminder postcard—were furnished through Temple University funding granted by Dr. Joseph P. McLaughlin, Jr. and the Temple University Institute for Public Affairs. The link to the web page and survey went "live" on October 30, 2013 and remained active until 12:00am on March 6, 2014.

Figure 1: PASchoolBoardSurvey.com Main Page



A letter was mailed to all 4,476 elected school board members explaining the background of the project (Appendix B) with specific instructions for completing the online survey. The letter was sent to the school board members at their school district mailing addresses. Although this letter was dated October 31, 2013 and was expected to be printed and mailed during the week of October 27, 2013, the printed letter instead arrived at school district administrative offices throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during the latter part of the week of November 18, 2013 due to a printing delay at Temple University's Duplication Services Department. The unfortunate part of this delayed delivery is that the letter arrived during the week of the Thanksgiving holiday. Given the fact that the letters were arriving at school board administration

buildings rather than home addresses, it was quite possible that some board members would not actually receive the letters until December or later given that school board business tends to be rather minimal during the month of December.

An email was sent using the program Constant Contact to the subset of 1,000 board members with available email addresses on January 22, 2014 (Appendix C). Additionally, a Constant Contact email was distributed to 412 school superintendents, school board secretaries, or administrative assistants who work for school district superintendents on February 7 (Appendix D). The purpose of this message was to encourage superintendents to remind their board members to consider completing the survey.

A follow-up postcard (Appendix E) was mailed to the same list of 4,476 school board members during the first week of February, 2014. Lastly, a second and final email blast was sent via Constant Contact to 976 of the original school board member emails (Appendix F) for the purpose of serving as a final reminder that the survey site would be closing at midnight on March 6, 2014. A total of 23 addresses were eliminated from the first email blast because they had bounced back as undeliverable. One additional address was removed because the recipient contacted me to ask that I stop "spamming" his account with a "political survey."

Table 4: Tracking Appeals to Pennsylvania School Board Members

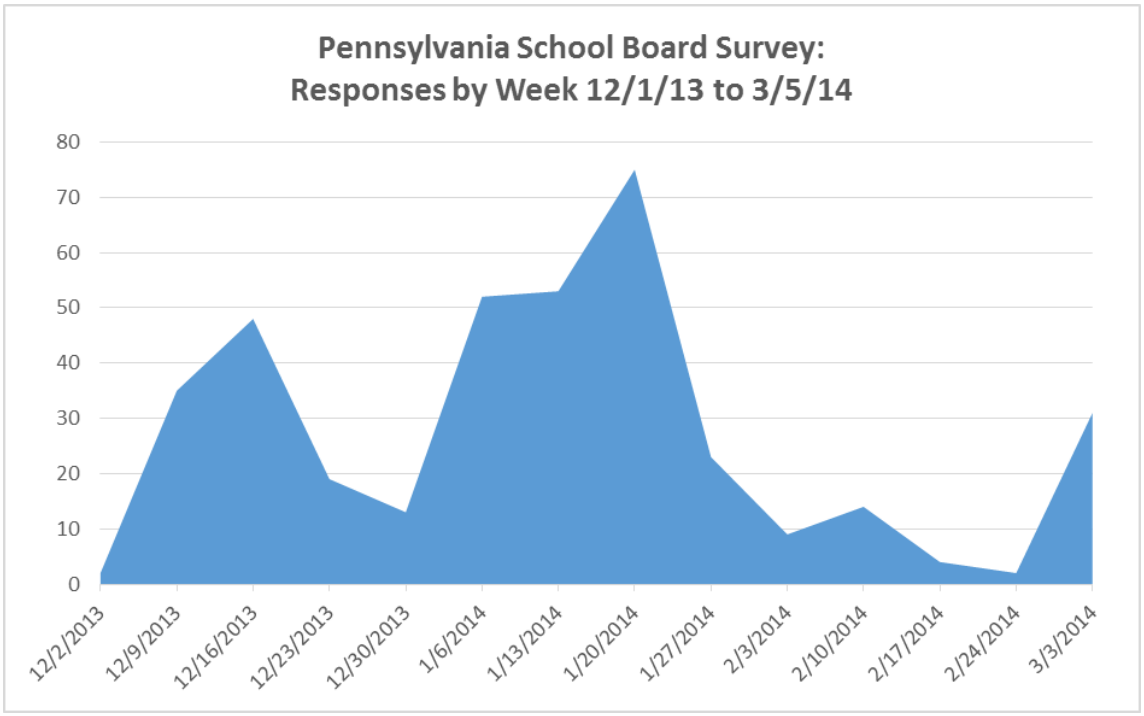
Type of Appeal	Date Delivered	Method of Delivery	Number of Contacts	Estimate of Responses Attributable to Appeal	% of Total Responses
Introductory Letter	11/20/2013	U.S. Mail	4476	222	58%
Email Blast 1	1/22/2014	Constant Contact	1000	98	26%
Reminder Post Card	2/10/2014	U.S. Mail	4476	15	4%
Superintendent Email	2/11/2014	Constant Contact	412	14	4%
Email Blast 2	3/2/2014	Constant Contact	976	31	8%

The data contained in Table 4 above is intended to provide an account of the types of appeals disseminated to school board members, the date that the appeal was delivered, the method of delivery, and the number of contacts who received each appeal. Additionally, I have attempted to characterize the number of estimated responses associated with each appeal based on the date that the appeal was distributed. Based on the timeline that I maintained throughout the data collection process, I believe that the majority of the total responses to the survey—about 58 percent of them—were a result of the original introductory letter which arrived at most school district administrative offices around November 20, 2013.

The second largest number of responses are attributable to the first email appeal that was disseminated to the list of 1,000 school board member contacts via Constant Contact on January 22, 2014. As Figure 2 below shows, 98 new responses—or 26 percent of all responses—were collected during the weeks of January 20 and January 27 shortly after the first Constant Contact message was sent. The smallest number of overall

responses are attributable to the final three outreach efforts including the reminder post card delivered around February 10, 2014, the superintendent email delivered on February 11, 2014, and the second Constant Contact-generated email to board members on March 2, 2014.

Figure 2: Weekly Tracking of Survey Responses



These three final appeals are estimated to have generated 16 percent of all responses. Because of the close proximity of their delivery dates, it is nearly impossible to determine exactly how many of the responses received during the weeks of February 3, 10, and 17 were attributable to the superintendent email or the follow up post card. As such, I opted to divide the 29 responses attributable to these two appeals almost evenly between them at 4 percent each. Regardless of how many responses are attributed to the

reminder postcard, I remain somewhat baffled at how little interest was generated by this appeal and the negligible impact it appears to have had on the overall rate of response.

Figure 3: Overall Response Rate

Overall Response Rate	
Universe	4476
Responses	380
Response Rate	8.5%

As demonstrated by Figure 3 above, there were 380 overall responses to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey for an overall response rate of nine percent. Unfortunately, due to the fact that very few surveys of Pennsylvania school board members have been published, there are limited opportunities to draw comparisons between the overall response rate for the Pennsylvania School Board Survey and similar survey-based studies.

One study that has been referenced numerous times thus far is the 2010 Hess and Meeks national school board study. This study relied upon a stratified sample of school board members and superintendents from across the country. This makes it rather difficult to compare its 24 percent response rate for board members to the nine percent rate of response for this study for a few reasons. First, the Hess and Meeks 2010 study was national in scope while this study is a single-state project. Second, while Hess and Meeks were relying on a stratified national sample culled from the National School Boards Association's internal database, the universe of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey included every single Pennsylvania school board member serving in 499 of 500

districts statewide. It should also be noted that the database from which the Hess and Meeks study's sample was drawn included only 51 percent of America's school districts (18) while this study included outreach to 100 percent of board members from 100 percent of districts with elected boards within Pennsylvania.

A survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Appropriations Committee in 2013 is instructive about response rate expectations. The Senate Appropriations survey was distributed to 27,000 public school teachers, all building principals, all superintendents, all intermediate directors, and all elected school directors in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Respondents were asked in this survey "to assess our current system, evaluate recent reform efforts, and provide their own suggestions to improve public education programs in Pennsylvania" (Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Appropriations Committee, 2013, 2). The Senate study received responses from 282 school board members for a 6.3 percent overall response rate. This response was far below their reported teacher response rate of 10 percent, 19 percent response rate among superintendents, and 24 percent response rate among intermediate unit directors.

Reflections on Response Rate

The 8.5 percent response rate for the Pennsylvania School Board Survey initially struck me as being somewhat lower than expected. Although I had very little upon which to base a prediction, I realistically believed that my response rate would be approximately 10 to 15 percent. I would like to conclude this section by offering several possible explanations for why the final overall response rate was several percentage points below my initial expectations.

First, I was not anticipating the problems associated with the printing delays at Temple University. As noted above, the expected drop date for the initial letter was somewhere around November 1, 2013 rather than the eventual drop date of November 20. Given that the letter was being sent to board members at their school district address, I strongly believe that the November 1 drop date provided the opportunity to get the information in front of the board members during their November meetings, thus allowing the information to be consumed for the first time prior to the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. The fact that the initial letter of introduction was dropped during the week of Thanksgiving and only two responses were recorded prior to the week of December 9 tells me that very few board members received the letter during an almost 20 day period between the week of Thanksgiving and the week of December 9.

Second, I have received feedback from multiple school board members who informed me that they never received the initial introductory letter that also contained instructions for completing the online survey. This feedback suggests that the letters were either delivered to the school district offices and never passed along to the board members or were never delivered to begin with. Since we know that the letters were mailed using the Temple University non-profit mail postage rate that was charged to the Institute for Public Affairs, I find it to be very hard to imagine that the letters could have been left behind during the mailing process. Instead, I am left to believe that a significant number of introductory letters were either not disseminated to school board members by the district-level administrative staff or overlooked by board members.

Third, the lack of impact from the reminder postcard continues to serve as a befuddling occurrence. The reminder postcard, at least in my opinion, should have been

more helpful than it was in boosting the overall response rate. Designed by Swift Marketing and Mailing in Bensalem, I found the reminder postcard to be graphically pleasing, concise, and informative. According to school board member from southwestern Pennsylvania who contacted me several days after the March 6, 12:00am deadline for logging onto www.paschoolboardsurvey.com to complete the survey, he and his fellow board members did not receive the card from the district administrative offices until March 10. According to this board member, his district used to hand-deliver a package of mail to the home of each board member every Friday so that the board members would not have a backlog of mail waiting at the district administration building during the next month's board meeting. Within the last two years the Friday delivery that brought a mail package to the home of each board member—at least in that district—was eliminated. The board member I spoke with suggested that such weekly mail deliveries have probably been eliminated in other districts around the Commonwealth. In this board member's view, the lack of a weekly mail package prevented him from participating in the survey, which this member was very interested in completing.

Fourth, I suspected that a greater number of district superintendents would have either shared the message that was distributed via email or helped encourage board members in their districts to participate in the survey. Based on the data analysis provided by Constant Contact, just 113 of the 412 superintendents or superintendent administrative assistants bothered to open the message directed to them. Constant Contact also reported that zero of these 113 who opened the message used the embedded forwarding option to send the message on to their district's board members. This, of course, doesn't take into consideration those who may have sent the message to a secretary or assistant

superintendent to forward to their board members, but it is indicative of the lack of impact that the superintendents or superintendent assistants had on the process.

Fifth, it is unfortunate that I am incapable of quantifying the number of respondents or potential respondents who struggled with the technological issues related to entering the URL of www.paschoolboardsurvey.com into their browsers to complete the survey. The letter and reminder post card sent to board members asked them to take the time to type the website address above into their browser in order to being completing the survey. At least six board members from different parts of the Commonwealth emailed me asking for help in determining how to get to the web page. Short of sending an email directly to their school district address, I had no alternative means by which to approach these board members other than to send them correspondence via "snail mail" or U.S. Mail. I know only of the roughly six board members who contacted me personally for assistance with logging onto the web site and have no way to determine how many attempted to access the site, struggled to do so, and opted not to ask for assistance.

Lessons Learned: Considerations for the Future

Overall, I am satisfied with the 8.5 percent rate that was ultimately attained, especially given the nature of these five possible factors that may have helped hamper efforts designed to meet my original expectation of a 10 to 15 percent rate of response. Having been through this process, I now know of several things that I would have done differently during the course of this project or will do differently should I decide to conduct further survey-based research concerning Pennsylvania school board members.

First, I would have sent a separate letter of introduction to the 499 district superintendents before the initial letter was mailed to the school board members in November. Within the text of that letter I would have asked the superintendents to please make their board members aware that information regarding the survey would be forthcoming. Additionally, I would have asked the district superintendents to please have a member of their staff send me a list of email addresses for their board members. Although it is unlikely that this would lead to a complete listing of all 4,476 school board member email addresses, it is probable that the number of addresses would have surpassed the 1,000 I cobbled together using information posted solely on district web pages.

Second, I would have utilized an off-campus printer such as Swift Mailing and Design in Bensalem to handle the printing of the initial letter. The unnecessary delays from Temple University's printing department undoubtedly prevented the introductory letters from being mailed and processed in a timely manner which would have allowed for delivery prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Swift designed and mailed the reminder postcard in a timely fashion, unlike the letter of introduction.

Finally, I should have utilized several of my existing contacts on local school boards who are members of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to help apply pressure on PSBA to release their mailing list as promised in my March 2013 meeting and subsequent follow up email. Perhaps hearing from school board members who know me either personally or professionally would have encouraged PSBA to follow through with their earlier agreement. Should I ever conduct this type of research concerning

Pennsylvania school boards in the future I will be certain to again brief PSBA, but will know not to expect much follow through from that organization.

Reviewing the Data: Where Do We Go From Here?

The five subsequent chapters will include a detailed review and discussion of the data accumulated through the Pennsylvania School Board Survey. The Pennsylvania School Board Survey was designed to help address this study's central research questions pertaining to motivation, recruitment, engagement, and ambition. These questions ask what political, policy, and personal concerns drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania? Are candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community, and if they are not self- recruited, who or what is the recruiting agent chiefly responsible? Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system? Do Pennsylvania's school board members have experience working in or for government agencies or departments? Lastly, do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future? Additionally, do factors related to recruitment and ambition have any bearing on the way that school board members see their role in managing the school districts in relationship to the district superintendents?

The forthcoming chapters will be presented in the following order. First, Chapter 4 will proceed with an introductory look at the baseline personal and demographic attributes of the respondents as well as an examination of data regarding school district-

level characteristics gathered from the survey. Chapter 5 presents survey data an analysis concerning the political background of both members and the districts they serve. Chapter 6 seeks to determine the place from which school board members in Pennsylvania emerge as well as whether these individuals are self-starters or are recruited to run for a seat on their district's school board by another entity. Chapter 7 contains a thorough examination of data related to political ambition for the purpose of determining whether Pennsylvania's school board members hold discrete, static, or progressive levels of ambition as discussed in Chapter 2. Next, Chapter 8 assesses school board service from the perspectives of five Pennsylvania legislators who began their political careers serving on their local school board and also examines questions pertaining to how board members perceive of their role in managing the school districts. Finally, Chapter 9 ties together the hypotheses, research questions, and analysis to demonstrate the importance of this study and the continued interest in public school boards within the discipline of Political Science.

CHAPTER 4

EXAMINING PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND DISTRICT ATTRIBUTES OF PA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Survey Data Review

This chapter contains an examination and discussion of data collected in the 2013 Pennsylvania School Board Survey which were designed to gather information concerning personal background, demographic figures, and district attributes of those serving on public school boards in the Keystone State. Data tables for each question will be presented below and will contain the question posed within the survey, the answer options provided to respondents, the response percent and response count for each question, and the number of respondents who provided an answer to the question as well as the number who may have elected to skip the question entirely. When available or applicable, the data tables will also include comparative statewide data from the U.S. Census Bureau and figures from the Hess and Meeks 2010 nationwide study of public school board members for the National School Boards Association.

Table 5: Question 31- Gender?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total	2010 National S.B. Sample
Male	61.7%	227	51.2%	56.0%
Female	38.3%	141	48.8%	44.0%
answered question		**368**		
skipped question		**12**		

This question simply asked respondents to indicate whether their gender could best be described as male or female. 62 percent of respondents indicated that they were

male while 38 percent indicated that they were female. A total of 368 respondents opted to answer this question for an overall question completion rate of 97 percent.

United States Census Bureau data from 2010 indicates that 51 percent of the Commonwealth's population is comprised of males while 49 percent are female. Combining these figures as well as the results taken from this sample, the state's male population is over-represented by 11 percent while the state's female population is underrepresented on Pennsylvania school boards by the same margin. The 2010 national school board survey conducted for the National School Board Association found that 56 percent of respondents reported to being men, meaning that the Pennsylvania sample contains six percent more male members than the national study found four years ago.

Table 6: Question 32- What is your race and ethnicity

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total	2010 National S.B. Sample
White	95.1%	346	83.5%	80.7%
Black	1.6%	6	11.4%	12.3%
Asian	0.3%	1	3.0%	0.8%
Hispanic/Latino	0.5%	2	6.1%	3.1%
Native American	0.5%	2	0.3%	0.1%
Other (please specify)	1.9%	7	1.7%	3.0%
answered question		**364**		
skipped question		**16**		

Respondents were asked in Question 31 to identify their race and ethnicity and were given the options listed in the table above. Overall, 96 percent of respondents chose to provide an answer to this question. Over 95 percent of respondents replied that they were white while two percent—or six total—reported that they are black. A combined one percent identified as being either Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American. Finally, almost two percent opted to select the "other" option and entered some of the

following information: “American,” “Seventh Generation American,” “Human,” “white with some American Indian,” and “white and Asian.” One respondent wrote that “There is only one race of humans on this earth and it is the Human Race.”

According to 2010 Census Bureau data, 84 percent of Pennsylvania’s population is white while 95 percent of this sample of Pennsylvania school board members share that particular racial identity. As such, we can determine that Pennsylvania school board members—based on this sample—are 12 percent whiter than the Commonwealth as a whole. A comparison of Census figures with the school board sample indicates that a wide gap exists between the percentage of school board members who indicated that they are black at just two percent and the overall population of the Commonwealth that is 11 percent black.

Based on the sample, Asian and Hispanic/Latino Pennsylvanians also appear to be underrepresented on Pennsylvania school boards. Census data indicates that three percent of Pennsylvania’s population is Asian while less than one percent of the state’s school board members identify as such. Likewise, six percent of the state’s population identifies as Hispanic/Latino while less than one percent of school board members noted that they share that identity. The school board sample is actually over-representative of the state’s Native American population, which according to Census data comprises less than one percent of the state’s population while the school board sample includes nearly one percent Native American respondents. Those belonging to a racial group other than the ones listed in the survey response options comprise two percent of the sample and two percent of the state’s population.

The sample of national respondents who participated in the 2010 National School Boards Association study more closely resembled Pennsylvania's overall population than it did the Pennsylvania school board sample. Over 14 percent more of the Pennsylvania respondents reported that they are white, 11 percent fewer said that they are black, and the Pennsylvania respondents are less likely to be Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or an unspecified ethnic group than the national school board sample.

Table 7: Question 33- Please select which of the following age groups you belong to.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total
Below 20	-		24.9%[4]
Under 30 (18 to 29 for sample; 20 to 29 for Census)	2.5%*	9	13.1%*
30-39	6.0%	22	11.7%
40-49	21.6%	79	14.2%
50-59	38.3%	140	14.7%
60-69	24.0%	88	10.3%
Over 70	7.7%	28	11.2%
	answered question	**366**	
	skipped question	**14**	

A total of 97 percent of respondents offered a reply to this question, which asked participants to select one of six age ranges within which to classify themselves. The most common response among respondents was the age range of 50 to 59 years of age, which was chosen by over 38 percent. The 60 to 69 age range was the selected by 24 percent while 21.6 percent reported to fall within the 40 to 49 range. The "Over 70" option was selected by eight percent. A total of six percent of respondents selected the 30 to 39 range while just three percent noted that they are under the age of 30.

[4] Data from the Pennsylvania School Board Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau are somewhat incongruent in this area since the school board survey sample for those reporting to be "Under 30" applies to anyone between the ages of 18 and 29. The U.S. Census Bureau data applies to those in the "20 to 29" grouping and the "Below 20" grouping.

The survey findings indicate that Pennsylvanians between the ages of 40-49, 50-59, and 60-69 are over-represented among the state's elected school board members. Based on 2010 Census Bureau data, 14 percent of Pennsylvanians are within the ages of 40-49 while 22 percent of school board members fall within that category. Nearly 15 percent statewide are between the ages of 50-59 while 38 percent of school board members fit within that classification. Additionally, 10 percent of the state's population falls between the ages of 60-69 while 24 percent of school board members are within that particular range.

Two age groups appear to be under-represented on Pennsylvania's school boards: the youngest and oldest members of society who are legally permitted to serve on school boards. Although over 11 percent of the total state population is over 70 years of age, just eight percent of the state's school board members report being older than 70. Likewise, according to Census data, 13 percent of the total population is between 20 and 29 years old, but those serving on Pennsylvania school boards between the ages of 18 and 29 comprise just three percent of the sample. Due to the way in which Census Bureau data is reported, their category representing citizens between the ages of 20 and 29 does not completely align with the survey response option of "Under 20," which takes in those legally permitted to serve beginning at the age of 18.

Table 8: Question 34- What is your marital status?			
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**	**Pennsylvania Total[5]**
Never Married	-	-	36.0%
Single	3.8%	14	-
Unmarried, living as a couple	0.5%	2	-
Married	88.8%	326	50.2%
Widowed	3.3%	12	3.1%
Separated	0.5%	2	1.9%
Divorced	3.0%	11	8.5%
	answered question	**367**	
	skipped question	**13**	

Respondents were asked in this question to identify their current marital status. The vast majority of respondents—88 percent or 326 total—replied that they are married. The second most likely response was that of single, which was only reported to be the case by four percent. Just a slightly lower number of participants reported to be widowed at three percent while an additional three percent reported that they had been divorced. Half of one percent of respondents selected that they are unmarried and living as a couple while the same number said that they are separated. The marital status question was answered by 97 percent of survey participants.

A comparison with United States Census Bureau data indicates that individuals describing themselves as being married are vastly overrepresented in the Pennsylvania school board sample as about 39 percent more survey respondents report to being married than the overall state population. Nearly 89 percent of respondents indicated in the survey that they are currently married while according to Census data, just slightly more than 50 percent of Pennsylvanians are presently married.

[5] The United States Census Bureau does not provide figures concerning the number of citizens who report to be "single" or "unmarried, living as a couple." Instead, the most comparable Census category for the sake of comparison is their "never married" category.

Conversely, the 36 percent of Pennsylvanians reported by the Census data as never being married is vastly underrepresented with just 4.3 percent of the state's school board members indicating that they are either single or unmarried, yet living as a couple. This represents a 32 percent difference between the school board sample and the state as a whole. Likewise, there is a six percent gap between the percentage of school board members who report to having been divorced (three percent) and the Census figures for Pennsylvania which show that a much larger number of divorced residents (nine percent).

The fairly small segments of the survey sample reporting to be widowed (three percent) or separated (one percent) are closely aligned with the state as a whole. According to Census data, three percent of the state's population is widowed while two percent are separated.

Table 9: Question 39- Which of the following options best describes your own level of education?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total	2010 National S.B. Sample
Did not complete high school	0.3%	1	11.7%	0.1%
High school graduate or GED	4.9%	18	37.2%	5.1%
Some college or post-secondary education (including AA or AS training)	17.4%	64	24.0%	20.6
Bachelor's degree	34.9%	128	16.6%	27.7%
Advanced degree (MA, MS, Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, JD, etc)	42.5%	156	10.4%	46.5%
answered question		**367**		
skipped question		**13**		

A total of 97 percent of respondents elected to select one of five choices best describing their own level of education attainment. The most popular choice among respondents was that of an advanced degree, which was indicated as the preference of 43 percent. The second highest number of respondents—35 percent—indicated that they

hold a bachelor's degree while almost over 17 percent noted that they completed some college or post-secondary education. The least likely responses included high school diploma or GED at almost five percent while less than one percent, or just one participant, noted that he or she did not complete high school.

An analysis of educational attainment data from the American Community Survey collected between 2008 and 2012 indicates that the sample of Pennsylvania's public school board members is considerably better educated than the state's overall population. The most under-represented segments of the population on Pennsylvania's school boards in the area of education attainment include those who did not complete high school, those who hold only a high school degree or GED, and those with some college or post-secondary training. Conversely, Pennsylvania's public school board members are collectively better educated than the overall state population with school board members being far more likely to hold a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree such as a master's, doctorate, medical degree, or law degree.

A gap of 11 percent exists between those in the general population who did not complete high school (12 percent) and those who serve on school boards who report to fall within that category (less than one percent). Likewise, there is a 32 percent gap between Pennsylvanians who hold only a high school degree or a GED (37 percent) and those serving on school boards who report this to be their highest level of educational attainment (five percent). Although slightly less proportionally lopsided, six percent more Pennsylvanians have completed some college or post-secondary education (24 percent) than the state's school board members as reflected in this sample (17 percent).

Pennsylvania's school board members outpace the rest of the state's population by 18 percent when it comes to obtaining a bachelor's degree (17 percent of the state versus 35 percent of the school board sample). Lastly, a substantial difference exists between those in the school board sample and the general population of the state who have earned advanced degrees with 32 percent more school board members holding advanced degrees (43 percent) than the general state population (10 percent).

Table 10: Question 40- Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total	2010 National S.B. Sample
Less than $25,000	1.2%	4	23.6%	1.6%
$25,000 to $49,999	8.3%	28	24.5%	8.1%
$50,000 to $99,999	38.1%	128	31.2%	41.8%
$100,000 to $200,000	37.8%	127	16.7%	39.1%
More than $200,000	14.6%	49	4.0%	9.5%
answered question		**336**		
skipped question		**44**		

Participants were asked in this question to identify the monetary range that best describes their household's annual income. The two most popular responses were that of $50,000 to $99,999 at 38 percent and $100,000 to $200,000 at 38 percent. These were followed by those making more than $200,000 at 15 percent of responses. A total of eight percent reported an annual household income ranging from $25,000 to $49,999 while just over one percent reported to make less than $25,000. This question was answered by 88 percent of participants.

Based on a comparison with data from the American Community Survey collected between 2008 and 2012, the sample of Pennsylvania school board member households is considerably wealthier than the households of the rest of the state's

population. 22 percent more Pennsylvanian households (24 percent) make under $25,000 than those serving on public school boards (one percent). Likewise, a 16 percent gap exists between Pennsylvanian households making between $25,000 to $49,999 with 25 percent of the state's total population falling into that category and just nine percent of school board members making doing the same. Overall, 31 percent of Pennsylvanian households make between $50,000 and $99,999 annually which is seven percent fewer than the percentage of school board member households falling within that income range (38 percent).

When considering the upper income brackets, 21 percent more Pennsylvania school board member households (38 percent) earn between $100,000 and $200,000 annually than overall Pennsylvania households (17 percent). Likewise, 13 percent more school board households earn more than $200,000 annually (15 percent) than all households within the Commonwealth (four percent). The respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey seem to resemble the respondents to the 2010 national study with one clear exception: the sample of Pennsylvania school board members are slightly wealthier than school board members nationally as over five percent more Pennsylvania members report having an annual household income of over $200,000.

Table 11: Question 41- Which of the following options best describes your current employment status?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Employed full-time	49.0%	178
Employed part-time	5.8%	21
Retired	25.1%	91
Self-employed	12.7%	46
Homemaker	5.5%	20
Unemployed	1.9%	7
	answered question	**363**
	skipped question	**17**

Overall, 96 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question asking them to describe their current employment status. Just short of half of all respondents reported to being employed on a full-time basis. The second most likely response to this question was that a respondent is retired, which was selected by 25 percent. Another 13 percent reported to be self-employed, six percent said that they are employed part-time, and six percent stated that they are homemakers. Almost two percent reported that they are currently unemployed.

Table 12: Question 42- Please list your current occupation:		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Management/Administration	13.5%	40
Retired	14.2%	42
Small Business/Self Employed/Entrepreneur	10.8%	32
Teaching/Education/Education Administration	12.8%	38
Medical/Medical Services/Medical Administration	6.1%	18
Accounting/Finance/Auditing	6.1%	18
Engineer	4.7%	14
Sales/Retail/Customer Service	3.0%	9
Computer Services/IT	4.1%	12
Law and Legal Services	2.7%	8
Volunteer	2.4%	7
Real Estate/Real Estate Development	1.7%	5
Marketing	2.0%	6
Insurance	1.7%	5
Homemaker	1.4%	4
Public Safety/Law Enforcement	1.4%	4
Agriculture	1.4%	4
Unemployed	1.0%	3
Other	9.1%	27
answered question		**308**
Indistinguishable response		**12**
Verifiable response		**296**
skipped question		**72**

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to list their current occupation. Although this question immediately followed the question about employment status, any respondents were permitted to provide an answer, regardless of whether or not they reported to be employed, retired, or unemployed. Although 81 percent of respondents chose to list a response to this question, 12 responses were indistinguishable and could not be classified into any of the categories listed within the table above.

The most common responses among the 296 valid respondents included occupations associated with management or business administration (just shy of 14 percent), retirement (14 percent), and small business ownership or self-employment (11 percent). Almost 13 percent replied that they are involved in the teaching profession or education administration, over six percent noted their employment in the medical industry, and six percent reported to be involved in accounting, finance, or auditing. Nearly five percent of respondents work in the engineering field while three percent said that they worked in a field related to sales, retail, or customer service. Another four percent reported to work in computer services or information technology and three percent—report to working in the legal profession. Two percent listed their occupation as a volunteer. Others reported working in the fields of real estate or real estate development (two percent), marketing (two percent), insurance (two percent), public safety or law enforcement (one percent), agriculture (one percent), or as a homemaker (one percent).

Just one percent of respondents noted that they are currently unemployed. A total of 27 respondents (just more than nine percent) reported an occupation other than the ones listed in the table. None of the responses in the "other" category received more than two responses and included occupations such as architect, transportation specialist, mechanic, landlord, writer, arcade technician, pastor, student, photographer, and researcher.

Table 13: Question 43- How long have you lived in the district you currently represent?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
My entire life	26.4%	97
More than 20 years	47.3%	174
10 to 19 years	20.7%	76
5 to 9 years	4.9%	18
Less than 5 years	0.8%	3
answered question		**368**
skipped question		**12**

This question helped determine that 74 percent of respondents have lived in the school district that they currently represent for somewhere between 20 years and their entire lives. 47 percent of school board members who participated in this survey reported to have lived in their district for more than 20 year while 26 percent have lived there for their entire lives. The third most likely response shows that almost 21 percent have lived in their district for a length of time between 10 and 19 years. Just five percent of respondents have lived in their districts between five and nine years while less than one percent have lived there for less than five years. Overall, 97 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 14: Question 37- Do you currently have school-age children?				
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**	**Pennsylvania Total**	**2010 National S.B. Sample**
Yes	39.4%	145	29.9%	38.1%
No	60.6%	223	70.1%	61.9%
answered question		**368**		
skipped question		**12**		

Although 100 percent of respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey serve on Pennsylvania public school boards, just 40 percent of them report that they

currently have school-age children. The majority—or 61 percent—say that they do not have any school-age children. 97 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 15: Question 38- If yes, where do they go to school?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In the same public school district where I serve	93.8%	135
Another public school district	2.8%	4
A public charter school	1.4%	2
A public cyber school	0.0%	0
A private or parochial school	1.4%	2
They are being home-schooled	0.7%	1
answered question		**144**
skipped question		**236**

The 145 respondents who answered in the affirmative to Question 37 indicating that they presently have school-age children were directed automatically to Question 38 asking them to identify where their children currently go to school. Overall, 99 percent—or 144 of 145—of those eligible to respond did provide an answer to this question. The vast majority, or 94 percent, noted that their school-age children currently attend school in the same public school district where they serve on the public school board. Almost three percent indicated that their school-age children attend school in another public school district. Just over one percent of respondents said that their children currently attend a public charter school while the same number indicated that their children attend a private or parochial school. One respondent noted that their school-age child is being home-schooled. No public school board members with school-age children reported that they send their children to a public cyber school.

Table 16: Question 4- How would you best describe your school district?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Total By Population	Pennsylvania Total by Municipality Designation
Rural	47.6%	180	33.4%	73.5%
Urban	5.0%	19	22.2%	0.8%
Suburban	47.4%	179	44.4%	25.7%
answered question		**378**		
skipped question		**2**		

Respondents were asked in Question 4 to determine whether their school district is best described as rural, urban, or suburban. School board members were closely divided based upon this district demographic as 48 percent who labeled their district as rural and the 47 percent who classified their own district as being suburban. Just five percent responded that they represented an urban school district. The question was answered by 99 percent of respondents.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) provides two separate methods to classify rural, urban, and suburban populations in the state. The first measure accounts for the actual population distribution between rural, urban, and suburban areas. The second measure is based on a "community demographic designation" that categorizes each municipal government unit within the state as either a rural, suburban, or urban municipality.

Using the first measure that is population-based, it appears as if rural and urban populations are under-represented in the school board sample. Specifically, rural Pennsylvania is under-represented in the school board sample by 14 percent while urban Pennsylvania is under-represented by 17 percent. Suburban sections of the state were under-represented using this measure by just three percent.

Considering the second designation that is based on the community demographics and municipal designation, we find that rural sections of the state are under-represented by 26 percent in the sample. Conversely, urban Pennsylvania is actually over-represented in the sample by four percent while suburban areas are over-represented by three percent.

Table 17: Question 30- Please list the county in which your school district is located:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Percentage of PA Population Per Region	Number of SB Seats Per Region[6]
Allegheny	9.7%	35	11.0%	7.3% (-2.4)
Northeast	11.9%	43	14.3%	15.3% (+3.4)
Southeast	15.3%	55	22.3%	11.4% (-3.9)
Northwest	10.8%	39	10.0%	16.4% (+5.6)
Southwest	14.7%	53	10.8%	15.9% (+1.2)
Central	37.5%	135	31.6%	33.6% (-3.9)
answered question		**360**		
skipped question		**20**		

Respondents were asked in this open-ended question to list the name of the county in which their school district is located. Based upon the regional division of Pennsylvania counties utilized by Franklin and Marshall College's respected Keystone Poll[7], I coded each county based on each region as described by Franklin and Marshall.

The divisions are as follows: All districts within Allegheny County were placed in the Allegheny region. Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties were classified as being part of the Northeast region. Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties were classified as part of the Southeast region. Armstrong, Butler, Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield,

[6] 98 of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts overlap between two counties. Without knowing the specific districts that each member represents, it is impossible to determine whether respondents reside in a district that may touch into more than one region within the state.
[7] https://edisk.fandm.edu/FLI/keystone/pdf/keyregions.pdf

Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren Counties were classified as part of the Northwest region. Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland were categorized as the Southwest region.

Lastly, Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Bradford, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lycoming, McKean, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Tioga, Union, and York Counties were grouped together as the Central region. Given the fact that they do not have an elected school board, no correspondence was sent to members of Philadelphia's School Reform Commission, thus Philadelphia County is not included in this study. If Philadelphia was to be included, it would have been classified—as per Franklin and Marshall's methodology—as a free-standing "Philadelphia" region.

As indicated in the table, 95 percent of respondents registered an answer to this question. 38 percent of respondents were from the Central region, 15 percent were from the Southeast, 15 percent were from the Southwest, 12 percent from the Northeast, 11 percent from the Northwest, and 10 percent from Allegheny.

Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter was to dissect the data compiled by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey to help create a profile of the demographic and district-level attributes of those serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards. Chapters 1 and 2 each contained discussions of the dearth of information pertaining to these individuals, which increases the importance of the information contained within this chapter.

We have learned from a review of this data that school board members in Pennsylvania are predominately male. At nearly 62 percent of respondents, men are considerably more highly represented on Pennsylvania school boards than in the state population or the 2010 national survey of American school board members. Individuals serving on Pennsylvania school boards are far more likely than the rest of the state population to be white, married, and to have school-age children living at home.

School board members in the Keystone State are collectively wealthier and more highly educated than their fellow Pennsylvanians. On the first measure, school board members are more than twice as likely to come from households earning between $100,000 and $200,000 annually and more than three times as likely to come from households earning over $200,000 annually. On the second measure, over 77 percent of school board members have earned a bachelor's or advanced degree as compared to about 36 percent of the rest of the Commonwealth. Likewise, while about 37 percent of Pennsylvanians have earned either a high school degree or GED, just under five percent of those serving on the state's school boards share this characteristic.

When considering their professional careers, nearly 50 percent of school board members report being employed full time while a quarter of all members are retired. Over 51 percent of all board members report holding one of the following occupations: management or administration, self-employed or small business, teaching and education, or retiree. Lastly, these public servants are also longtime fixtures in their communities, as over 47 percent have lived in their districts for more than 20 years. Conversely, just about six percent have lived in their districts for nine years or less.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BACKGROUND

Survey Data Review

This chapter contains a review of data uncovered by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey with respect to the history of political and community engagement possessed by board members. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to provide an answer to the research question discussed in Chapter 1 which asks the following: "Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system? Likewise, do they have experience working in or for government agencies or departments?"

Relevant survey questions will be reviewed along with data tables containing the response count and response percent for each question, a review of the data uncovered in each question, and a comparison of data from other sources will be included. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the data points which proved to be most helpful in answering the above-stated research question.

Table 18: Question 35- Which political party do you currently belong to?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	Pennsylvania Electorate	PA General Assembly
Democratic	39.6%	144	50%	45.5%
Republican	58.5%	213	37%	54.5%
Other (please specify)	1.9%	7	13%	0.0%
answered question		**364**		
skipped question		**16**		

Over 58 percent of respondents stated that they are members of the Republican Party while over 39 percent reported to be members of the Democratic Party. Another two percent selected the "Other" option which allowed them to specify their partisan orientation. Among the seven members who indicated that they belong to a party other than the Democratic or Republican parties, two noted that they are registered Republicans but do not consider themselves to be Republicans. Four respondents said that they are registered as independents while one self-identified as a Libertarian. A total of 96 percent of respondents provided an answer for this question.

Data from the Pennsylvania Department of State demonstrates that there are vast differences in partisan affiliation between members of the state's public school boards and the overall Pennsylvania electorate. According to the Commonwealth's official registration numbers, 50 percent of registered voters are affiliated with the Democratic Party, which is over ten percent more than the school board sample. Meanwhile, the school board sample contains 22 percent more Republicans than the full sample and 11 percent fewer independents than the overall electorate. A review of the partisan affiliation of members of the Pennsylvania House and Senate indicates a closer similarity between the General Assembly and the school board sample. Of the 253 seats in the state legislature, 54 percent are held by Republicans, 46 percent are held by Democrats, and zero are held by members of third parties as of October 2014.

Table 19: Question 36- Which of the following best describes your political views?				
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**	**Pennsylvania Total[8]**	**2010 National S.B. Sample**
Conservative	40.4%	146	34%	30.3%
Liberal	14.7%	53	26%	20.3%
Moderate	44.9%	162	36%	49.3%
answered question		**361**		
skipped question		**19**		

Respondents were asked in this question to provide a self-description of their own ideological views. Almost 45 percent of respondents indicated that their political views can best be understood as moderate. Another 40 percent indicated that their political views are conservative while 15 percent said that their political views are liberal in nature. Overall, 95 percent of participants responded to this question.

The June 2014 Franklin and Marshall College Poll[9] asked respondents to indicate whether their ideological views can best be summarized as liberal, moderate, or conservative. As indicated in the table, 36 percent reported to being moderate, 34 percent as conservative, and 26 percent as liberal. Using these numbers as a baseline for comparison, the Pennsylvania school board sample is over four percent more conservative than the state's population, nearly nine percent more moderate, and over 11 percent less liberal. The 2010 National School Board Association study also asked respondents from their nationwide sample to identify their ideological viewpoint. The national sample found about 10 percent fewer conservatives, four percent more moderates, and six percent more liberal respondents than among Pennsylvania school board members.

[8] Includes Philadelphia, although the survey sample does not

[9] http://www.fandm.edu/uploads/media_items/july-2014-f-m-poll.original.pdf

Table 20: Question 14- Based on your own assessment of your school district, what percentage of the voters in your district would you say are Democrats? What percentage would you say are Republicans? What percentage would you say are independent or third party members?

Answer Options	Average Response Percent	Pennsylvania Total
Democratic Party %	44.3%	50%
Republican Party %	48.6%	37%
Independent/Other Parties %	7.2%	13%
	answered question	**356**
	Invalid response	**7**
	Total valid responses	**349**
	skipped question	**24**

Respondents were asked to provide their own assessment of the partisan affiliation of the voters residing in their school districts. This question provided three blanks spaces and asked respondents to provide estimates for the number of voters in their district registered as Democrats, Republicans, or affiliated with third parties. 356 respondents attempted an answer to this question, although seven responses were invalid as they included a statement rather than a number or percentage estimate. An average of the 349 responses (or 92 percent of all survey respondents) show that based upon the assessments or estimates of school board members statewide, 49 percent of voters in their school districts are believed to be Republicans, 44 percent are seen as Democrats, and eight percent are believed to be members of third parties or affiliated with neither major party.

Table 21: Question 15- Which of the following options most closely describes the political parties in your district?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Both political parties have very active organizations in my district	27.9%	102
My district has a very active Democratic Party organization only	11.7%	43
My district has a very active Republican Party organization only	20.8%	76
Neither political party has a very active organization in my district	39.6%	145
	answered question	**366**
	skipped question	**14**

School board members were asked to evaluate the strength of the political party organizations in their districts. The majority of respondents—60 percent—report the presence of at least one active political party organization in their school district while 40 percent indicate that neither political party has a very active organization. A closer assessment of the data shows that almost 28 percent noted that both major political parties have very active organizations in their districts. Another 21 percent believe that their districts only tend to have very strong Republican Party organizations while 12 percent feel that their districts only tend to have very active Democratic Party organizations. Overall, 96 percent of all respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 22: Question 16- Which types of <u>organizations</u> have the most influence over local elections in your district? For each of the organizations listed below, please select whether these groups are extremely influential, very influential, somewhat influential, or not at all influential over local elections in your district.

Answer Options	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	Not Influential	Response Count
Political party committees or organizations	**13.9%**	23.7%	34.8%	27.6%	359
Community and neighborhood groups or organizations	7.0%	**26.5%**	**49.4%**	17.0%	358
Church affiliated groups and organizations	2.2%	7.8%	35.2%	**54.7%**	358
Organized labor groups	4.2%	13.0%	29.1%	**53.7%**	354
Business organizations	1.1%	7.7%	36.6%	**54.5%**	352
Fraternal clubs and organizations	0.9%	4.3%	28.8%	**66.1%**	351
School or education-oriented organizations	8.7%	**26.0%**	**43.0%**	22.3%	358
answered question 363					
skipped question 17					

Those who participated in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey were somewhat reluctant or incapable of identifying a particular type of organization that is extremely influential in local elections held within their districts. Respondents were asked to evaluate a variety of organizations ranging from political party committees to neighborhood associations to interest groups that are commonly found in communities throughout the country and were asked to indicate whether each of these types of organizations are extremely, very, somewhat, or not influential over local elections in their districts.

A combined 40 percent of respondents stated that political parties or organizations are “extremely” or “very” influential over local elections, 35 reported that school or education groups are influential in this way, and 34 percent said the same of community and neighborhood organizations. Just 10 percent said that church organizations are influential over local elections in their districts while 17 percent said the same of labor organizations. Fewer than 10 percent said that business or fraternal organizations held sway over local elections.

Although opinion appears to be somewhat weak when it comes to identifying extremely or very influential organizations, a majority of respondents identified four types of organizations that they believe are clearly "not influential" in local elections. These organizations include fraternal clubs or organizations (66 percent), church-affiliated groups or organizations (55 percent), business organizations (55 percent), and organized labor groups (54 percent).

Over 95 percent of respondents provided answers to this question.

Table 23: Question 17- Which types of individuals have the most influence over local elections in your district? For each of the types of individual actors listed below, please select whether these individuals are extremely influential, very influential, somewhat influential, or not at all influential over local elections in your district.

Answer Options	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	Not Influential	Response Count
Local, county, or state officeholders/politicians	**8.7%**	**22.1%**	40.9%	28.3%	357
Political party leaders	**8.7%**	**18.3%**	41.9%	31.2%	356
Law enforcement officials	0.3%	3.1%	25.6%	**70.9%**	351
Business leaders	1.1%	10.7%	**46.2%**	42.0%	355
Organized labor leaders	3.4%	9.9%	27.6%	**59.1%**	352
Community or fraternal organization leaders	1.4%	9.1%	36.5%	**53.0%**	351
Individual parents[10]	**9.0%**	**34.7%**	**42.6%**	13.7%	357
Education organization leaders (other than teachers union leaders)	5.1%	**18.0%**	**43.7%**	33.2%	355
Clergy men or women	0.9%	5.1%	30.6%	**63.4%**	350
answered question 362					
skipped question 18					

When asked to identify the individuals who hold the most influence over local elections in their districts, respondents reported that no one individual or type of individual seemed to be extremely influential in their school districts. However, nearly 44 percent indicated that individual parents are either extremely or very influential over local

[10] Given the ambiguity of this response option, it is possible that some respondents may have interpreted "individual parents" to mean either a small, elite group of parents or parents who individually take initiative in organizing or influencing school board campaigns. When this question was written, the intent was to ask whether individual parents—not a group comprised of parents acting in concert—are an influencing factor in local elections.

elections in their districts. Likewise, nearly 31 percent and 27 percent said that local, county, or state officeholders or politicians and party leaders are extremely or very influential, respectively. 23 percent said that education organization leaders (other than teacher's union leaders) are extremely or very influential in this way. Just 13 percent said the same of labor leaders, 12 of business leaders, and 11 percent of community or fraternal organization leaders. Less than 10 percent reported that individual clergy men or women and law enforcement officials influenced local elections.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, almost 71 percent noted that law enforcement officials were not influential in local elections while over 63 percent said the same of clergymen or clergywomen. 59 percent said that organized labor leaders were not influential in local elections and 53 percent said the same of community or fraternal organization leaders.

Table 24: Question 18- When you were in high school or college, did you ever run for office, such as class representative or president?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	43.0%	159
No	57.0%	211
	answered question	**370**
	skipped question	**10**

This question was asked to attempt to gauge whether an individual's participation in the electoral process began at an early age. Although there are obvious differences between the politics surrounding an election for a public office and a high school or college class office or student council seat, it allows for a glimpse into whether those who are serving on Pennsylvania's school boards were ambitious during their transition into adulthood. The majority of respondents—57 percent—admitted to not having run for a

position such as class representative or class president during their time in high school or college. Conversely, 43 percent did run for such a position. Overall, 97 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 25: Question 19- How many of your district's school board meetings would you say you attended before running for a seat on that board?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	17.2%	60
1 to 10	50.0%	174
11 to 20	15.5%	54
21 to 30	7.2%	25
Over 30	10.1%	35
answered question		**370**
invalid answer		**22**
total valid answers		**348**
skipped question		**10**

This open-ended question allowed board members to insert a number of their own choosing to reflect the number of board meetings they attended prior to running for a seat on the school board. Although 370 respondents answered this question, 22 of these responses were deemed invalid because they did not list a specific figure or provide a response from which a discernable number could be drawn. For example, two individuals mentioned that they attended 80 percent of board meetings prior to running. However, it is impossible to know the time horizon for which the 80 percent figure applies. This figure could refer to 80 percent of meetings in the six months before they declared their candidacy, or it could refer to 80 percent of meetings over the course of ten years. As such, the responses provided were coded to fit in one of the five categories indicated in the table above. Valid responses were offered by 92 percent of respondents.

Exactly 50 percent of all respondents reported to have attended between 1 and 10 school board meetings before running for a seat on that very board. Another 17 percent

indicated that they did not attend any board meetings before running while 16 percent said that they personally attended between 11 and 20 board meetings. Over 10 percent of respondents indicated that they attended 30 or more board meetings while more than 7 percent said that they attended 21 to 30 meetings before running.

Table 26: Question 20- Are you active in any religious or church-based organizations?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	52.4%	194
No	47.6%	176
	answered question	**370**
	skipped question	**10**

Over 52 percent of respondents said that they are active in a religious or church-based organization. Conversely, 48 percent said that they are not active in any such organization. Overall, 97 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question. The percentage of school board members reporting to be active in a religious or church-based organization in Question 20 is very similar to the number who reported to have participated in a church or religious-affiliated organization in their community in Question 22, which was 52 percent.

Table 27: Question 21- Were you engaged in any of the following political or governmental activities prior to running for a seat on the school board (please check all that apply)?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Ran for public office in the past (9)	10.7%	28
Held public office in the past (5)	16.0%	42
Served as a party committeeperson (6)	12.6%	33
Volunteered on other political campaigns (1)	44.3%	116
Helped raise money for political candidates (4)	18.3%	48
Involved in campaigns through a business, labor, or professional organization (9)	10.7%	28
Worked for a government office, agency, or other public official (5)	16.0%	42
Lobbied or contacted a government official or agency in support/opposition of a policy (3)	30.2%	79
Organized people in my community to take action regarding an issue or concern (2)	33.6%	88
Other (7)	12.2%	32
None (8)	11.4%	30
answered question		**262**
skipped question		**118**

The most likely form of engagement among respondents in political or governmental activity before running for a seat on the school board includes volunteering on political campaigns for other candidates (44 percent), organizing people in the community to take action regarding an issue or concern (34 percent), and lobbying or contacting a government official or agency in support or opposition to a policy (30 percent). Others responded that they had helped raise money for political candidates (18 percent), held public office in the past (16 percent), or worked for a government office, agency, or other public official (16 percent). Another 13 percent reported that they served as a party committeeperson while 11 percent said that they had ran for public office in the past. An additional 11 percent said that they were involved in political campaigns through a business, labor, or professional organization.

Over 12 percent indicated that they were engaged in ways other than the options listed in the question. Included among these responses were references to writing letters

to the editor of the local newspaper, serving as campaign finance manager for the district attorney in their county, being appointed to the local zoning hearing board, serving in the military reserves, and working as chief negotiator during their time as a teacher for their union. Lastly, 11 percent noted that they were not involved in political or governmental activities prior to running for a seat on the school board. A total of 69 percent of respondents provided answers to this question.

Table 28: Question 22- Were you engaged in any of the following community activities prior to running for a seat on the school board (please check all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Regularly attended public meetings of elected officials in my community (5)	29.8%	97
Participated in my neighborhood association or community organization (3)	31.6%	103
Participated in a fraternal or social organization in my community (4)	30.4%	99
Participated in a church or religious-affiliated organization in my community (1)	51.2%	167
Participated in an education-oriented organization in my community (2)	47.2%	154
Was or is a member of a labor union (6)	18.1%	59
Other (7)	11.9%	39
None (8)	2.7%	9
answered question		**326**
skipped question		**54**

Immediately following the question regarding prior forms of political or governmental involvement, respondents were asked whether they were engaged in community activities prior to running for a seat on the school board. Over 51 percent responded that they had participated in a church or religious-affiliated organization in their community while over 47 percent said that they had participated in an education-oriented organization in their community. Another 32 percent mentioned that they had participated in a neighborhood association or community organization, 30 percent in a fraternal or social organization, and 30 percent regularly attended public meetings of

elected officials in their communities. Another 18 percent reported to have either been or are currently a member of a labor union.

Almost 12 percent opted to include additional community-based activities by filling in the "other" option. This option produced a variety of other forms of civic and community participation such as volunteering with the local Boy Scouts, offering time to keep statistics for the high school football team, and as a member of a volunteer fire company. Nine respondents—or three percent—simply noted "none" or indicated that they were not involved in any civic capacity prior to running for the school board. Overall, 86 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Summary and Discussion

One of the original research questions posed in Chapter 1 was labeled "Engagement" and asked *"Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system? Likewise, do they have experience working in or for government agencies or departments?"* The data presented in Chapter 5 helps answer this question.

Individuals serving on public school boards in Pennsylvania do have a history of political engagement, participation, experience in party or electoral politics, and experience in the education system itself. Only 16 percent reported having worked in government agencies or departments, yet over 60 percent had participated in at least one form of political activity prior to running for a school board seat while over 80 percent had participated in at least one form of non-political, community engagement.

Survey findings reviewed in this chapter portray Pennsylvania's public school board members as a group of individuals who are highly involved in both political and non-political affairs in their communities. It would be nearly impossible to create and administer a survey that overlaps with the constituency of each of the board members who replied to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey, but it is plausible to suggest that the average citizen who does not hold a public office—even an unpaid local position—is considerably less active in political and community affairs than our sample of school board officials.

A recent national survey assists with the articulation of this point. A report by the Corporation for National and Community Service (2011) found that 27 percent of Americans surveyed had volunteered with a community-based (non-political) organization in the last year. Just over nine percent reported attending a public meeting, 15 percent said that they participated in a school group, and 26 percent said that they had participated in one or more political activities. Although these numbers are not drawn directly from the constituencies of the school board members in our sample, the data suggests that Pennsylvania's school board officials are considerably more active in community affairs on these measures than the typical citizen. Compared to the CNCS report's findings, nearly 30 percent of school board members in Pennsylvania regularly attend public meetings, over 47 percent have participated in a school group, and over 83 percent noted that they participated in at least one form of community engagement that was non-political in nature. Meanwhile, 61 percent reported participating in at least one form of political activity prior to seeking office.

There are several possible explanations for the high levels of political and non-political community participation among the school board sample. First, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, these individuals are public servants who are chosen by the electorate to serve in their positions through the political process. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that an above-the-ordinary level of engagement leads some members down the path of running for office. Second, it is possible that high levels of involvement are undertaken by members because they felt that it would be politically beneficial for them to take such actions.

Third, it is possible that these individuals who are highly active in the political and non-political life of their community are adhering to patterns observed among other Americans who share similar levels of income and educational attainment as Pennsylvania's public school board members. The Pew Research Center's "Civic Engagement in the Digital Age" study (Smith, 2013) examined political and civic engagement among Americans in both online and traditional offline settings. The study found that class-based differences are prominent when trying to explain the differences in engagement, "especially those related to educational attainment, are prominent in political engagement of all kinds, whether that activity takes place offline, online, or within the specific context of social networking sites" (2).

The Pew data shows that just 33 percent of those without a high school diploma and 41 percent of those with a high school degree reported to be engaged in civic activities while the same is true for 52 percent of those with some college education and 59 percent of those with a college degree or an advanced degree. A similar pattern exists when considering income levels, as 68 percent with a household income over $150,000,

63 percent between $100,000 and $149,999, and 55 percent of those between $75,000 and $99,999 were civically engaged. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 40 percent of those making between $20,000 and $29,999 and 38 percent of those making between $10,000 and $19,999 reported to be engaged.

Considering the preceding discussion, it is possible to conclude that individuals serving on Pennsylvania's school boards were more highly engaged in political and non-political, community affairs prior to seeking positions on their local boards because a) they found this to be advantageous for their future political endeavors, b) they felt a sense of civic duty to begin with, which led them to become school board candidates, or c) they are following the patterns of other Americans with similar levels of education and household income.

There are two final points worth noting as we close out Chapter 5. First, as a group, school board members in Pennsylvania tend to be skewed towards the Republican Party as well as a conservative ideological outlook. This sample of school board members serving in Pennsylvania is much more likely than the electorate as a whole or even their legislative counterparts in the Pennsylvania General Assembly to associate with the Republican Party, which could be a reflection of the highly rural nature of large swaths of the Commonwealth, particularly the Central region, which is home to the largest share of survey respondents.

Second, the data generated by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey allows for the conclusion that respondents—over 60 percent of them—sense that there is at least one active political party organization operating within their districts. This figure helps underscore the fact that political party *organizations* hold the most influence over

elections in their districts while local public officeholders and party leaders are respectively rated as the second and third most influential sources of *individual* influence over local elections. These data points demonstrate a healthy level of activity among party organizations and suggest that these organizations exert a fair amount of political influence through both organizations and individual party leaders. The inclusion of this information regarding active political party organizations is an important addition to the aforementioned data regarding political engagement, public participation, experience in electoral politics, and experience in community engagement. These local elected officials—regardless of whether they consider themselves to be politicians—must navigate election and reelection campaigns in districts often featuring an active party or parties as well as influential political groups and leaders.

CHAPTER 6

RECRUITMENT AND EMERGENCE

Survey Data Review

While Chapter 5 helped uncover answers to the question of *who* serves on Pennsylvania's 499 elected public school boards, this chapter seeks to determine *why* they choose to run for these seats and *where* they emerge from. The purpose of this chapter is to deconstruct and explore the findings of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey concerning why respondents decided to seek a position on their local school board in the first place, assess the similarities and differences between those who were recruited by an individual or organization to seek a seat on the school board and those who were self-recruited, and to analyze recruited board members based on the recruiting agent that helped convince them to run for this office. This chapter will open with an assessment of survey findings pertaining to recruitment, emergence, and details surrounding the involvement of various organizations within the community in school board campaigns.

Two of the original research questions posed in Chapter 1 will be addressed through the findings presented in this chapter. The first research question addresses motivation and asks "What political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?" The second question is related to recruitment and asks "Are candidates for public school board positions self-recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community?"

Table 29: Question 7: Before your first campaign for the school board, did any organizations contact you to encourage you to run?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Yes	23.8%	90
No	76.2%	288
answered question		**378**
skipped question		**2**

The purpose of this question was to help determine whether Pennsylvania school board members were recruited to run for their seats, or if they could best be described as self-starters. A majority of respondents reported that they were *not* recruited to run for the school board by any organizations in their districts. Over 76 percent said that no such recruitment efforts occurred while nearly 24 percent said that an organization did contact them to encourage them to seek a seat on the school board. Overall, 99 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 30: Question 8- If yes, which type of organization or organizations contacted you (please check all that apply)?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Political party committee or organization	42.8%	39
A non-political community/neighborhood group or organization	36.3%	33
A church-affiliated organization	3.3%	3
A labor organization	7.7%	7
A business organization	2.2%	2
A fraternal organization	0.0%	0
Incumbent member(s) of the school board	8.8%	8
An education-oriented organization within the district	7.7%	7
Other	8.8%	8
answered question		**91**
skipped question		**289**

Among the 24 percent of respondents who indicated that they were contacted about running for a seat on the school board, political party committees or political party organizations were the most common source of recruitment or encouragement. About 43

percent of those who were encouraged to run by an organization cited a party committee or organization as the source. Another 36 percent cited a non-political community or neighborhood group or organization while eight percent reported to be encouraged to run by a labor organization. Just three percent said the same of a church-affiliated organization while two percent said that they were initially encouraged by a business organization. No respondents said that they were encouraged to run by a fraternal organization.

A total of 24 respondents—or 26 percent of those who were recruited—said that they were encouraged to run by an organization other than one of the aforementioned six types. Eight of the respondents who chose the open response option noted that they were encouraged to run by one or more sitting members of the school board. Seven more indicated that they were asked to run by an education-oriented organizations or individuals within their districts. Finally, another eight percent indicated that they were contacted by an organization other than one of the aforementioned choices. One respondent said that their State Representative suggested that running for the school board would be "a good way to serve". Another respondent said that they were recruited by something called Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters, a Tea Party aligned organization which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Table 31: Question 2- Were you elected to your current term on the school board, or were you appointed to the board?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	2010 National S.B. Study
Elected	98.4%	373	94.5%
Appointed	1.6%	6	5.5%
answered question		**379**	
skipped question		**1**	

Over 98 percent of respondents report to having been elected to the school board while two percent said that they had been appointed to the position. This follows along very closely with the results of the 2010 National School Boards Association study which found that nearly 95 percent of board members nationally were also elected rather than appointed. Given that 499 of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts are comprised of elected school boards, it is probable that the two percent who report to having been appointed were selected by their local boards to fill vacancies that arose during the course of another member's term.

It has been mentioned twice in this study thus far that the City of Philadelphia does not have an elected school board. It should be noted here that data reported in Table 1 of Chapter 1 demonstrates that this is a somewhat normal trend in other large urban areas in the United States. The Education Commission of the States reports that Oakland, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, New York City, Cleveland, and Providence are among the cities in other states which rely on appointed boards while the rest of the school boards in each state utilize elections to select their members.

Table 32: Question 5- On which party's primary election ballots did your name appear during your first successful campaign for the school board?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Democratic	8.2%	31
Republican	11.1%	42
Both	74.8%	282
Neither: I ran as a write-in or third party candidate in the general election	5.8%	22
answered question		**377**
skipped question		**3**

The purpose of this question was to determine whether board members typically take advantage of Pennsylvania's unique cross-filing law under which a candidate may choose to file nominating petitions under both the Democratic and Republican Party lines. Should the candidate meet the minimum number of signatures, he or she would be listed as a candidate in the primary election of both parties in their district regardless of their actual party registration status. This law is applicable to candidates seeking election to public school boards, magisterial district judgeships (commonly referred to as Justices of the Peace or District Justices), members of every county-level Court of Common Pleas, and the Philadelphia Municipal Court.

The vast majority of school board members—nearly 75 percent—saw their names appear on both the Democratic and Republican Party primary election ballots during their first successful campaigns. Just over 11 percent of respondents said that their names appeared exclusively on the Republican ballot while eight percent appeared only on the Democratic ballot. Another six percent did not appear at all on the primary ballot as they ran as either a write-in candidate or a third party candidate in the general election. 99 percent of all respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 33: Question 6- Which party's nomination did you win during your first successful primary election campaign for the school board?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Democratic	11.1%	42
Republican	16.4%	62
Both	68.5%	259
Neither. I ran as a write-in or third party candidate in the general election	4.0%	15
answered question		**378**
skipped question		**2**

Nearly 69 percent of respondents were successful in capturing the primary election nomination of both the Democratic and Republican Parties in their districts thanks to the Commonwealth's cross-filing law. Just over 16 percent won only the Republican Party nomination while slightly more than 11 percent captured only the Democratic Party nomination. Additionally, four percent reported to have ran as either write-in or third party candidates and did not appear on either party ballot during the primary election. 99 percent of participants responded to this question.

Table 34: Question 9- Have you ever run for election or reelection to the school board as part of a slate of candidates?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	35.0%	132
No	65.0%	245
	answered question	**377**
	skipped question	**3**

When asked whether they had ever run for election or reelection to the school board as part of a slate of candidates, 35 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative. A majority—or 65 percent—replied that they have not campaigned as part of a slate. Candidate "slating" occurs when either a political party organization, political action committee, interest group, or some other type of group organizes multiple candidates to seek positions as a team in a race in which there may be multiple victors. Through this practice, an organization would essentially endorse a slate of candidates and work towards the election of every member on the slate through what in essence becomes a joint campaign coordinated by that organizing source. A total of 99.2 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 35: Question 10- If yes (to Question 9), who organized this effort?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
A political party or an official affiliated with a political party	29.8%	36
A non-political community/neighborhood group or organization	11.6%	14
A church affiliated organization	0.0%	0
A labor organization	0.8%	1
A business organization	0.0%	0
A fraternal organization	0.0%	0
Friends and neighbors	19.8%	24
An incumbent member of the school board	22.3%	27
The candidates themselves	9.0%	11
Other (please specify)	6.6%	8
answered question		**121**
skipped question		**259**

Almost 92 percent of respondents who said in Question 9 that they had run for election or reelection as part of a slate of candidates responded to the follow-up question asking who was chiefly responsible for organizing that team effort. Nearly 30 percent said that a political party or an official affiliated with a political party was responsible for organizing the effort while 22 percent attributed the effort to an incumbent member of the school board. Almost 20 percent indicated that their friends and neighbors organized the slate campaign while 12 percent cited a non-political community or neighborhood group or organization.

Less than one percent said that a labor organization was responsible for the slate effort while zero respondents cited a church affiliated organization, a business organization, or a fraternal organization. Another 16 percent chose to provide a response by choosing “other”. Eleven of the 19 respondents who opted to enter a response in the “other” category said that the candidates themselves organized the slate.

Table 36: Question 11- If you ran with a slate, were all members of the slate of candidates successful…		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
In the primary election	15.9%	18
In the general election	8.8%	10
In both the primary and general elections	75.2%	85
	answered question	**113**
	skipped question	**267**

According to those who answered that they had run as a part of a slate of candidates, over 75 percent of them reported that all members of the slate were successful in both the primary and general elections. Nearly 16 percent of the time all members of the slate were successful only in the primary election while they were successful exclusively in the general election nine percent of the time. Almost 86 percent of those who responded that they had run as a part of a slate of candidates provided a response to this question.

Table 37: Question 12- Which of the following have you used in your past campaigns (please check all that apply)?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Door knocking/canvassing	50.6%	181
Raised money	17.0%	61
Displayed campaign signs or billboards	54.7%	196
Organized poll workers for Election Day	44.1%	158
Recruited/organized volunteers	27.7%	99
Webpage or Facebook page	20.1%	72
Direct mail	25.7%	92
Radio advertising	3.4%	12
Television advertising	0.8%	3
Campaigning in person at community events	34.6%	124
Other	14.2%	51
None	15.9%	57
	answered question	**358**
	skipped question	**22**

Question 12 was designed to help determine the level of campaign activity undertaken in local school board races by members of Pennsylvania school boards. Incredibly, 84 percent all those who responded to this question indicated that they were engaged in at least one of the campaign tactics or activities listed among the response options. Respondents were encouraged to check all options that may have applied to their past campaigns. Nearly 16 percent reported to have not engaged in any campaign activities in the past.

Nearly 55 percent of respondents reported that they had displayed campaign signs or billboards during their past campaigns. The second most likely campaign activity to be utilized by Pennsylvania School Board members is door knocking or canvassing, which was selected by 51 percent of respondents. Over 44 percent indicated that they organized poll workers for Election Day while almost 35 percent said that they campaigned in person at community events within their school districts. Another 28 percent of respondents said that they recruited or organized volunteers to assist with their campaigns while 26 percent said that they utilized direct mail to reach voters during their elections. Meanwhile, over 20 percent said that they relied upon a campaign webpage or a Facebook page to assist in their campaign efforts. Only 17 percent said that they raised money as a part of one of their previous campaigns for a seat on the school board. Over three percent utilized radio advertising to reach voters while less than one percent said that they advertised on television.

An additional 14 percent used the space provided to record a response other than one that was allowed through the aforementioned options. Common answers entered in the available space for those who selected the “other” response option included using

email to reach voters, using word of mouth throughout their communities, and the use of newspaper advertising.

Table 38: Question 3- Which of the following statements best describes the main reason you originally decided to run for a seat on the school board?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
To gain governmental and political experience in order to seek higher office	0.8%	3
Concerns over local taxes or school district budget	7.4%	28
To affect school district curriculum decisions/education quality	10.8%	41
To help ensure that the education system was well managed while children in my family are/were in school	26.1%	99
Desire to serve the public/civic responsibility	42.7%	162
Other (please specify)	12.1%	46
answered question		**379**
skipped question		**1**

This question asked respondents to identify the main reason why they ran for their first term on the school board and were given a choice of five statements or a sixth option that allowed them to enter their own reason into a provided blank space. Nearly 43 percent of respondents described their main reason for originally deciding to run for a seat on the school board as a desire to serve the public or due to civic responsibility. Slightly more than 26 percent described their main reason for running as an effort to help ensure that the education system was well managed while children in their family either are or were attending school in that district.

Another 11 percent cited the need to affect school district curriculum decisions while just short of one percent said that they originally ran in order to gain governmental experience in order to seek higher office. Concerns over local taxes or school district budgets reportedly drove over seven percent of respondents to run for a position on their public school board. Just over 12 percent of respondents selected the “other” option, thus

allowing them to enter their reason for originally running for a school board seat in the line provided.

Over 99 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 39: Question 13- What issue is the most important to you as a school board member?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Education quality/curriculum concerns	70.8%	264
Finance/taxes/budget issues	52.3%	195
Maintain balance between education/curriculum and finance/budget	31.1%	116
General district management	15.5%	58
Personnel concerns (teachers, administrators, staff)	6.4%	24
Other	6.7%	25
No single most important issue	0.3%	1
answered question		**373**
valid responses		**683**
skipped question		**7**

This open-ended question allowed respondents to state the issue—or in many cases—issues—most important to them as a member of their local school board.[11] A total of 373 respondents (or 98 percent of participants) provided one or more answers which were sorted by likeness, coded, and then placed in the categories reflected in the table above. Cumulatively, 683 responses were recorded for this question with each

[11] This question was originally intended to allow for only one response option. However, an error on the author's part allowed the Survey Monkey program to provide for multiple answers to be accepted rather than a single most important issue. In the author's view, this mistake not only rendered the responses to this question to be somewhat confusing due to the unplanned coding system described within the text, but also made the findings presented here less helpful and insightful than initially expected.

respondent's statements being placed in multiple categories in the even that they referenced more than one issue.

The most popular response among participants were issues related to education quality and curriculum. Over 70 percent of participants noted in their answer that they cared about the quality of education being provided in their school district, concerns related to the district's educational curriculum, or education-related mandates such as the Common Core standards. Typical responses that fell in this category included comments suggesting that board members want to provide students with the skills and abilities required for success following graduation, keeping standards high to preserve the district's reputation, and increasing the district's focus on STEM-related coursework.

Over 52 percent noted in their response that they are concerned about issues of taxation, finance, and district budgeting. Replies classified in this category include statements concerning the need to reduce taxes or keep them from being increased, an interest in ensuring that taxes are increased if necessary, keeping an eye on taxpayer resources, rooting out waste in the district budget, and providing professional expertise in the area of balancing the district's books. Roughly 11 percent of those who mentioned issues pertaining to finance, budget, and taxation noted that unfunded mandates from the federal and state government or cuts in state funding were specifically of interest to them.

A total of 31 percent responded that maintaining a balance between *both* education and finance-related issues are critical to them. Most of the responses that simultaneously mentioned education and finance stated that this is their top issue because of the need to equally balance the educational needs of the students with the financial capabilities of district taxpayers to fund the schools.

Another 16 percent of respondents said that issues related to general district management were most important. Specific responses categorized as "general district management" include items such as the need to increase communication between district leadership and the public, improving discipline and behavior within the schools, promoting high ethics and accountability to the public, and increasing transparency within the school district.

Over six percent indicated that issues concerning personnel such as hiring quality teachers, overseeing or selecting competent administrators, or allowing principals more control over the schools were their top concerns. Another seven percent provided a smattering of responses that were classified in the catch-all "other" category. These included items such as preserving the U.S. Constitution, keeping the school board "apolitical," improving technology within the district, charter schools, political corruption, the ubiquitous "truth in government" response, and the reply that all issues are equally important. Lastly, one respondent—or 0.3 percent of the sample—specifically noted that they "do not have a single most important issue."

Opportunities and Motives for Seeking Office

Chapter 1 of this study provided an overview of the duties and responsibilities of Pennsylvania's public school boards as explained by the respected and bipartisan Education Policy Leadership Center (EPLC). The EPLC remarked that Article V of the Pennsylvania School Code is generally quite ambiguous and provides the state's locally elected school boards with authority over virtually all areas of the management of education within their districts beyond areas controlled specifically by the federal or state

government. It is important to first catalog the menu of motives and opportunities that could lead a citizen to seek an unpaid position on a governmental body comprised of eight of their fellow community members.

Figure 4 below reveals nearly 30 opportunities and motives that may be taken into consideration by a citizen who decides to run for a seat on the public school board. This list was developed in part based in part on a review of the academic literature from Chapter 2, a personal assessment of school board candidates as citizens and practitioners of politics, and responses provided in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey. Each of these motives can be sorted into six larger categories: finance and budget, education and curriculum, politics, civic duty, associational interests, and general district management.

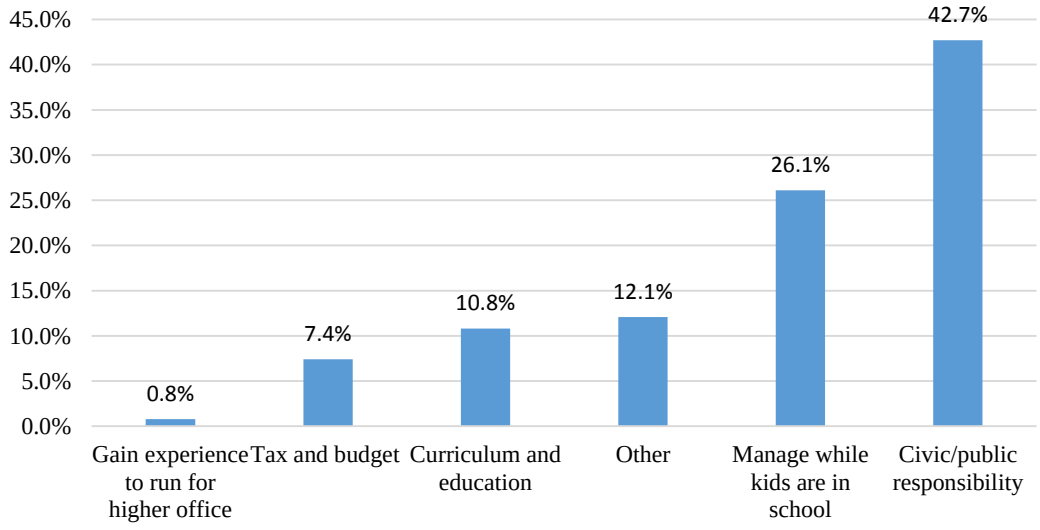
As observed in Figure 4, a variety of these motives are rooted in policy preferences such as in the financial/budgetary and education/curriculum categories while others such as those ascribed to the personnel, general management, associational, and politics categories may or may not include a motivation that is driven by a desire to see a specific policy implemented or rejected. For example, the motives and opportunities contained within the civic duty category tend to represent a personal outlook embodied through the notion of civic engagement and public responsibility rather than a political or policy-driven purpose behind one's candidacy for the public school board. The purpose of all of this is to say that although some individuals who seek public school board seats may be motivated to do so because of policy concerns such as what is being taught in the science curriculum or whether tax dollars should be appropriated for constructing a new elementary school, it should come as no surprise that some may be driven because of purposes related to oversight, district management concerns, self-interest, or civic duty.

Figure 4: Opportunities and Motives for Seeking School Board Positions	
1) Financial/Budgetary	Increase/reduce/maintain property tax levels Increase/reduce/maintain spending and borrowing Increase/reduce/maintain expenditures on certain budget items Address unfunded mandates
2) Education/Curriculum	Enhance/change/maintain quality of educational programs Support/oppose components of district curriculum Favor/oppose adoption of textbooks
3) Politics	Support/oppose various ideological agendas Hold seat for my party/block opposing party from holding seat Opportunity to lobby legislators for support of district needs Gain experience to use seat as springboard to higher office
4) Civic Duty	Opportunity to give back to community Frustrated with lack of interest in schools within community In need of something to do Own kids had positive/negative experience in district and wanted to maintain/change things based on their experiences
5) Associational Interests	Recruited to run by organization that I support Recruited to run by individual leader that I support Support/oppose agenda of incumbent(s) that I agree/disagree with
6) District Management	Approve/disapprove of changes to physical plant Play role in awarding building contracts Improve communication with constituents or taxpayers Oversee athletic programs Govern student-based organizations in district Approve/disapprove of professional conference/student trip attendance Interested in overseeing district while own children are enrolled Manage/hire/fire superintendent and leadership team Play role in negotiating labor contracts with district staff Influence general personnel or hiring decisions

The third question in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey asked respondents to identify the main reason they originally decided to run for a seat on the school board. Respondents had the option of selecting one of six responses (see Figure 5). Overall, 43 percent claimed to have run because of a "Desire to serve the public/civic responsibility," 26 percent said that they ran "To help ensure that the education system was well managed

while children in my family are/were in school," 10 percent responded that they decided to run in order "To effect school district curriculum decisions," seven percent indicated that they ran because of "Concerns over local taxes or school district budget," and another 0.8 percent indicated that they were driven to run for a seat on the board "To gain governmental or political experience in order to seek higher office." Another 12 percent of respondents selected "Other" and provided their own answers including politics and ideology, enhancing professionalism in the district, and communication between the board and the public. It is important to explain that 17 respondents chose the "other" option and proceeded to indicate that education, education quality, or a reply related to the education program offered in the district was the only response offered. These 17 responses were recoded from the "other" category to the "curriculum" category as they were clearly related to this response option.

Figure 5: Why Did PA School Board Members Originally Decide to Run?



Given the substantial amount of data generated by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey, complete data tables containing the relevant crosstabs for the third survey question can be found in the Statistical Appendix found at the conclusion of this study. Data concerning the motivations for seeking school board seats and presented in the Statistical Appendix are sorted into five categories: personal demographics, school district characteristics, politics and elections, community engagement, and school board service. The number of respondents falling into each response option are provided along with the percentage falling into each category based upon their reported reason for running.

Although the option of running to "gain experience to run for another office" was among the menu of choices within the survey, just three respondents indicated that this was their reason for running. This data appears in the Appendix, but will not be discussed here because of the small number of respondents who selected that option. Instead, this section deals primarily with those who ran for their school board seats due to tax and budget issues, education and curriculum concerns, a desire to ensure that the education system was well managed while children from their family are/were in school, and civic or public responsibility. A discussion concerning respondents who indicated that they ran for "other" reasons beyond those options available in the survey instrument will not be included here given the dissimilar nature of responses proffered by participants. However, those figures will appear in the appendix.

Members Motivated by Civic Duty

The most popular reason cited by respondents for originally seeking a seat on the school board was a "desire to serve the public/civic responsibility," which was chosen by

43 percent of respondents. Members who sought their position because of a sense of civic duty are predominantly male (61 percent), come from wealthier households, and at 45 percent are more likely than other subsets of respondents to have earned an advanced degree. They are also the most highly represented group of respondents between the ages of 50 and 70. Civic duty-driven members are mainly full-time workers and retirees, but also comprise a significant number of those who are employed full-time, self-employed, and homemakers. They are also disproportionally unlikely to have school age children at home. Civically-motivated members contain the highest percentage of urban members, second highest percentage of suburban members, and smallest percentage of rural respondents based on why they opted to run. They have also lived within their districts for 20 or more years or for their entire lives at a greater rate than their peers who sought office for other reasons.

Considering the political interests of this subset, civic duty members are the second most Democratic of all subsets of respondents as well as the *most* moderate and the *least* conservative among all respondents when sorted by the reason for running. Another common feature among those who ran because of civic duty is the fact that 66 percent come from districts with at least one active political party, trailing only those who ran due to tax and budget issues when considering the level of party activity within their districts. Members who ran because of civic duty are most likely to engage in political activity through volunteering on a campaign, lobbying on behalf of an issue of cause, and organizing people in their communities and at just 20 percent were the least likely to be recruited to run for a school board seat. However, civic duty members who were recruited were the second most likely to be enlisted by a party organization, non-political

organization, or education group. These members were slightly less likely than the full sample to run as a part of a slate, but those who did were most likely to find themselves on a slate organized by a party organization or education-oriented organization at a greater rate than their peers.

Table 40: Selected Personal Attributes of Members Based on Why They Sought School Board Seats

Variable and Answer Options	*Tax & Budget*	*Education & Curriculum*	*Manage While Kids are in School*	*Civic Duty*
Gender				
Male	66.7%	37.5%	68.4%	61.4%
Female	33.3%	62.5%	31.6%	38.6%
Household Income				
$25,000-$49,999	8.7%	21.7%	4.5%	8.4%
$50,000-$99,999	39.1%	34.8%	33.7%	36.4%
$100,000-$200,000	26.1%	39.1%	38.2%	42.7%
More than $200,000	21.7%	4.3%	23.6%	11.2%
College Educated				
Bachelor's degree	48.1%	20.8%	33.7%	32.7%
Advanced degree	29.6%	45.8%	44.2%	44.9%
Age Group				
40 to 49	18.5%	12.5%	32.6%	19.2%
50 to 59	33.3%	41.7%	36.8%	32.7%
60 to 69	25.9%	33.3%	14.7%	44.9%
Employment Status				
Employed Full-Time	69.2%	20.8%	50.5%	50.6%
Retired	15.4%	45.8%	16.1%	24.4%
School Age Children				
Yes	33.3%	25.0%	62.1%	32.9%
No	66.7%	75.0%	37.9%	67.1%

Members Motivated to Manage District While Their Children are/were in School

Just over 26 percent of respondents indicated that they originally decided to run for a seat on the school board "to help ensure that the education system was well managed while children in my family are/were in school," making this the second most common answer provided in the survey. Members falling into this category are more likely to be male, more affluent than those who reported to run for other reasons, well-educated (with large numbers holding either a bachelor's or advanced degrees), employed full-time or self-employed, and are the only subset of respondents in which a majority has school-age children. Members who ran because they were motivated to run the district while their kids were in school are most likely to represent rural school districts and less likely than their peers to represent suburban areas. Collectively, they are the least likely subset of respondents to have lived in the district for either more than 20 years or their entire lifetime and are more likely than all other groups of respondents to have lived in the district for a period of five to 19 years.

This category of respondents is the second most likely to report to belonging to the Republican Party and the least likely among all to be affiliated with the Democratic Party. Despite their Republican leanings and tendency to cluster in rural areas, the plurality of these members report to be ideologically moderate. Nearly 60 percent of members who ran for this purpose come from districts with at least one active party organization, although they are more likely to come from a district featuring only an active Republican organization. With few exceptions, these individuals were collectively less engaged in political activity than their peers. At 78 percent they were also the second least likely to

have been recruited. These members were also the least likely to have run as part of a slate and are largely lacking progressive ambition.

Table 41: Selected District Attributes of Members Based on Why They Sought School Board Seats

Variable and Answer Options	Tax & Budget	Education & Curriculum	Manage While Kids are in School	Civic Duty
Community				
Rural	42.9%	50.0%	53.5%	40.7%
Urban	3.6%	4.2%	5.1%	6.2%
Suburban	53.6%	45.8%	41.4%	53.1%
Pennsylvania Region				
Allegheny	11.5%	13.0%	5.4%	12.5%
Northeast	19.2%	17.4%	7.5%	9.9%
Southeast	11.5%	13.0%	20.4%	13.8%
Northwest	11.5%	30.4%	12.9%	7.9%
Southwest	7.7%	8.7%	12.9%	20.4%
Central	38.5%	17.4%	40.9%	35.5%

Members Motivated by Curriculum or Educational Concerns

Nearly 11 percent of respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey reported having run "to affect school district curriculum decisions." Those who reported to run because of curriculum concerns represent the only group of school board members in which a majority are female. They are also less affluent than their peers, more likely to hold an advanced degree or a basic high school diploma than other respondents, and are less likely than all other types of respondents to hold a bachelor's degree. Collectively, these members are older than their peers, contain the highest percentages of retirees and

part-time employees, are the least likely to be employed full-time, and are the least likely to have school-age children.

These members represented the only subset of respondents containing a higher number of Democrats than Republicans, featuring over six percent more Democrats than the next highest category within the reason to run question. Education/curriculum-driven members also contain the second highest percentage of moderates among the members in this subgroup. Unlike most of their peers who ran for other reasons, these members come from districts featuring weak or absent party organizations, with 44 percent saying that neither the Democratic or Republican Parties are active in their communities and just 22 percent saying that both parties are active. Despite the dearth of active party organizations in their districts, members driven by education or curriculum issues are more likely to report some sort of prior involvement in politics, especially in the areas of being a member of a political party organization. They are also more likely than their peers to have volunteered on a political campaign, worked in government, or organized people in their community to take action regarding an issue or concern.

Nearly 37 percent of curriculum-driven members were recruited to run for the school board, a full eight percent more likely than the second most highly recruited subgroup. Somewhat related to this, these members were the most likely subset of respondents to have run as part of a slate of candidates for either election or reelection. Education/curriculum members were also the least likely to take part in slates organized by party organizations. These members are also considerably less likely than others to have ambition to seek higher office.

Table 42: Selected Political Attributes of Members Based on Why They Sought School Board Seats

Variable and Answer Options	Tax & Budget	Education & Curriculum	Manage While Kids are in School	Civic Duty
Party Identification				
Democratic	29.6%	45.8%	29.0%	44.9%
Republican	70.4%	45.8%	68.8%	54.5%
Other	0.0%	8.3%	2.2%	0.6%
Ideology				
Conservative	74.1%	54.2%	41.5%	35.5%
Liberal	14.8%	8.3%	9.6%	13.5%
Moderate	11.1%	37.5%	48.9%	51.0%
Party Activity in District				
Both parties have active organizations	44.4%	21.7%	25.0%	30.0%
Active Democratic organization only	3.7%	13.0%	9.8%	13.8%
Active Republican organization only	29.6%	21.7%	25.0%	22.5%
No active party orgs.	22.2%	43.5%	40.2%	33.8%

Members Motivated by Tax, Budget, and Finance Concerns

A total of eight percent of respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey reported to have sought a seat on the board because of "concerns over local taxes or school district budget." These members are two times more likely to be men than women and are slightly younger than their peers. These members fall most heavily within the middle and upper middle-income ranges, are more likely than those who reported to have run for other reasons to hold a bachelor's degree, and are the least likely to hold an advanced degree. Tax and budget members are more likely than their peers to be either single or divorced, are 15 percent less likely than their peers to have school-age children, and are more likely

than others to report to being employed full time. These respondents tend to be from rural areas. Although the majority of these members have lived in their districts for over 20 years or their entire lives, a higher percentage of them report to having lived in their districts for five to nine years or fewer than five years than any other subset of respondents.

Tax and budget-oriented members are the most likely to identify as Republicans. Likewise, these individuals are vastly more conservative than the sample as a whole, with 20 percent more conservative identifiers than the second most conservative group in this subset. These members were far more likely than those who ran for other reasons and the sample as a whole to come from districts with two active parties, are far less likely to have no active parties in their districts, are five percent more likely than their peers to have only an active GOP organization in their communities, and a full six percent less likely to have only an active local Democratic organization. Despite the presence of strong party organizations and a strong allegiance to the Republican Party, these members were less likely than the sample to have sought or held public office in the past, volunteered on a campaign, or helped raise money for a political cause. Tax and budget members were more likely than their peers to serve as a party committeeperson and lobby on behalf of an issue or cause. Meanwhile, this group was less likely than those who reported to run for different reasons and the overall sample to have worked for a government office, agency, or public official.

These members were more likely to have been recruited to run than those in the full sample, except for education and curriculum-driven candidates. They were also more likely than any of their peers to have been recruited by a party or church organization, but less likely to have been recruited by a non-political community group. Tax and budget members

report to being slightly more ambitious than their peers and comprise the largest percentage who say that they would consider seeking a state office such as the General Assembly.

Table 43: Selected Recruitment and Ambition Attributes of Members Based on Why They Sought School Board Seats

Variable and Answer Options	Tax & Budget	Education & Curriculum	Manage While Kids are in School	Civic Duty
Recruited?				
Yes	28.5%	36.5%	22.4%	20.3%
No	71.5%	63.5%	77.6%	79.7%
Source?				
Political Party Committee/Org.	50.0%	46.7%	45.5%	48.5%
Non-Political Community Organization	25.0%	26.7%	31.8%	39.4%
Church Affiliated Organization	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%
Labor Organization	0.0%	6.7%	13.6%	3.0%
Business Organization	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%
Fraternal Organization	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Incumbent Member of Board	0.0%	13.3%	9.1%	9.1%
Education Organization or Person Affiliated with Education in District	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	12.1%
Other	25.0%	20.0%	9.1%	3.0%
Ambitious?				
Yes	25.9%	16.7%	25.3%	25.8%
No	74.1%	83.3%	74.7%	74.2%

Polarization Among Members

Although they only represent a combined 18 percent of the sample, members who ran for seats on the school board due to policy concerns related to either curriculum or tax and budget issues reflect the highest level of polarization between respondents. Those who

initially sought their school board seats because of their interest in curriculum or education issues represent the only subset containing a majority that is female, Democrat, and retired or working part-time. These members are also collectively older and wealthier than their peers. Education/curriculum members are the most evenly split among rural and suburban districts and tend to hold advanced degrees. They are more engaged collectively in both political and community affairs than any other subset of respondents and are the least likely among all to report to having school-age children.

Conversely, members who ran because of tax and budget concerns are predominately male, work full-time, and are likely to be suburbanites. They also contain the highest percentage of Republicans, are the most conservative of all respondents, and are the least active in the community outside of politics. Although they aren't likely to be recruited, these members are slightly more ambitious than other types of respondents.

Not only do these two types of members stand out because of the stark differences that exist between them in the areas of demographics, politics, community engagement, and levels of recruitment and ambition, they also represent the only subsets of members who responded that they ran for office because of direct policy-related motivations. The existence of an exceedingly Democratic affiliated, center-left, female majority bloc of members with a focus on education issues and a strongly Republican affiliated, highly conservative, male majority bloc of members with a focus on financial issues resembles the sort of division that may be expected in many facets of American political life from the United States Congress to the rank and file members of the electorate.

Lastly, despite their clear differences, members who ran because of education/curriculum policy or tax/budget policy concerns were the most likely among the

entire sample to a) run as members of a slate of candidates and b) be recruited to run for their positions on the school board. These two types of board members were more likely than their peers to have run on a slate organized by an incumbent member of the school board, meaning that sitting board members could have been actively seeking like-minded citizens within their districts to serve alongside them to either implement a type of policy favorable to that incumbent member or to protect the status quo in the district.

Self-Interested, Self-Starters

The data shows that 26 percent of members ran because of a desire to manage the district while children from their own families are attending the schools. On the surface, these members appear to be the most self-interested of all board members because they explicitly stated that they sought their positions to oversee the management of the district while children from their own families were being educated in that school system. They freely admitted to becoming candidates for the purpose of ensuring that they were able to play a role in leading the school district to produce a benefit for their own families. This is not intended to imply that these members ran in order to gain personal remunerations for their service, but rather to suggest that there is a relationship between their desire to serve and the type of outcomes they expect from the school district during the time of their service: an education system that serves their children—and the rest of the children in the district at that overlapping point in time—to the best extent that it can.

As demonstrated by the data, these members are predominately upper middle class men with advanced degrees. They tend to fall between the ages of 40 and 59, are employed full-time, and are collectively the least engaged in political and government affairs while

reporting to be the second least engaged in their communities. Interestingly, these members are nearly 70 percent Republican, yet are more likely to identify as politically moderate than the full sample.

Considering all of this, we may infer that the typical member from this particular subset is a father from an upper-middle class household who is employed full-time and largely not involved in political or civic affairs. The father, who is likely from a white collar or management background, decides that he should take a role in making managerial decisions in the schools while his child is enrolled.

Analysis of Self-Starters, Recruits, and Recruitment Sources

The web page of the Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters (PFF) organization is a prototypical shrine to the Tea Party movement. A swift scroll through the group's main page will allow viewers to access links to articles about Sarah Palin's policy views, graphics comparing Obama supporters to zombies, a graphic noting that the Second Amendment is America's *original* homeland security apparatus, a call for the implementation of voter identification laws, and the typical boilerplate conspiracy material about the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya.[12]

Based in rural Jefferson County—home to the state's iconic Groundhog Day celebration and the recently retired Speaker of the House of Representatives Sam Smith—PFF touts the motto of "educate, motivate, activate," imploring citizens to become engaged in their movement. According to the site, "monthly meetings are held at 6:00 pm the second Thursday of the month at the Rathmel Grange located 3 miles East of

[12] http://www.pennsylvaniafreedomfighters.com/index.html

Reynoldsville (near Well's Junk Yard) on Rte. 322. We offer a place for people to come and educate themselves, we give them tools and ways to get involved, then we encourage them to get involved" (Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters, n.d., n.p.) in the mission of "upholding our Christian values as our Founding Fathers intended. We are here to educate, motivate, and stop the march toward socialism, and ultimately restore the Republic so our children will not live in tyranny, or in a country we would not recognize" (PFF).

Among the numerous types of political activities purportedly undertaken by the Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters is the recruitment of "superior candidates" for public office who share their values and goals. They also list the name and contact number for a member who serves as director of recruitment. The organization specifically mentions the importance of keeping tabs on the actions taken by members of the local school boards in the region, noting that it is essential "to know who your school board member is so you can express strong opposition to schoolchildren being indoctrinated with left-wing propaganda, something that has become a malignant epidemic in the nation's public schools. Most recently, thousands of public schools are subjecting students to political brainwashing" (PFF) regarding an array of political issues.

The Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters are not alone in the Keystone State when it comes to having a political, personal, or policy-driven interest in influencing the outcome of local elections for seats on public school boards. Political and non-political organizations ranging from teachers unions to community associations to business groups such as local chapters of Chamber of Commerce chapter have plentiful reasons for not only paying close attention to the actions taken by their school boards, but also for

recruiting individuals who share their interests and goals to seek school board positions. Among the many purposes of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey was the need to help determine the frequency with which organizations such as Pennsylvania Freedom Fighters, labor unions, community associations, and other groups of stakeholders situated within the school districts engage in the practice of recruiting candidates.

Are School Board Members Being Recruited?

The vast majority of the state's elected school board members who responded to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey reported that they were *not* contacted and encouraged to run for their positions by organizations within their districts. A total of 76 percent of respondents indicated that they were not recruited to run for a seat on the school board while 24 percent said that they were contacted and encouraged to run. This substantial percentage of "self-starting" members serves as an indicator that local organizations at the school district level are generally not as highly involved in rounding up candidates for seats on the public school boards as originally anticipated. Additionally, it demonstrates that many of the individuals serving on these critical bodies who are responsible for overseeing the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue each year are primarily dominated by individuals who opted to seek office on their own and without the recruitment efforts of organized interests.

Who are the Recruits and Self-Recruits?

A comparison of the survey data between self-starting candidates (non-recruits) and recruited candidates reveal differences between these two types of school board

members. Although male members represent a majority of the overall sample, the recruited population includes three percent more women than the non-recruited component of the sample. Overall, recruited members tend to be older than both their non-recruited counterparts with a combined 73 percent of recruits reporting to be between the ages of 50 and 69. Meanwhile, nearly 62 percent of self-starters are between the ages of 40 and 59.

While both sets of members report to being highly educated and significantly more likely than the average Pennsylvanian to hold bachelors or advanced degrees, recruits are almost eight percent more likely to hold such a degree than their self-starting peers. Recruited members are upper-middle or upper class, with 61 percent of them reporting a household income between $100,000 to over $200,000 per year. Meanwhile, their self-starting colleagues come from middle or upper-middle class families with 80 percent of their households earning between $50,000 and $200,000 per year. Self-starters are also slightly more likely than recruited members to have school-age children at home.

Geographic differences are present as well with members from rural districts as well as the Central, Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and Allegheny regions being more likely to have been self-starters than recruits. Recruited members were more likely to emanate from suburban or urban districts or districts within the state's Southeast region, which his comprised of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties.

Perhaps the most significant difference between these two types of members is represented by the rural-suburban divide, as 51 percent of self-starters represent rural districts compared to just 36 percent of recruits. Conversely, 57 percent of recruits represent suburban districts as compared to about 44 percent of self-starters. This leads to

the consideration of the idea that Pennsylvania's suburban districts are likely home to more active community organizations or political party organizations that based upon the survey data, are responsible for most of the candidate recruitment activity.

Recruits and self-starters also exhibit differences in partisanship and ideological interests. Although 40 percent of all respondents indicated that they are members of the Democratic Party, 33 percent of recruits and 42 percent of self-starters are members of that party. Recruited candidates are thus more likely than their self-recruited colleagues to claim membership in the Republican Party. Despite their skew towards the G.O.P., recruited members are six percent more likely to identify as liberals than the self-starters. Additionally, self-starters are over five percent more conservative than their recruited colleagues. Even while considering these important differences, it is essential to note that a plurality of recruits *and* self-starters identify as moderates while a majority of both subsets are Republicans.

These variations are not limited to the ideological or partisan preferences and are also observable when looking at the status of political party organizational activity within the school districts. Recruited members are more likely to emerge from places featuring *at least* one active party organization, with 71 percent representing districts with one or two active party organizations as compared to just 57 percent of self-starters. In addition to this, recruited members were over six percent more likely than self-starters to report having two active party organizations in their districts.

Political considerations also come into play when examining the likelihood of members running as part of a slate of candidates. Although a minority of recruits (48 percent) and self-starters (32 percent) reported to have run as a part of a slate, recruits

were over five percent more likely to see all members of their slate of candidates winning both the primary and general elections. The organizing source behind the slate of candidates also tends to differ for the recruited and self-started members who ran as part of a slate, as 46 percent of slates featuring recruited candidates were organized by political party organizations, 20 percent by incumbent board members, and 17 percent by non-political community organizations. Conversely, nearly 24 percent of slates containing self-starters were organized by friends and neighbors, 24 percent organized by incumbent board members, and 21 percent were organized by political parties.

Recruited members were about three percent more likely than self-starters to indicate that they possess ambition to seek higher office and have a history of attending more board meetings than the self-starters prior to running. There is also a greater probability that recruited members will be active in church organizations, they are 10 percent more likely to attend public meetings than self-starters, are 14 percent more likely to be involved in community or neighborhood associations, and are 12 percent more active in education organizations. Meanwhile, a slightly higher percentage of self-starters report being members of a labor union or involved in social organizations than recruits.

Lastly, there are several noticeable differences when it comes to ascribing the motivations of these members for running for seats on the school board. The plurality of self-starters and recruits reported to have run because of civic duty or to ensure that the district was well run while children from their families were in school. However, recruited candidates were slightly more likely to run because of tax and budget concerns and about five percent more likely due to curriculum issues than their self-starting colleagues. Self-starters were slightly more likely to have run to manage the schools

while their kids were in them and about eight percent more likely to run because of civic duty.

Why Recruit Candidates?

Now that we have discussed the composition of these two separate pools of school board members, we will consider the reasons why various types of organizations or individuals would seek people within their communities to run for seats on the public school board. As discussed at length in Chapter 2, there are five main groups of stakeholders within each school district in the United States. These stakeholders are parents and parent organizations, superintendents and administrators, taxpayers and district residents, teachers and teacher unions, and the children who attend the schools. Each of these types of stakeholders would have an interest in who is serving on the school board in their district.

- Parents and parent organizations would obviously be interested in who is serving on the school board since the policies being crafted by the board from hiring individual teachers to approving textbooks to deciding whether or not to fund the sixth grade field trip directly impacts their children and families.

- Pennsylvania's 500 Superintendents and thousand-plus administrators have an interest in knowing who is serving on the school board and where they came from because the district's top administrators can only be replaced by a majority of the nine sitting board members in each district.

- Taxpayers and district residents in general share an interest in the school board and its members because of the $14.3 billion in locally raised funds controlled by school boards throughout the state.

- Public school teachers are employees of the district and must work day in and day out in a professional environment set in part by the school board. Given that Pennsylvania is a highly unionized state, teachers unions must also rely upon the school boards in each district to ratify the terms of contracts negotiated between the teachers and the districts.

- Students who attend the schools are clearly effected by the individuals who serve on Pennsylvania's school boards. Students and school-age children are the chief beneficiaries of the public school system, yet unlike the other groups of stakeholders, are the least able to influence school board politics since they are unable to cast ballots in school board elections (with the exception of some high school seniors who may be 18 years of age).

Recruitment agents seek to enlist candidates to run for school board seats because these recruiters are members of the school district community and in one way or another are parts of one of the aforementioned stakeholder groups. These agents may decide to actively recruit individuals to run for public office for myriad reasons which vary from recruiting agent to recruiting agent. First, political party committees or political organizations within the districts are likely to recruit candidates to seek school board seats in order to carry out the primary mission of political parties: winning elections and

anchoring down elected offices for that party organization. Downs (1957) famously argued that a political party is best defined as "a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election" (25). If Downs is believed to be accurate in his assessment, it is also likely that political parties or political organizations other than parties are engaged in recruitment in order to ensure that members of their organization who share their outlook are occupying seats on a governing body with policymaking responsibilities.

Second, non-political community organizations tend to be neighborhood, community, or civic associations that hold regular meetings of individuals living within the boundaries of a neighborhood within a municipality. These organizations generally address quality of life concerns, provide a meeting place for individuals within a community where they can collectively discuss problems, interact with neighbors in a meaningful way, and present their concerns to elected officials or municipal officials. A neighborhood, community, or civic association is likely to engage in the practice of recruiting candidates to run for school board seats to safeguard that the people living within their community's jurisdiction are being represented by the school board.

Third, church-affiliated organizations have numerous incentives to engage in candidate recruitment at the school district level. Deckman (2004) posits that religious or church organizations affiliated with the Christian faith have a long history of recruiting local candidates for school board seats due to concerns regarding the teaching of evolution, sex education, opposition to federal meddling in schools, and support for local control of education, advocating for what they believe to be "traditional" Christian values, and issues related to textbook selection. Anecdotal evidence has also been offered

during the course of this study indicating that church-affiliated or religious groups occasionally become intertwined with other political organizations such as anti-tax organizations which may combine their resources to recruit candidates and promote slates of multiple candidates that are conducive to advancing the agendas of both types of organizations.

Fourth, labor organizations have significant incentives to engage in the practice of recruiting candidates to run for school board seats. Pennsylvania is home to 500 school districts, all of which have separately negotiated teacher, secretarial, maintenance, and other types of labor contracts. The multitude of locals affiliated with the Pennsylvania State Education Association, Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers, and the labor unions which represent other types of workers in the district are incentivized to recruit candidates for school board seats since contracts for all of the district's workforce must be approved by the school board (at least this is the case in 499 districts, Philadelphia being the exception). Moe (2006) contends that labor's clout in local elections such as those for school board seats "is substantial, especially when elections are held at off times with few citizens voting, as is often the case" (11).

Fifth, business organizations such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, or small business councils may also find incentives for recruiting school board candidates. Business organizations—or any interest group for that matter—can be moved to take action in this sort of arena if it is believed that such action will promote the interests of the organization and its members. According to Olson (1965), "the interests that all of these diverse types of organizations are expected to further are for the most part common interests" (7) of those who belong to that organization. Business organizations

may be compelled to recruit school board candidates either from within or outside of their own membership rolls if they believe that the district's tax property tax level is creating a burden on local businesses, contributing to population—and thus consumer—decline by encouraging people to move away from the district, or making the district uncompetitive with other school districts. Business organizations may also consider recruiting members from within their ranks for the prestige of being able to say that one or more of their active members are engaged in the civic duty of serving in an unpaid capacity in local government. Another impetus for recruitment by business officials could be the desire to counterbalance organizational strength of organized labor as explained in multiple venues by Moe (2006 and 2013).

Sixth, education-oriented organizations such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs), Good Schools Pennsylvania, Parents United for Public Education, and Students First are all active in various parts of the state. Groups such as these are involved in grassroots organizing on behalf of various education-related issues, are active in the day-to-day affairs of the school districts, and are led by individuals who have a strong commitment to working on education policies and management. According to Moe (2006), parent groups "tend to be wholly unorganized outside (perhaps) the PTA—which is a parent-teacher organization, not simply a parent organization, and almost always an ally of the unions" (11). There could be some blending between the types of individuals involved in these groups. Another example is the group Students First, which is comprised of education advocates and businesspeople seeking to expand school choice in the Commonwealth. Although parents

of school-age children are ostensibly behind the organization's grassroots operation, several well-endowed business leaders are the chief financiers of the group's efforts.[13]

Parents involved with the PTA or PTO groups may be driven to recruit candidates if they sense that a situation or problem unfolding within one of the schools or across the entire district are not being adequately handled by the district's professional administrators or the school board itself. It is also probable that these recruits are parents with school-aged children and sense that their membership on the school board will allow them to help manage the district while their kids are in attendance. This fits with the assessment of Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) who argued that the when it comes to parents and their interaction with the schools, "specific concerns are quite narrow, focusing on the educational needs of their own children" (103) rather than the district as a whole.

Lastly, school board candidate recruitment may be a high priority for incumbent members of the school board to build larger coalitions among their colleagues. Again, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) discussed examples in the 1970s and 1980s in which coalitions of religious fundamentalists and scientists clashed over the teaching of evolution while organizations comprised of feminists battled with culturally conservative groups over the inclusion of feminist reading material in school curricula (103). Hypothetically, incumbent board members on either side of either of these legitimate

[13] For an example of this in Pennsylvania, see John Kopp's *Daily Times* piece covering the beleaguered Chester Upland School District in the Philadelphia suburbs (http://www.delcotimes.com/general-news/20120826/on-the-road-to-recovery-joe-watkins-chosen-to-help-chester-upland-turn-around-its-finances)

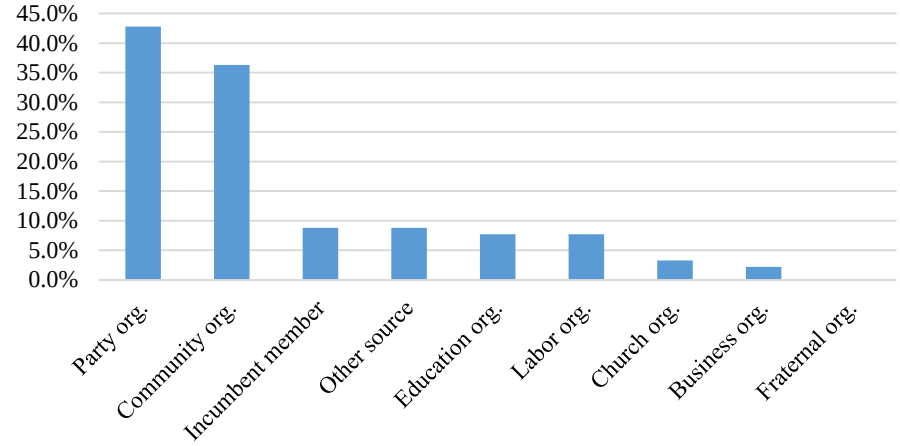
issues could plausibly engage in the act of recruiting like-minded individuals who will vote for policies that they favor.

Who are the Recruits and the Recruiting Agents?

Since almost a quarter of those who responded to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey reported to be recruited to run by an organization within their district, it is essential to unpack the data to compare and contrast the types of individuals being conscripted by different recruitment agents.

Figure 6 below indicates that among members reporting to be recruited, a plurality of nearly 43 percent were enlisted by political party organizations, just over 36 percent were recruited by non-political community or neighborhood associations, and almost nine percent were recruited by incumbent board members. Nearly eight percent were the products of recruitment efforts by education-oriented organizations within the district, another eight percent by labor organizations, three percent by church organizations, and two percent by business groups. No members reported to be recruited by fraternal organizations while another nine percent said that they were recruited by "other" sources which included a school district administrator and a state legislator.

Figure 6: Percentage of Members Recruited by Source



These diverse types of recruitment sources not only have different reasons for recruiting candidates, but they also show patterns of recruiting somewhat dissimilar types of individuals. For the purpose of this assessment, recruited board members were examined based on the following categories: party or political organization recruits, non-political community organization recruits, incumbent board member recruits, and interest group recruits (this category includes those reporting to be recruited by labor, business, education, or church organizations).

Male recruits are the most prevalent among party enlistees (61 percent), those recruited by incumbent board members (63 percent), and those from "other" sources (88 percent). The overall percentage of men and women recruited by non-political community organizations was split exactly in half while 53 percent of the collective interest group recruits were women. In other words, female recruits are disproportionately likely to emerge from non-political organizations like community associations or "interest groups" like labor, business, churches, or education organizations like the Parent Teacher Organization. This finding supports the conclusions

reached by Fox and Lawless (2010) who found that "women are significantly less likely than men to report receiving encouragement to run for office from party leaders, elected officials, and political activists" (91). In their words, political party "organizations' leaders, elected officials, and activists serve as formal electoral gatekeepers who groom eligible candidates" (91), yet they "have historically been enclaves of male dominance" (91). Women, according to Fox and Lawless, are far more likely to be groomed or recruited to seek legislative offices thanks to women's organizations than traditional political party organizations.

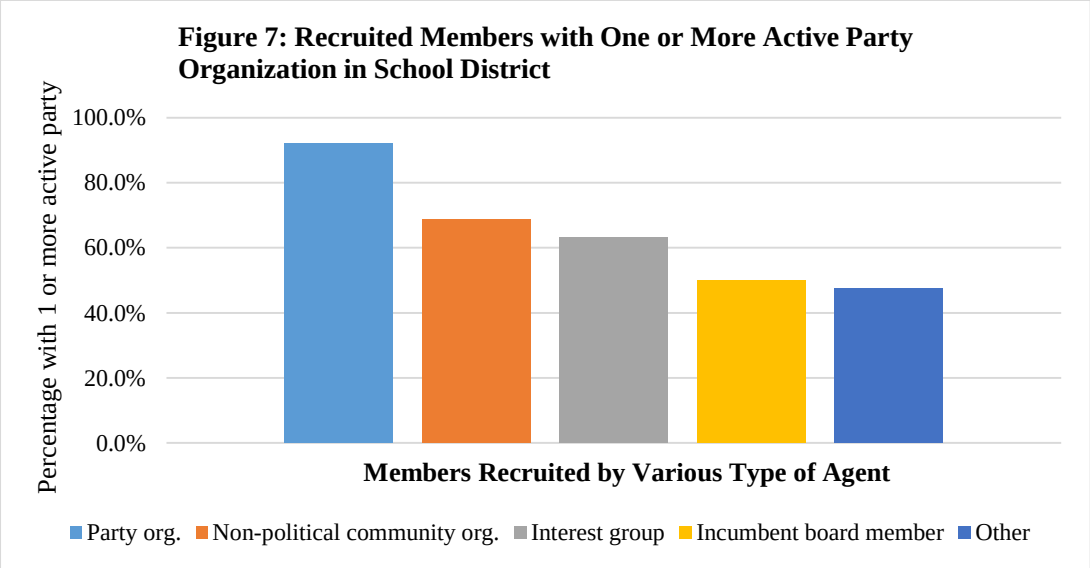
As previously noted, suburbanites comprise over 57 percent of all recruited members. A vast majority of members recruited by political parties, interest groups, and incumbent board members represent suburban districts while an above-average percentage of those recruited by non-political community organizations and "other" sources come from rural districts.

The survey data indicates that the predominant recruitment source is not fixed across geographic regions in Pennsylvania, Interest groups are the most probable source of recruitment in Allegheny County, political parties in the Southeast, incumbent board members in the Southwest, non-political community organizations in the Central region, and "other" recruiters in the Northwest. Leading recruitment agents in the Northeast region are almost evenly split between "other" sources, non-political community organizations, and incumbent board members.

Political party recruits are predominately between the ages of 50 and 59 and come from households earning over $100,000 per year. A solid majority of non-political community organization recruits are between the ages of 50 and 69 and are most likely to

live in households making less than $25,000 each year or between $50,000 and $99,999. Interest group recruits are also most likely to fall within the ages of 50 to 69, but are the most spread out among income levels with 33 percent making less than $25,000, 33 percent making between $50,000 and $99,999, and 22 percent making more than $200,000 annually. Members recruited by incumbent board members contain the highest proportion under 30 and the highest proportion between the ages of 50 and 59. These members are also the wealthiest, with half making over $200,000 annually. Those enlisted by "other" types of organizations are generally between 40 and 59 years of age and mirror the household income pattern of members recruited by incumbent board members.

Although Republicans represent the majority of each of the subsets of members recruited by various organizations, the highest percentage of Democratic members were recruited by both non-political community organizations and interest groups. Figure 7 below demonstrates that over 90 percent of party recruited candidates emerge from districts featuring at least one active party organization. The likelihood of having at least one active party organization in the district declines across subsets of members who were enlisted by other recruitment agents, indicating that in places with the weakest party organizations, other types of recruitment agents are likely to step in to attempt to fill the void left by weak party infrastructure.



Members recruited by political parties aren't just more likely to have stronger associations with the political parties in their districts or to emanate from districts featuring at least one active party organization, but they are also more politically ambitious than their peers with 38 percent of them saying that they think they may run for an office other than the one they currently hold. This figure is nearly 13 percent higher than the collective ambition level of any of the other subsets of recruited members and nearly 14 points higher than the full sample.

Those recruited by non-political community organizations, incumbent board members, and "other" sources were about as likely as the full sample to say that they are politically ambitious. However, those enlisted by interest groups such as education, church, labor, or business groups are three percent less ambitious than the full sample and nearly four percent less ambitious than any of the other types of recruited members.

Summary and Discussion

The first research question posed in Chapter 1 was labeled "Motivation" and asked *"What political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?"* The second research question posed in Chapter 1 was labeled "Recruitment" and asked *"Are candidates for public school boards self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community?"* This chapter has helped provide clear answers to these two questions. The data accumulated through the Pennsylvania School Board Survey shows that individuals serving on school boards throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are overwhelmingly self-starters (just over 76 percent) rather than individuals who have been recruited to seek office at the behest of a political or non-political organization in their area (about 24 percent).

As discussed in detail throughout this chapter, over three quarters of all board members spanning every personal, political, and demographic indicator report to being non-recruited self-starters at significantly higher rates than those who report to having been recruited. On the whole, this majority bloc of self-starting members are more likely to be male, white, middle class, younger, and employed full time than their recruited colleagues. They are also more likely than the recruited members analyzed here to have school-age children at home, represent rural communities, identify with the Democratic Party yet admit to a conservative ideological outlook, and to have run for a seat on the school board because of civic or public duty and to ensure that the district is well-managed while children from their own families are or were attending school.

For their part, recruited members are more likely than their self-starting peers to emerge from districts with one or two active political party organizations, and they report higher levels of engagement in both political and non-political affairs in their communities before seeking office. These recruited members also say that organizations such as political parties, community groups, labor unions, and school or education organizations exert greater influence in local elections in their areas than in the districts of self-starters.

These findings—particularly the data pertaining to the second question regarding recruitment—ran counter to the author's own expectations at the commencement of this project. The preface to this study recounted the narrative of several highly contested school board races personally observed by the author during his time as a secondary school student. Chapter 2 included a review of the academic literature by authors such as Moe alleging that teachers unions essentially dictate public education policy in the United States and Deckman who found that Christian conservative actors and organizations in certain types of school districts (not nationwide) work tirelessly to influence outcomes of school district elections. Chapter 2 also included a discussion of the work by Berkman and Plutzer on public opinion and politics in American school districts. In their work, Berkman and Plutzer dissected the pre-existing theories regarding the "Grey Peril" (Rosenbaum and Button, 1989 and Coles, 1997) in which armies of senior citizen voters may at any time rise up to combat high school taxes.

A combination of anecdotal evidence culled from years of reading local press reports about contentious school board elections throughout Pennsylvania, the experiences discussed in the preface, and the literature noted in Chapter 2 created an

expectation that they survey of Pennsylvania's school board members would yield results confirming that a significant percentage of members were sought out by a party organization, interest group, or some other type of actor within their community. Instead, the results confirmed that exactly the opposite is true in the Keystone State. Board members tend to be self-starters who sought their positions because of a personal sense of civic duty or to oversee the district's management while kids from their own families were attending school in the district.

Although the expectation that a larger number of Pennsylvania's school board members were recruited to seek office by a recruitment agent such as a party, an incumbent board member, a church-affiliated organization, a business group, or a labor group was not confirmed, the data uncovered here does help to dispel some previous assertions regarding political power in school districts and school district elections.

For instance, Moe (2006) argued that "unions are typically the most powerful participants in school board elections" (13) and that teacher unions "are about equally powerful in districts of all sizes" (13). He also contended that "unions are major players in these elections" (13) and often face competition from other types of organizations in school district elections. Additionally, Berkman and Plutzer (2005) posited that they "expect as well that unions with collective-bargaining rights will be more effective at the local level and, in general, shall be more politicized and militant in their approach to both local and state politics" (119). Their research also suggested that union strength at the local level varies and that local unions must be both large and robust in order to achieve outcomes beneficial to their members.

The Pennsylvania School Board Survey shows that labor unions and their influence in school board politics are largely absent from the political scene when it comes to recruiting candidates in school board elections and influencing the outcomes of school board races. Several specific data points offer an explanation that is contradictory to the conventional wisdom about labor unions essentially controlling school boards and school district business.

- When asked to identify types of organizations that are either "extremely" or "very" influential over local elections in their districts, only 21 percent of recruited members and 15 percent of self-starters identified labor unions. Organized labor lagged far behind party organizations, school or education organizations, and non-political community groups in this department.
- When asked to identify types of individuals that are either "extremely" or "very" influential over local elections in their districts, only 18 percent of recruited members and 11 percent of self-starters identified individual labor leaders.
- Only eight percent of those who were recruited reported to have been enlisted by a labor union.
- Among the 35 percent of all respondents who said that they ran as part of a slate of candidates, less than one percent (actually, just one total respondent) said that the slate was organized by a labor union.
- A total of 18 percent of respondents said that they are or were a member of a labor union (although they were not asked to identify which union

they were a member of, meaning that they could have been affiliated with a union other than an educator's union).

It is necessary to consider several other points about labor unions as confirmed by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey. Very few patterns appear within the data regarding union membership or union activity within the school districts. We know from examining the numbers that recruited and non-recruited members were equally likely to say that they are members of a labor union (17 percent) as were ambitious and unambitious members (16 percent). This study revealed only seven members who reported to have been recruited to run by a labor union. Of these seven labor recruits, not a single one was part of a slate of candidates and instead appeared to be recruited as a solitary candidate in a race for either four or five seats in a given election cycle. This suggests that where union activity did play a role in candidate recruitment, the labor organizations involved may have been working to supplement the number of reliable votes on a "friendly" board or to add a single pro-labor voice to a less friendly board, perhaps in time for an upcoming contract negotiations.

This study also discovered that four of the seven labor recruited members say that they represent rural districts while just one claims to represent an urban district and another solitary labor recruit represents a suburban district. Likewise, 17 percent of all recruited members (not just those recruited by organized labor) reported that they are members of a labor union. The majority—64 percent—of these labor union members also come from rural districts. Another 29 percent are from suburban districts and just seven percent represent urban areas.

Lastly, the data collected through the Pennsylvania School Board Survey allowed for the creation of a baseline profile of school board members who indicated that they are members of a labor union. The data reveal that this subset of board members is far more Democratic than their colleagues in terms of party affiliation (64 percent), less conservative than other board members (29 percent), emerge at a disproportionate rate from union-friendly Southwestern Pennsylvania (26 percent), and contains a larger share of women than other subsets of board members (43 percent). Additionally, the data show that a combined 62 percent of union members who serve on Pennsylvania school boards are either employed in the education field or are retired.

I am able to draw several conclusions about union activity and union members serving on Pennsylvania school boards after analyzing these data:

- As the most Democratic and moderate subset of board members, union members likely serve as the partisan counterweight to the rest of the school board sample, which tends to be considerably more Republican and more conservative than the state as a whole. This makes even more sense when considering that 43 percent of those who report to being a member of a union say that they have volunteered on other political campaigns, 32 percent have lobbied a government official or agency, 13 percent have served as a party committee person, 17 percent say they work for the government (possibly the school system), and 22 percent say that they have been politically involved through their profession.

  My reading of these data suggests that the activists within the Democratic Party organizations within the districts and the union members within the

same districts are experiencing a great deal of overlap. The activists doing the work of the party organizations in these places such as volunteering for campaigns and serving as committeepersons are also rank and file union members.

- Although organized labor does not appear to be active in recruiting candidates to seek school board seats, 16 percent of all board members belong a labor union. Even if we have no way of making a precise determination regarding which union they belong to, the fact that 62 percent of all union members serving on school boards are either in the education profession or are retired from their profession could lead us to infer that a considerable share of these individuals are or were public school teachers or public school employees.
- A relatively large chunk of union members (59 percent) and recruited union members (57 percent) are from rural districts. Considering that rural areas tend to be viewed as the most politically conservative areas in the state, it may seem odd that union members are present on school boards in such districts. However, if we take the aforementioned theory about these members either being teachers or retired from the education profession seriously, it becomes far more plausible to consider that union members are active in politics and government throughout every school district in every region of the state since the entire Commonwealth and every traditional public school teacher in it is covered by the same blanket "closed shop" rules. Therefore, just because a district may be located in a

> conservative county in a rural section of the state does not mean that there is a scarcity of active unions or union members, especially since unions containing teachers and other public school employees exist in every one of the state's school districts.

Despite these important pieces of evidence indicating at least some level of activity among unions and union members on local Pennsylvania school boards, this research has not led me to conclude that the union-controlled school system as depicted in Chapter 2 is prevalent in this state. I have found no systemic or clear evidence suggesting that Moe's portrait of school boards controlled by union elites is true regarding Pennsylvania. Lyndon Johnson was known for dismissing ideas that made little sense to him by opining that "that dog just don't hunt" (Safire, 1993, 790). Regarding local school boards in the Keystone State, Moe's union power thesis "just don't hunt."

Labor unions were not the only type of interest group whose influence can best be classified as underwhelming when it comes to Pennsylvania school boards. According to the findings of this study, church-based organizations are also relatively absent from the school board scene in Pennsylvania, especially when it comes to recruiting members or influencing school board elections. Although over 50 percent of respondents indicated that they are active in a church organization, just three percent of those who were recruited to run for their positions were recruited by church-based groups. Not a single board member who said that they were part of a slate of candidates reported to have been on a slate organized by a church or religious-affiliated organization. Lastly, just 10 percent of all respondents said that church groups are "extremely" or "very" influential in local elections in their districts, lagging far behind party organizations, non-political

community organizations, and school or education oriented organizations. Church groups also lagged behind labor unions and only managed to out-pace business organizations and fraternal clubs and organizations when it comes to the ability to influence local elections.

In summation, Research Questions 1 and 2 can best be answered by saying that members serving on Pennsylvania's school boards are engaged in local politics and community affairs at an exceedingly high level, yet are largely self-starters who seek office out of a sense of civic duty or to help make certain that the district is well run while their own kids are or were in school. When it comes to recruiting members to seek office, organizing slates of candidates, and influencing local elections, the focal point of any future streams of research on school board politics should pay careful attention to local political parties as they are the ones who are the most highly engaged at this level.

CHAPTER 7

AMBITION

Survey Data Review

Chapters 5 and 6 provided crucial answers to the research questions pertaining to the factors that drive citizens to seek positions on school boards, whether individuals serving on Pennsylvania school boards have a history of political and community engagement, and whether candidates for school board seats are self-recruited or recruited to run for office by other individuals or organizations within their communities. This chapter will work to address the fourth research question pertaining to ambition which asks "Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher offices in the future?" The chapter will begin with a review of findings from the Pennsylvania School Board Survey related to political ambition and will then move on to discuss similarities and differences between ambitious and unambitious school board members as well as school board members exhibiting different levels of ambition.

Table 44: Question 24- Do you think you will ever run for an office other than the one you currently hold?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	24.3%	89
No	75.7%	278
	answered question	**367**
	skipped question	**13**

Almost 76 percent of respondents reported that they do not intend to seek an elective office other than the one they currently hold. On the other hand, over 24 percent say that they may decide to seek a different public office in the future. A total of 97 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 45: Question 25- If yes, which type of office would you be most likely to seek (please select all that apply)?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
A different local office	46.1%	41
A countywide position	42.7%	38
A state office like State Senator or State Representative	50.6%	45
A federal office like U.S. Congress	16.9%	15
Other (please specify)	3.4%	3
answered question		**89**
skipped question		**291**

Question 25 was made available to any respondents who answered in the affirmative to Question 24 regarding political ambition. Respondents were asked to identify which type of office or offices they would be most likely to seek in the future. Over 50 percent of respondents with potential political ambition said that they would be most likely to consider running for a state office such as State Senator or State Representative while over 46 percent said that they may consider seeking a different local office.

A total of 43 percent reported to have interest in seeking a countywide position while 17 percent said that their interest may be in a federal office like United States Congress. One replied that they would be interested in a state office if they happened to be younger while another said that he or she would prefer to seek a position that relates to their occupation. A final respondent indicated that they are politically ambitious, but do not know as of yet what type of office they would consider running for in the future.

Table 46: Question 26- In what way do you hope that your service on the local public school board has prepared you to serve in a different public office should you choose to run for such a position (please select all that apply)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Provided experience in dealing with budgets	9.9%	9
Allowed me to gain experience in working with the public	20.9%	20
Gave me exposure to key political actors and organizations	3.3%	3
Allowed me to formulate a platform to help propel me to a higher office	2.2%	2
Challenged me to work together with others to seek consensus for policymaking	36.3%	33
All or most of the above	14.3%	13
Other	12.1%	11
	answered question	**91**
	skipped question	**289**

Over 36 percent of respondents with political ambition (see Question 24 above) believe that their school board service has prepared them to serve in a different position by challenging them work together with others to seek consensus for policymaking. About 21 percent said that their school board service has prepared them by allowing them to gain experience in working with the public while about 10 percent said that serving on the school board has helped them by providing experience in dealing with budgets.

Just three percent said that school board service has given them exposure to key political actors and organizations while two percent said that it has allowed them to formulate a platform to help propel them to a higher office. Respondents were only permitted to choose one of the aforementioned options or select "other" to provide a response not among those listed in the survey. 14 percent noted that all or most of the available choices applied to them while 12 percent provided an alternative response.

Table 47: Question 1- How many years have you served on the school board?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Less than 1	5.0%	19
1 to 4	37.0%	140
5 to 8	28.0%	106
9 to 12	13.5%	51
13 to 16	9.0%	34
17 to 20	4.8%	18
Over 20	2.6%	10
answered question		**378**
skipped question		**1**

Respondents were asked to provide an open-ended answer to this question. These responses were then coded with each reply assigned to one of the seven categories described in the table above. The plurality of respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey indicated that they have served for a span of time ranging from one to four years, which was the choice of 37 percent in Question 1. The second largest number of participants—28 percent—report that they have served between five and eight years on the board while 14 percent say that their school board service has spanned between 9 and 12 years. A full nine percent indicated that they have served from 13 to 16 years while almost five percent reported that they have either served from 17 to 20 years. Another five percent said that they are currently serving in their first year on the board. The least likely response was that of over 20 years or five or more terms, which was selected by just three percent of participants.

Table 48: Question 23- About how many years would you like to serve on the school board?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
1 term (4 years) or less	7.8%	27
Between 2 and 3 terms (5-12 years)	44.1%	153
Between 4 and 5 terms (13-20 years)	17.3%	60
More than 5 terms (over 20 years)	4.3%	15
For as long as possible/unsure of length/will wait and see	16.7%	58
Will be finished after present term/finished soon (overall length not specified)	9.8%	34
answered question		**366**
Indistinguishable response		**14**
Verifiable response		**347**
skipped question		**14**

This open-ended question sought to determine the length of time that each respondent desires to serve as a member of his or her school board. Given that this was an open-ended question, participants in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey were asked to enter a response into a blank provided through the Survey Monkey tool. Because I did not specify a specific number of years desired by each respondent, some of the responses reflected a range of years or a very broad period of time. As on respondent noted, they wish to serve for "life" while another said that they want out of their commitment to serve as soon as possible. Responses were classified into one of seven categories.

The plurality of respondents—over 44 percent—said that they desire to serve between five and 12 years, or between two and three terms on the board. Almost 17 percent of respondents eschewed a specific number of years or terms and instead noted that they intend to wait until deciding on the number of terms they expected to serve or that they intend to serve for as long as possible. Over 17 percent said that they would prefer to remain on the board between four and five terms or 13 to 20 years.

A total of 10 percent of respondents said that they intend to be finished with their school board service almost immediately or at the end of their current term in office. Nearly eight percent indicated that they would like to serve one term or less on the school board while four percent noted that they would prefer to serve five terms or more, which would amount to 20 years or more of school board service. 14 respondents provided an indistinguishable answer that did not include any specific length of time or desired number of terms. Responses that were included in this category included items such as "more" or "another two years," neither of which could be classified along with the other responses.

Assessing Ambitious and Unambitious School Board Members

Political ambition is defined in this study as an incumbent politician's desire to seek a political office that they view as being more important or powerful than the one he or she presently holds. The frequent reference to those who lack ambition as being "unambitious" is not intended to be interpreted as a negative attribute. The term "unambitious" is in no way meant to imply that these members do not pursue an active (or ambitious) policy agenda, are not motivated to provide oversight when dealing with the district's budget, or lack the enthusiasm to participate in politics or civic engagement in their communities in a less-than-determined manner. The use of "ambition" in this sense applies solely to the idea of actively pursuing a higher political office.

The literature review chapter provided a detailed overview of Schlesinger's model of political ambition. This theory posits that holding public office creates an opportunity structure for political advancement which enables an elected official to potentially

advance from a lower office to a higher office using the original post as a "base office" or a springboard. Schlesinger's theory also attempted to reconcile the notion of political ambition with behavior by creating three categories of ambition: discrete (holds office for period of time, recedes from public life), static (seeks to make career out of holding the same office in perpetuity), and progressive (aspires to run for a different position). The remaining portions of this chapter will assess not only the characteristics which distinguish ambitious members from those who are unambitious, but will also split the school board sample into three categories of ambition based on Schlesinger's model.

This study examines incumbent members of Pennsylvania public school boards. As such, before continuing with a review of the ambition-related data from the survey, it will be helpful to briefly explain why incumbent board members may decide to seek another office beyond the school board seat that they presently serve as well as why the majority of respondents may desire to "stand pat" and continue holding their school board seat without consideration of another, higher office.

First, why may sitting board members choose to either hold their school board position for an extended period of time and make a (unpaid) public service career from that position or hold that position for a brief period of time before withdrawing from this type of electoral public service to resume their private and personal lives? Members may be compelled to shun seeking higher office and stand pat for a number of reasons.

- Their main interest may be to serve the public school district in which they live and sincerely believe that the best way to do so is through service on the school board.

- They may have no desire whatsoever to hold higher office, which could require them to surrender their career in order to run for and hold a full-time, professionalized position.
- As they continue to accumulate experience serving on the school board, they may sense that they are increasing their own clout and expertise on education issues and problems facing the school district. Leaving the school board would result in losing the ability to influence items pertaining to the school district budget, curriculum, hiring the administrative team, or helping negotiate the next labor union contract.
- They may not have the types of connections in the political world necessary to help elevate them to another position.
- They may have taken a series of "tough" votes as a member of the board such as to raise property taxes or to prohibit a certain type of science textbook that could possibly return to haunt them in another type of political campaign.

Second, why would sitting members of local school boards have the inclination to seek a higher elective office other than the one they presently serve in?

- These members may believe that the best way to advance their own policy agenda is through an office with greater policymaking influence.
- They may be hardline partisans who see the need to make certain that their own political party is adequately represented in a race for a different type of office.

- They may desire additional power that is available only through another type of office.
- They could be groomed by a political party organization or another type of interest or community group to seek and hold a higher office.

Are Pennsylvania's School Board Members Politically Ambitious?

The brief response to this question is "no, Pennsylvania's school board members are largely unambitious." A majority of the state's elected school board members who participated in the survey report to being unambitious, meaning that they are either content with holding their current seat on the school board for an extended period of time or are planning on holding their position for a brief period before withdrawing from public service. Overall, 76 percent of respondents indicated that they do not think they will ever run for an office other than the one they currently hold. An additional 24 percent indicated that they do possess a progressive level of ambition and may seek another office in the future.

Comparing Ambitious and Unambitious Members

In this chapter we have already established that a majority of respondents do not report to be politically ambitious and that there are clear divisions between members when considering whether their ambition level can best be described as discrete, static, or progressive. This section will consider some of the intriguing differences between members who are ambitious (those with a progressive level of ambition) and those who are not (those classified as bearing discrete or static levels of ambition).

Although males comprise 62 percent of all respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey, almost 73 percent of those reporting to be ambitious are men. Likewise, women comprise over 38 percent of the full sample and just over 27 percent of members who report to be politically ambitious. Unambitious members are also slightly wealthier than their ambitious counterparts. Nearly 15 percent of ambitious members report to having a household income of between less than $25,000 and $49,999 while just eight percent of unambitious members report a household income at this level. Ambitious members are eight percent more likely to report that their highest level of educational attainment is some college or post-secondary while unambitious members are over six percent more likely to hold advanced degrees.

Members who are politically ambitious are collectively younger than the unambitious with 58 percent reporting to fall between the ages of under 30 and 49. Unambitious members tend to fall on the opposite end of the spectrum as 79 percent are over 50 years of age. Politically ambitious members are seven percent more likely to be single, 15 percent more likely to be employed full-time, and four percent more likely to be self-employed than their unambitious peers. On the other hand, unambitious members are more likely to report to being retired, employed part-time, or a homemaker. Perhaps the greatest statistical difference between these two types of members is the likelihood of having school age children, as ambitious members are 23 percent more likely than unambitious members to have school age kids at home. There is also a sharp geographic divide as ambitious members are 12 percent more likely to represent rural districts while unambitious members are 13 percent more likely to represent suburban districts.

Partisan differences between the two subsets of members are negligible, but unambitious members are six percent more likely to identify as conservatives than their ambitious peers. Ambitious members are four percent more liberal than unambitious members and are nearly three percent more moderate as well. Over 67 percent of ambitious members come from districts with *at least* one active political party organization as compared about 58 percent of unambitious members. Additionally, although unambitious members were about 10 percent more likely to have run as part of a slate, they were 22 percent less likely to have run on a slate organized by a political party. Instead, they are vastly more likely to have been on a slate organized by friends and neighbors or incumbent members of the school board.

There are also clear differences between the sources of recruitment for the 27 percent of ambitious candidates who were recruited to run and the 23 percent of unambitious members who were recruited. Ambitious members were nearly 15 percent more likely to be recruited by a political party and about five percent more likely to be recruited by a labor organization than unambitious members. Meanwhile, unambitious members were over five percent more likely to be recruited by a non-political community organization and over nine percent more likely to have been recruited by an education organization or person affiliated with education in the district. Ambitious members were also collectively more highly involved in politics and more likely to be engaged in community affairs prior to seeking a position on the school board those who are unambitious.

Unambitious members tend have more board experience than their ambitious colleagues with 19 percent and nine percent reporting to have served for 13 or more

years, respectively. Likewise, 49 percent of ambitious members have served for four years or less as compared to 39 percent of unambitious members. Despite the fact that both subsets of members reported that issues pertaining to education quality and curriculum are most important to them, unambitious members were 11 percent more likely to identify issues pertaining exclusively to education as being the most important.

Static, Discrete, and Progressive Levels of Ambition

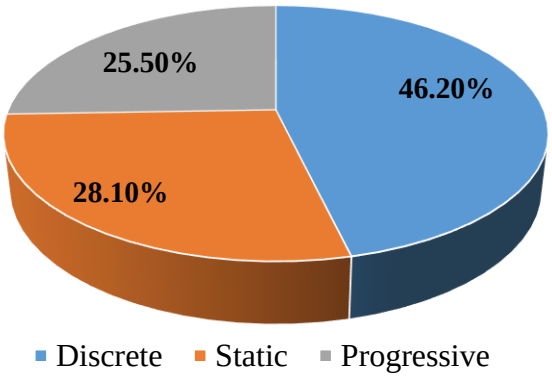
The survey data also allows for a closer examination of whether members who lack progressive ambition could best be classified as possessing discrete or static ambition. Question 23 in the survey asked respondents to describe their *desired* amount of time to serve on the school board. This was an open-ended question in which members either described a fixed number of years or a certain number of terms. A number of other respondents described their desired length of service as being somewhat indefinite, noting that they intended to serve as long as possible. Others stated that they will continue serving, but will have to wait and see before committing to a certain time horizon. Others indicated that they will either be finished "soon," in the near future, or at the conclusion of their current term without indicating the exact number of years.

Table 49: Desired Years of Service Among Unambitious Members	
Desired Years of Service	**Among Members Lacking Progressive Ambition**
1 term (4 yrs) or less	8.5%
Between 2 and 3 terms (5-12 yrs)	44.8%
Between 4 and 5 terms (13-20 yrs)	16.2%
More than 5 terms (over 20 yrs)	4.6%
As long as possible/will wait and see	17.0%
Finished after this term/finish soon	8.9%

In order to make an informed determination about whether members lacking progressive ambition should be classified as possessing discrete or static ambition levels, members were sorted into two sets. Those who said that they intend to serve for a time period between one term or less and three terms as well as those who said that they will be finished after their current term or finished soon were coded as bearing *discrete* ambition, meaning that they intend to walk away from public service sooner rather than later. Members reporting to desire to serve more than four terms or for as long as possible were coded as harboring *static* ambition. Based on this analysis, we can conclude that a plurality of respondents—just over 46 percent—possess discrete ambition, 28.1 percent possess static ambition, and 25.5 percent[14] are progressively ambitious.

[14] This 25.5 percent figure does not add up to the 24.3 percent figure given for members who are progressively ambitious among the full sample. The reason for this 1.2 percent discrepancy is because 19 unambitious respondents did not provide enough information to allow themselves to be classified in either the discrete or static categories. This allowed for the overall percentage of members possessing progressive ambition to appear slightly larger than the full sample.

Figure 8: Ambition Level of PA School Board Members



Respondents possessing a progressive level of political ambition were asked two supplemental questions that were not available to those who reported to be unambitious. First, these members were asked to indicate which type of office they would be most likely to seek should they decide to run for higher office. Participants were permitted to select any or all options that they believed to be applicable to their own aspirations and ambitions. Nearly 51 percent indicated that they would be likely to seek a seat in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, 46 percent mentioned a different local office would likely be their goal, nearly 43 percent said that they would consider pursuing a countywide office, and almost 17 percent said that they would be likely to run for a federal office like United States Congress.

Members with a progressive level of ambition were also asked how their service on the local public school board has prepared them to serve in a different public office should they choose to run for such a position. Over 36 percent indicated that their school board service challenged them to work together with others to seek consensus for

policymaking, almost 21 percent said that it allowed them to gain experience in working with the public, and about 10 percent said that it provided them with experience in dealing with budgets. Just three percent said that their school board service gave them exposure to key political actors and organizations, two percent reported that this allowed them to formulate a platform to help propel them to a higher office, and over 14 percent said that all or most of these items have prepared them to serve in a different public office.

Several important, discernable differences exist between members when broken into the three subsets of discrete, static, or progressive ambition. A number of these noteworthy discrepancies between members based on their ambition level are indicated in Table 10 below. A full accounting of variations between members with progressive, static, and discrete levels of ambition on additional variables covered in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey is located in the Statistical Appendix.

Table 50: Personal Characteristics	***Progressive***	***Static***	***Discrete***
Gender			
Male	72.7%	55.7%	57.5%
Female	27.3%	44.3%	42.5%
Age			
Under 30	9.1%	1.0%	0.0%
30 to 39	14.8%	2.1%	4.4%
40 to 49	34.1%	10.3%	24.1%
50 to 59	30.7%	46.4%	39.2%
60 to 69	6.8%	30.9%	25.9%
Over 70	4.5%	9.3%	6.3%
School Age Children			
Yes	56.8%	22.4%	42.1%
No	43.2%	77.6%	57.9%

First, members who are progressively ambitious are considerably less likely to be women than those who have either static or discrete levels of ambition. A gap of over 45 percent exists between the genders among members with progressive ambition while a gap of just 11 and 15 percent separates men and women with static and discrete ambition, respectively. These findings associate closely with Fox and Lawless (2005 and 2010) who found in their study of political ambition that women (and minorities) tend to be "substantially less likely to express political aspirations" (2005, 655) and that "women are much less likely to express interest in holding high-level office" (655).

The second variable noted in the table demonstrates that the likelihood of finding members with progressive ambition declines with age. Nearly 60 percent of members with progressive ambition—an interest in moving up the political ladder—are under 49 years of age while just 13 percent of those with static ambition and 29 percent with discrete ambition are in that age range. Conversely, 71 percent of those with discrete ambition and 87 percent of those with static ambition are over 50 compared to just 42 percent of progressively ambitious members. Somewhat related to the age variable, 57 percent of progressively ambitious members have school age children at home as compared to 22 percent and 42 percent of those with static or discrete ambitious, respectively.

Table 11 below indicates several other data points worth discussing along with the political ambition content of this study. Recalling that Chapter 6 showed that a sizable majority of over 76 percent of respondents indicated they were not recruited to seek office and were self-starters, there were some noticeable differences between recruitment and recruitment sources depending upon the level of ambition held by the respondents to

the Pennsylvania School Board Survey. The table below shows that 30 percent of members with static ambition were recruited to run for their positions while just 27 percent of those with progressive ambition and 21 percent of discretely ambitious members were recruited.

Table 51: Recruitment and Recruitment Agents	***Progressive***	***Static***	***Discrete***
Recruited to Run?			
Yes	27.0%	29.9%	20.5%
No	73.0%	70.1%	79.5%
If Yes, Who Contacted You?			
Political Party Committee/Org.	46.7%	31.3%	34.1%
Non-Political Community Org.	26.7%	28.1%	31.7%
Church Affiliated Organization	0.0%	6.3%	2.4%
Labor Organization	10.0%	3.1%	7.3%
Business Organization	3.3%	3.1%	0.0%
Fraternal Organization	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Incumbent Member of Board	6.7%	12.5%	4.9%
Education Organization or Person Affiliated with Education in District	0.0%	3.1%	14.6%
Other	6.7%	12.5%	4.9%

Although progressively ambitious members aren't the most likely to be recruited, they are significantly more likely to be recruited by a political party organization. Progressively ambitious recruits are 16 percent more likely than discretely ambitious members and 19 percent more likely than statically ambitious members to have been recruited by a party organization. Those with progressive ambition are also 20 percent

more likely to be recruited by a party organization than another type of recruitment agent. Although political party organizations comprise a plurality of recruitment sources for static and discrete members as well, the numbers are considerably closer. Parties are just three percent more likely to recruit those with static ambition and two percent more likely to recruit those with discrete ambition than non-political community organizations.

Summary and Discussion

The fourth research question offered in Chapter 1 was labeled "Ambition" and asked "Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future?" The data presented and analyzed in this chapter informs us that roughly three out of every four school board members serving on Pennsylvania school boards are not politically ambitious and do not aspire to seek or hold higher public offices in the future. The data assessed in this chapter presented a plethora of useful insights into the individuals who serve on public school boards in the Keystone State.

My own expectation was that progressively ambitious members—the individuals who expressed that they were considering running for a higher office in the future—would be more likely than their peers to say that they were recruited to run for their school board position. The reason for this expectation was the assumption that recruiting agents would be more inclined to enlist individuals who may be willing to represent the interests of the recruiting agent not only on the school board, but also at another level of public life in the future. Instead, members with static ambition were slightly more likely to report to having been recruited to run for the school board. In hindsight of my earlier

prediction regarding the relationship between progressive ambition and recruitment, the reason for why a recruitment agent may want to enlist a statically ambitious candidate to serve on the school board for an extended period of time is understandable. Recruitment organizations such as the Parent Teacher Association, the Democratic Party, the teacher's union, etc. would be well-served by finding candidates willing to commit to a greater amount of time on the school board focusing on the issues that interest the organization responsible for the recruitment outreach rather than considering a move to a different type of office.

There are two essential takeaways from this data on party involvement in recruitment. First, since parties are the most likely recruiting agent for all three types of members discussed here, it is reasonable to argue that parties at the local level are the main source of activity in school district-level politics and ought to be examined more closely and carefully in future streams of research in this area. Second, despite the fact that ambitious members and recruited members are in the minority among respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey, the data presented here shows that the largest cohort of ambitious members who were recruited were recruited by political parties as opposed to being enlisted by another type of organization. This in and of itself has interesting implications because it lends some credence to the idea that when they are engaged in recruitment efforts at the school board level, the parties may very well be considering candidates who are open to "moving up" to other offices. Thus, the parties are potentially using this small subset of respondents who are both 1) recruited and 2) progressively ambitious to constitute a party development pool for future elections for higher offices.

Looking beyond political parties, incumbent school board members were not extremely active in the recruitment game, having enlisted just seven percent of recruits with progressive ambition and five percent of those with discrete ambition. However, sitting board members who engaged in the action of recruiting members to serve as their school board colleagues were responsible for recruiting 13 percent of those with *static* ambition. A likely explanation of this once again is the notion that among the traits an incumbent board member may be most likely to seek in a recruit is a colleague who will support them on votes on policy areas of shared interest and secondly a colleague who will remain on the board for a longer period of time to continue working alongside the member who engaged in the recruitment outreach.

In conclusion, Pennsylvania school board members are not collectively ambitious and the school board does not appear to be the best venue from which to launch a career as a political candidate. However, we now know that a plurality of Pennsylvania's school board members are discretely ambitious, meaning that their preference is to hold onto their positions for a period of time before exiting public service and returning to their lives as parents, teachers, businesspeople, and citizens. A smaller percentage of members have aspirations to seek higher office or cling to their school board seats for as long as possible. The data presented here also informs us that when ambition is a factor for members, it only makes sense to follow the trail which will inevitably lead back to political parties. This is only reasonable since ambitious members are more likely than their peers to emerge from districts with active party organizations, more likely to report being politically active, and more likely to have been recruited by a party organization within their district.

CHAPTER 8

MANAGING THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTITIONERS

From the School House to the State House (and Senate)

Chapter 6 established that a minority of respondents to the Pennsylvania School Board Survey have a progressive level of ambition. Based on responses to questions regarding their desired number of years of school board service as well as their own aspirations to seek higher office, over 46 percent of members could be classified as being discretely ambitious, over 28 percent could best be described as having a static level of ambition, and over 25 percent were classified as being progressively ambitious. This chapter will examine school board service from the perspectives of several individuals who have once served in such positions, but have since advanced to higher office. Chapter 8 will conclude with a discussion of the relationship between the legislative branch of school district governance embodied by the school board and the executive branch of governance personified by the district superintendent, which was a critical theme reflected in the academic literature considered in Chapter 2 as well as by the interview subjects who will be discussed momentarily.

Do any Pennsylvania school board members end up winning seats in the Pennsylvania legislature? The Pennsylvania General Assembly is home to sixteen individuals who either began their political careers as members of public school boards or served on a public school board prior to being elected to the House or Senate. A review of each of the 253 legislator biographies (203 in the House, 50 in the Senate) contained in *Pennsylvania Manual, Volume 119* for the 2011-12 session revealed that 16 members

serving in one of the two legislative chambers once served on a public school board. Much like the survey sample of Pennsylvania school board members, the state legislators who once served on a school board are mostly Republican, with 14 of the 16 being members of the Grand Old Party and just two belonging to the Democratic Party.

These General Assembly members are uniquely positioned to help explain whether those who begin by serving in a local position such as the school board before climbing to a position such as the legislature are progressively ambitious from the time of their initial entry into the world of electoral politics, or if that ambition grows and changes as one's time in public office marches on.

As per the survey findings, school board members with progressive ambition represented a minority of the overall respondents. Additionally, a minority of members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly began their careers as public school board members. Despite these two facts, the presence of these generally accessible and experienced public officials struck me as an obvious enhancement to this study of Pennsylvania school boards and those who serve on them. All members of the General Assembly—regardless of whether they serve on the House or Senate Education Committees—make decisions each session pertaining to public education in Pennsylvania. These decisions include setting the size of the education budget, imposing mandates that are implemented by superintendents and school boards, and policy choices that effect parents and students statewide. The actions of Pennsylvania legislators have a direct effect on all five of the groups of stakeholders discussed in Chapter Two. As such, an opportunity to integrate meaningful discussions with a number of these members with authentic school board experience is highly beneficial to this study.

Trends in public opinion as well as education finance in the Commonwealth help underscore the importance of education and education policy among lawmakers in the General Assembly, regardless of whether they serve on the House or Senate Education Committees. A Franklin and Marshall Poll (2014) released by the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin and Marshall College found that education was consistently ranked by Pennsylvania citizens as being the most important problem facing the state in three four surveys conducted between August 2013 and July 2014. Meanwhile, data compiled by Temple University's Center on Regional Politics demonstrates that the state share of education funding in Pennsylvania has declined precipitously over the past several decades. In the 1971-72 fiscal year, the Commonwealth was responsible for providing nearly 55 percent of the total instructional expenditures for public education statewide. That figure declined to about 30 percent in the 2013-14 fiscal year (Atherton, 2014). As a result, local school boards (and local taxpayers) are left to make up the difference as Harrisburg—under executive and legislative branch leaders of both parties—has reduced its state share contribution almost annually over the past forty years.

Given the impact of the decisions made by the legislature regarding the state's public schools, it is somewhat surprising that there are not more former school board members serving in the General Assembly. School board members have an understanding of the challenges facing local school districts and the major stakeholders found in each type of district in Pennsylvania; an understanding that would undoubtedly be useful as a member of the General Assembly. While designing this project, I believed that interviewing these members could possibly shed more light on this matter. I began contacting the offices of several of these members in the fall of 2013 in order to arrange

interviews with as many as possible in their legislative district offices or in their offices with the State Capitol Building to enhance the process of understanding school boards, ambition, recruitment, and school board service from their perspectives.

Modeled on the approach undertaken by Richard Fenno in *Home Style: House Members in their Districts* (1978) and *Watching Politicians* (1990), interview subjects were informed—often during the initial contact with a staff person—that although I intended to draw quotes from the members during the course of the interviews, the actual identities of the members would not be revealed in the text. I also informed either the members themselves or their staff contacts that I was conducting original research on Pennsylvania school boards, those who serve on them, and the process by which those who serve on school boards emerge as candidates. This chapter contains five interviews with members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly who once served as members of their local school boards. The table below indicates the interview dates and venues for each member.

Table 52: Pennsylvania General Assembly Member Interview Schedule

Subject	Type	Interview Date	Interview Venue
Legislator 1	Former school board member (R)	11/15/2013	District office
Legislator 2	Former school board member (R)	11/22/2013	District office
Legislator 3	Former school board member (R)	12/6/2013	District office
Legislator 4	Former school board member (D)	1/8/2014	District office
Legislator 5	Former school board member (R)	1/24/2014	District office

This chapter will proceed with three separate sections. Part one features interviews with five members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly who began their political careers as members of their local school boards while part two contains a

discussion of several questions from the Pennsylvania School Board Survey dedicated to determining how board members perceive of the job being done by their district superintendents, decision-making capabilities in their districts, and how their districts are managed. These questions are also directly related to Hypothesis 4 offered in Chapter 1 which address the relationship between the school boards as the legislative branch and the superintendent as the executive branch in government at the school district level. As such, the final section of this chapter appeared to be an ideal venue for a discussion of the survey data and findings pertaining to board member conceptions of school district leadership and their orientation towards their district superintendents given that this topic was one that was frequently raised by the interview subjects as being critical for understanding the challenges faced by school board members and the execution of their duties and responsibilities as public servants.

Progressive Ambition Leads to the Legislature

Legislator 1: The Civically Engaged Parent[15]

Initially driven to seek a seat on the school board because of her involvement in the schools as a parent, Legislator 1 is a Republican who represents a rural legislative district characterized by winding roads cutting across large swaths of farmland and dotted with roadside markets, small family-owned businesses, and farmhouses that resemble something out of a Rockwell painting. A junior member of the General Assembly, Legislator 1 worked in the private sector and county government before winning election to the state legislature.

[15] Interview conducted on November 15, 2013 in member's district office

Although her background is replete with examples of public and private sector service, Legislator 1's first foray into public service came as a member of her local school board. According to Legislator 1, she was highly involved in the education of her children and had served as a youth sports coach and president of the area PTA before a vacancy occurred on the school board. Unlike the majority of the respondents to the Pennsylvania school board survey, Legislator 1 sought appointment to the board rather than election given that the seat had opened up only partway through an incumbent member's term. Motivated by what she saw as serious safety issues in the schools and her own knowledge of the district's education system, Legislator 1 felt that her background and involvement in the schools as a parent would be of value to the incumbent board members who were charged with selecting one of several applicants to fill the vacant position. Following her appointment, Legislator 1 was elected to her own full term,

When asked why she thought the incumbent board members selected her to fill the initial vacancy, Legislator 1 replied that she believed her involvement in the community and the schools tipped the scales in her favor. "People knew me from the PTA and from other things I was doing in the community," she said. "When you place your name in consideration for an appointment like I did, it is important to consider who is on the board at the time since their understanding of who you are and what you have done for your community makes a difference" in who they choose.

Intrigued by the question of whether her experiences on the school board helped drive her desire to run for the legislature years later, Legislator 1 replied that "holding a position on the school board had no influence on me running for state representative." According to the legislator, she does not believe that a school board position actually

serves as a regular springboard to a different position, be it as a township supervisor, county official, or state legislator; noting that "Someone serving on the school board tends to be more focused on schools and education and less interested in moving into a higher office."

In her estimation, most people vastly underestimate all that goes into school board service until they do it for themselves by either winning an election or fulfilling an appointment to complete a partial term. Legislator 1 commented that while some people may look at school board service as a title to hold in their community, it is actually very difficult work. She says that there are four specific items that are often overlooked when considering school board service. First, school board members are confronted with the serious challenge of dealing with a large amount of money and making sure that the budget is balanced. Second, school board members put in very long hours either attending workshop sessions to learn more about upcoming items that they will have to consider or attending their regular board meetings. Third, people often forget that school board members receive no compensation for their work, meaning that some people in the community assume that since these nine people are serving in a public position, they are being compensated. Lastly, Legislator 1 suggests that school board members receive very little thanks for their efforts at serving the public.

Following a discussion about how school boards and school board members are often misunderstood or underestimated, I asked Legislator 1 to talk in some detail about where school board members in her own school district and in other school districts within her legislative district boundaries tend to emerge from. Legislator 1 was abundantly clear about one entity that is *not* a regular source of school board candidates

in her area: “Political parties are not a factor,” she said. In her view, “political party organizations in my district don’t control school board races and most candidates who run for school board seats are disengaged from the parties as a whole.”

“It is very rare for the parties to endorse in races for the school board in my area,” she said, “but I managed to get both endorsements” from the Democratic and Republican organizations for the school board position. When asked why she felt that the parties made an exception in her school board race, Legislator 1 indicated that she was probably given party backing because unlike most school board candidates and school board members, she “was in the party structure” through her involvement in local political affairs “and most school board candidates would never know that they should go to the parties and solicit endorsements.” Legislator 1 is also unique in that the school board she sat on is one of the roughly 80 that straddles multiple counties, something that she also said has an impact on the involvement or interest of parties and party leaders. According to Legislator 1, there is greater party control and organizational strength in one of the two counties than the other, meaning that the involvement of the party groups really depends, at least to some degree, in which part of the district a candidate happens to reside.

Legislator 1 was careful to note that if anything, she sees the lack of influence currently held by the party organizations in school board elections holding steady in the future. “There is a disappearing party structure,” she argues, noting that there is “no go-to-person in the parties who organizes such an effort at this level.” Since the parties do not appear to be highly active in her school district, I asked Legislator 1 who—if anyone—is chiefly responsible for recruiting or organizing school board candidates.

Based on her experiences on the school board and her observations as a legislator, Legislator 1 says that there are four main places from which local school board candidates emerge in her area: *teachers unions*, an entity that she referred to as "school board groupies" who attend virtually all of the meetings and even in some cases record the proceedings, *self-recruited candidates* who tend to be businesspeople or professional types, and *tax activists*. Legislator 1 reported that she believes that the most probable emerging recruitment agent in her area will likely be "issue-oriented groups that are especially attractive for political novices" since they serve as a rallying point for people with similar ideas. She also mentioned that several new groups have formed in one of the two counties that she represents with a focus on tax issues and teacher contracts.

Finally, Legislator 1 discussed her view concerning how school board members make decisions on critical issues and their orientation towards managing the school district. Among the most important issues she identified is that board members today—and likely in the future—will have to meet the challenge of finding funding mechanisms to finance educational needs in their districts and will come under "more pressure to fund education without breaking the bank." She argues that school board members need to be cognizant of what is happening in Harrisburg with efforts to change the way taxes are collected locally for education, especially with a number of bills gaining steam that would reduce or eliminate the property tax as a tool for raising local education dollars. "In my view, the average school board member is not engaged in the nuanced discussion about property tax legislation, she said. "Unfortunately, they are not looking into the details" and generally need to be doing so.

As for managing the district, Legislator 1 feels that one of the most important things that school board members can do is to establish trust with their district administrators, noting that board members have to be able to feel confidence in their administrators. At the same time, she acknowledges that there have been cases where "administrators shield board members from information" leading to a "lack of checks and balances" within the district. This trust, however, should not be blind and board members, in her view, must occasionally assert their independence.

Legislator 2: The Concerned Former Teacher[16]

Legislator 2 represents a historically rural community that is quickly suburbanizing. Having represented this growing and changing district for nearly a dozen years, Legislator 2 has a resume as diverse as the landscape of her district: she is a former high school teacher, a small business owner, a township supervisor, and an appointed administrator in county government. According to Legislator 2, she was driven to run for a seat on the school board while her child was in school.

The first and foremost reason for her school board candidacy was a period of labor unrest within her school district which prompted her and many other parents to begin attending school board meetings out of a concern about teacher strikes. As strikes started to become more frequent, she utilized her abilities as a former teacher to organize other retired or former teachers to provide lessons for children in their community to prevent their retention of information from slipping. As Legislator 2 started attending additional school board meetings during this time, she found herself speaking out more

[16] Interview conducted on November 22, 2013 in member's district office.

frequently against strikes and the need to get the 20,000 kids in the sprawling school district back into the classrooms.

Secondly, Legislator 2 said that her decision to run for a seat on the school board was shaped by Jack Kennedy's call to "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," which was something that her father engrained in her as a child. In her view, "you need to take your turn in the box" to serve your community and serving on the school board in an unpaid capacity seemed to be the best fit. The third factor influencing her decision was self-interest since her own child was attending the schools and she was becoming increasingly concerned about the quality of education being delivered during the aforementioned period of labor unrest. Fourth, she was approached by both an incumbent member of the school board as well as her local Republican Committee and was asked to run given that she was already an active party committeewoman with a reputation for being issue-driven.

Not only was Legislator 2 asked to run by the Republican Committee organization, but she was also placed on a slate with a number of other party-recruited candidates, all of whom were successful. Recalling her election to the position and the challenges that she experienced on the school board, Legislator 2 noted that "the fact that I ran unopposed should have been a clue," indicating that it came somewhat as a surprise to her about the level of responsibility placed on the shoulders of school board members. She believes that school board service is often thankless work which can at times drive people to bow out after only one or two terms because of the vast time commitment while also serving as a deterrent for those considering running for the first time.

Although Legislator 2 indicated that she was approached and asked to run by her party committee, she believes it is imperative for school board members everywhere to remember that making decisions regarding the best way to govern a school district must be "based on philosophy, not party identification," and that the "debates and fights I experienced while on the school board were policy-driven more so than driven by political party affiliation." School board members, she said, "are elected to represent their own views so that voters in our democratic system can eventually hold them accountable." Legislator 2 indicated that the most significant debate that occurred during her school board tenure related to issues pertaining to teacher salaries and teacher contracts.

According to Legislator 2, she discovered that the way board members in her area approached these areas were driven largely by policy preferences rather than party affiliation, meaning that board members were more inclined to approach disputes over salaries and contracts from a perspective based on their own personal understanding of these issues rather than the way in which their partisan affiliation may lead one to assume them to they will approach them. In other words, she did not observe that Democratic members were reflexively supportive of the positions of organized labor nor were Republican members reflexively pessimistic about a policy or policies because of where labor happened to come down on them. Instead, members brought their own personal views to bear on these types of issues because of their professional experiences.

According to Legislator 2, "teachers in my part of the state are very well paid" and that the debate over their contract revolved around "the teachers asking for more money." Although she believes that union politics occasionally plays a role in school

district governance, Legislator 2 feels that labor issues are not the same throughout all 500 school districts: "unions are active district-by-district. For example, in one of my counties they are more powerful than in the other county that I represent [in the legislature]. However, unions tend to be more powerful in school districts either in close proximity to or bordering on large cities." Interestingly, she said that unions—at least from her experience—are not necessarily engaged in recruiting candidates for school board elections, a point that was confirmed by the findings of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey. "You do have teachers or former teachers on school boards, but they probably aren't recruited to run," she said. She believes that they instead opt to do so because of their own passion for education or understanding of schools and school districts thanks to their professional lives.

Legislator 2 believes that one of the most significant differences between how school boards used to operate versus how they function today has much to do with the managerial orientation of the school board: "In the old days, school boards were more ceremonial and were somewhat run by the administrators," she said. Although it is important that board members think for themselves, Legislator 2 would implore board members to listen to the advice being dispensed by the superintendents and district administrative staff: "It is okay for a school board member to have their views, but on a real education issue you should defer to administrators and those who specialize in education," she said. "A good school board member does defer because they have hired the professionals" and it is best to rely on their expert advice.

When asked how her school board service may have prepared her to serve in the General Assembly, Legislator 2 was very careful to assert that she "wasn't elected to the

legislature because of my school board service" and that after she left the school board she ultimately ended up running for and getting elected to a position as a township supervisor and then serving in an appointed countywide office. "I didn't see my school board service as a springboard," instead indicating that "I always saw it as a public service."

The school board may not have served as a means for launching her political career or an eventual candidacy for the state legislature, yet Legislator 2 insists that her school board experience did help prepare her for legislative service. "It is very helpful that I served on the school board and was part of local and county government," she said. Most importantly, "my school board service helped improve my understanding of how budgets work and about how to dig through layers of numbers and line-items." Legislator 2 also mentioned that the types of constituent interactions she had during her school board tenure were helpful in her transition to the legislature: "Most of my interaction with constituents was about the curriculum, about parents wanting their kids to go to one of our high schools or the other, or issues about the process" of running the district.

Legislator 3: The Ambitious Public Servant[17]

Very few regions in the Commonwealth have seen as much political change in the past several years in Pennsylvania than the region containing the suburban district represented by Legislator 3, a Republican with a middle class, but increasingly affluent constituency that can be best described as having a socially liberal and fiscally conservative tilt. Situated in a storefront office on a lively suburban main street,

[17] Interview conducted on December 6, 2013 in member's district office.

Legislator 3 and his staff were busy setting up food and other light refreshments for an open house for constituents that was set to take place in the office later that evening. Legislator 3's biography reads like a community and public service checklist: school board member, township commissioner, military service, teacher, coach, religious education instructor, volunteer on several community boards, a university-level student counselor and advisor, and currently a doctoral candidate.

After entering his private suite in the rear of the office complex, Legislator 3 was bursting with insights into his school board service and the governance of school districts in the state. Unlike other interview subjects who began their political careers as candidates for the school board, this legislator actually started out with an unsuccessful race for the state legislature before realizing that he needed to start out with a local position enabling him to learn more about the nuances of government and politics.

"I ran in a race for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives at the age of 25 and lost," he said. "I was a teacher and I believed that perhaps school board service was the best way to begin in public service since I am motivated by issues related to education." After his election to the school board, Legislator 3 said that he benefitted from the experience of other incumbent board members. "I was about 26 when I was elected and served with older, veteran board members," he said. "Not only was I young, but I had gone to Catholic school, so I was able to learn the nuances of how public schools and public school boards operate from these veteran members."

Legislator 3's path to the General Assembly included a period of service in another local office sandwiched between his school board and legislative service. "After I served a four year term on the school board, I went on to serve ten years as a township

commissioner and then ran for the legislature and won," he said. Mentioning that former President Jimmy Carter's first elected position was as chairman of the Sumter County School District in rural Georgia, Legislator 3 noted that "Some people use the school board as a training ground for higher office" and that "it's okay if a person wants to use a school board position as a springboard, but not if they don't have a real desire to serve the school district first."

When asked about the role of parties in local school board races in his own school district and the school districts within his legislative district, Legislator 3 replied that he was approached by the Republican Party following his legislative race and was asked if he would consider running for the school board. Although he believes that not all political parties are engaged in school district politics, party organizations really ought to be out recruiting school board candidates, noting that "parties should be looking out for good candidates all of the time."

According to Legislator 3, he ran for the school board as part of a slate of candidates organized by a political party organization. Even though four of the five candidates on his slate were victorious, Legislator 3 remains skeptical about running for school board seats with a slate of candidates. "Slates are common in most municipalities in my area," he said, adding that "I'm not big on running as a slate because some members of the slate don't pull their share of the load." In addition, he raised a crucial point about how slates are organized and developed for school board races. "Many people who run for the school board are running for the first time," he said. "It is good to have someone with star power in the community on board," meaning that a notable local figure can help attract attention to the entire ticket.

From Legislator 3's perspective, individuals run for school board seats for a variety of reasons. "Some school board members run because of a single issue or single concern," he said. "This probably isn't the norm, but probably one out of every ten people are motivated to run for school board positions because of a single issue." He continued by emphasizing the importance of filling school boards with people who are well-intentioned and interested in educational issues, stating that "People need to step out who are good people who don't have axes to grind, but care about policy and education." Legislator 3 also reported to having seen "situations where local political organizations will call board members to try to influence policy, hiring decisions," and other outcomes.

Legislator 3 chiefly identifies party organizations as recruiting agents for school board candidates in his area: "Party structures wax and wane based on the leadership structure at the time. Party structures are strong when they have active leadership." He reported that the Republicans have been more active in his district, but much like the findings of the school board survey demonstrated, the activity level of one or both party organizations varies from place to place.

Unlike the parties who he believes are actively recruiting candidates for school board seats in his district, Legislator 3 suggests that "business, labor, and community groups are not generally involved in recruiting candidates, although the Rotary Club can be a source of recruitment." He also was careful to draw a distinction between organizations engaging in the active *recruitment* of candidates and the *endorsement* of candidates, the latter meaning that some organizations may choose to back candidates from among the pool of declared candidates rather than actually seeking out individuals or slates of candidates to work towards their goals on the school board. According to

Legislator 3, “Labor unions locally may back people through endorsements, but are not regularly recruiting.” This particular insight was an intriguing one, especially considering that the Pennsylvania School Board Survey found a very limited amount of school board candidate recruitment among organized labor, yet was not able to adequately gauge whether labor is actively involved in the *endorsement* of school board candidates as opposed to the actual *recruitment* of them.

Legislator 3 indicated that “Serving on the school board did assist me in becoming well prepared for meetings, to understand and know the agenda items, to be up to speed on issues,” but did not “teach me a whole lot that I didn’t know politically.” He said that one of the most valuable lessons he took away from his school board service is the importance of “projecting a public posture and being unified as a board” on major issues. An example of this occurred during his school board tenure when a teacher contract was being negotiated and he felt it was important for the board to speak with a unified voice on such a difficult issue while also recognizing that it “was important to be respectful and polite to those you serve with, especially if and when you may disagree with them.”

Another valuable lesson that Legislator 3 learned from his school board experience is that there are legitimate limits on power that must be acknowledged. As an example, Legislator 3 noted that a board member cannot simply pick up the telephone and call the math teacher to complain about a grade awarded to a student whose angry parent has approached the board member. Returning to his earlier point about promoting cohesion among board members, he emphasizes that spending four years on the school board “trained me to work as a member of a board, educated me as to what my own role

is, and taught me the importance of working with other elected officials and professional staff."

Legislator 3 offered little to no hesitation when asked about the most difficult challenge facing school board members: "The budget," he replied. "Managing the budget is very, very hard and you learn that it is quite expensive to run an educational entity like a school district as you must manage a great deal of financial and human capital." He recounted a story from his school board tenure in which the board asked the administrative team to come up with a tax increase-free budget due to a particularly rough economy that year. "We were able to do it for a year without increasing taxes, but not over time," he said, mentioning that fiscal realities change on an annual basis and require constant attention.

We closed our discussion by talking about the way in which school board members interact with district superintendents, which is a relationship that is critical to the daily management of the schools as well as to the policymaking process. According to Legislator 3, board members and superintendents are reliant on one another. "As a board member, I didn't have all of the expertise that the administrators do," he said, adding that "the superintendent works for the board, but a smart board will have a partnership where one party isn't perceived as working for the other."

In his view, board members and superintendents are more likely to have harmonious relations than a contentious relationship if trust exists between them. "Most of the time, board members usually do trust—and can trust—the superintendent," he said. Suggesting a relationship in which board members and superintendents are cognizant of each other's needs, he indicated that "Board members occasionally have pet issues that

superintendents need to take care of" in order to show the board members that they are responsive to them.

Legislator 4: The Advocate for Teachers[18]

The waiting room in Legislator 4's district office was bustling with as much constituent traffic as the tidy downtown street where the historic building housing the office is located. While sitting in the waiting room, I observed one group of visitors stopping in to meet with legislative staff about a community problem, another constituent who brought her daughter in to pick up a pamphlet about preparing for a driver's license exam, and a bevy of phone calls about pieces of legislation coming before the General Assembly in 2014. A left-leaning Democrat, Legislator 4 must meet the expectations of a constituency containing both burgeoning affluence as well as areas containing pockets of extreme poverty.

Prior to his service in the General Assembly, Legislator 4 served as a college professor, a countywide elected official, an elected school board member, and an appointee to the local municipal authority. When asked about his own school board service, Legislator 4 informed me that he served for one term on his area school board, winning by just three votes during his initial campaign. His primary motivation for running was linked to his interest in education as a teacher and a professor, stating that "I decided to run for the school board because some incumbent board members were saying nasty stuff about teachers. As a professor and teacher, I decided that I had to run."

[18] Interview conducted on January 8, 2014 in member's district office.

According to Legislator 4, his successful election to the school board and four years of school board service did not necessarily impact his decision to run for a countywide position and then the General Assembly. “School board service doesn’t automatically lead to an interest in higher office,” he said, arguing that those elected to serve on school boards are unlikely to be “planning on using the school board as a stepping stone to higher office.” Instead, Legislator 4 believes that other types of local officials like mayors and township supervisors are probably the most interested in running for a higher office because those positions seem to be more visible within the community.

Based on his term on a school board, Legislator 4 believes that the most important thing that he learned in those years that has assisted him as a state legislator is a better understanding of “how the state plays a role in how the schools are run and financed.” He also believes that school board service helps elected officials to understand the way government works, especially those who later find themselves serving in the General Assembly, as they “are able to see the relationship between state and local issues and what is occurring in the education system.” In his current role as member of the General Assembly, Legislator 4 keeps in close contact with the local school boards and school board officials within his legislative district: “I regularly talk at regional meetings with members of my local school boards in the counties that I represent,” he said.

When it comes to synthesizing his own school board service with his current work in the General Assembly, Legislator 4 frequently drove the discussion back to elections, public policy, and how education issues help bring together groups of people who are often at odds in policy debates. Instead of talking about specific elections, Legislator 4

was quick to point out his own work in the legislature to change the way Pennsylvania school boards are elected. “I recently introduced a bill that would move us to nonpartisan school board elections in Pennsylvania,” he said. “Right now Pennsylvania, Mississippi, and Massachusetts are the only states that have partisan school board races in the country. I’ve talked to school board members about this and I would estimate that in my district, two thirds of them would say that school board elections should be nonpartisan.” Legislator 4 indicated that his bill is gaining steam among his colleagues, but there are others in the legislature who argue that school board races are not partisan enough. “Right now a House Republican has introduced legislation to end cross-filing,” he said. This would mean that school board candidates would no longer have the option of appearing on both party ballots and would have to run only as the candidate of their own political party, making school board elections even more partisan than they are today.

Legislator 4 also talked at length about trends in education politics that he has observed in his own highly suburbanized district. Specifically, he has noticed the increasing politicization of suburban parents due to what he describes as “right wing takeovers of a number of local school boards.” According to Legislator 4, “Parents in my area began organizing to respond to what they were seeing on the school boards after two consecutive election cycles. Parents became unhappy with school boards who were cutting budgets and laying off teachers, but not necessarily due to curriculum issues.” Legislator 4 said that the increased political activity was mainly observed in upper middle class schools and has been led by parents (mainly mothers) who began putting together slates of candidates to oust board members who were blamed for the layoffs and budget cuts.

"I represent the most highly educated county in the Commonwealth," he said. "Education is more than just filling a pail, it is the lighting of a passion. Parents felt that the schools were becoming less capable of lighting the passion in their kids and decided to do something." Calling this phenomenon "the rise of the soccer moms in education," he said that these concerned parents who were traditionally associated with Democratic politics found some allies among others who believed that "federal and state government should keep their noses out of the local schools because our schools are actually very good as they are being run locally." He also added that "School board members come to me saying that they see the relationship between our successful and well-funded schools and the poor schools because they think the state, by cutting and cutting, is coming to weaken our schools as they already have done elsewhere."

According to Legislator 4, "The Political Scientists are not seeing the politicization of parents in suburban schools," but he believes that the trend is one worth watching. Returning to the point about how local school board politics can produce strange bedfellows, Legislator 4 indicated that the same soccer moms who helped organize slates of candidates to respond to the conservative boards who were cutting funds and laying off teachers have recently passed resolutions against graduation exams, which has long been a major concern among some conservative activists. "The impact of federal and state politics are driving the new activism and we are seeing alliances between the right, the middle, and the left over issues like graduation tests, unfunded mandates, and opposing the federal government on certain issues," he said.

"People are uniting despite their ideologies in resistance to one-size-fits-all education policies," said Legislator 4. "I see liberal Democrats and Tea Party members

joining forces to oppose graduation tests, which amount to a $300 million unfunded mandate." He envisions the future fault lines over education issues being fought on two different levels: first, local school leaders versus federal and state governments and second, charter school and private school parents versus public school parents and believes that "School board elections start to reflect that change, especially in a way that unifies some Democrats with people of faith who are not traditional allies."

Legislator 5: The Upstart-Turned-Party Leader[19]

The district represented by Legislator 5 contains some of the most rural components of a county that has become more suburbanized over the course of the past decade. As the county has begun to shift towards the Democratic Party in many county, state, and federal races, the areas contained within this district remain loyal to the Republicans. Legislator 5 has represented this area for nearly three decades after running his family's small business and serving on the area school board. He is also a longtime, active member of his community's Chamber of Commerce, nature conservancy, and library committee.

Legislator 5 was born into a family in which school board service was a part of daily life as his father was a member of the board. "My father was on the school board and was a conservative, cost conscious Mennonite who believed in voluntary service to the community and was appalled at what he thought was going on in the school district. Right when I graduated from college, my father suffered three strokes," said Legislator 5. "I not only came home to take over the family business, but also, at my Dad's request, to

[19] Interview conducted on January 24, 2014 in member's district office.

take over his seat on our school board." At the time that he declared his candidacy to replace his father for a full term on the school board, Legislator 5 says that the Republican Committee organization already had their own candidate, so he ran against the endorsement of his own party. After the votes had been counted it was discovered that not only had this future legislator won the race for the school board, but was also elected to a seat on the Republican Committee itself.

"I went on to serve for 17 years on the school board," he said, stating that he ultimately decided to run for his first term and continue serving on the board because he and his five kids all attended school in that particular district and because of his own interest in kids and education. "I was very cost conscious and thought quite a bit about what we spent and how we spent it because of the influence I had from running our business," said Legislator 5. "I ran three times and I received a bigger margin each time."

Although Legislator 5 initially ran against and defeated the party-backed candidate, he soon found himself as the area's GOP leader. "I became the Republican Party leader on the board and actually ended up as the person who recruited other school board members," he said. Still serving as Republican Party chair in his community after all of these years, Legislator 5 staunchly believes that the job of candidate recruitment is a crucial function. "Party organizations should be the source for recruiting candidates, including for the school board," he said. "The party organization has the money to beat back challenges from interest groups like PSEA [the Pennsylvania State Education Association, the state's largest teachers union]. It is also important to keep a tight rein as a party chairman on the school board."

In order to underscore his point about ensuring that the party organization is holding the reins on the school board, Legislator 5 recounted a time after he had already left the school board and was serving in the General Assembly. A member of the school board whom Legislator 5 had backed for the position declined to take his advice on an issue facing the board. When asked what became of that board member who did not regard the advice of the party chair, Legislator 5 responded by saying that the board member in question "was no longer on the board" following the next election.

When asked how he would go about recruiting candidates for school board seats, Legislator 5 explained that interested candidates would often come to him while at other times he would seek out individuals to run. "I try hard to avoid costly battles and sometimes go to my counterparts in the other party and find a way that we can avoid the fights," he said. "If there are four openings, I have gone to the Democrats before and given them one of the seats in exchange for supporting my three candidates. It saves money to make deals, although this hasn't been the case in recent years," he said. Legislator 5 is also a steadfast advocate for candidate slating in school board races, noting that he has always worked to build slates over the course of his 40 years as a party leader. "If people wanted to run but refused to participate on the slate, we just find someone else who will," he said.

Legislator 5 explained that he has several serious concerns regarding the operation of school boards today. First, he argues that school boards have become too subservient to the interests of administrators. "When I was a school board member, the board was the authority within the districts. Now the boards seem to work for the superintendents," he said. "Boards today seem to lack an understanding of what the job

entails. In some cases they seem unfamiliar with what they can do independently of anyone else and have become more conciliatory." Legislator 5 recounted a recent development in his own school district in which home schooled kids wanted to be involved in extracurricular activities, yet the board deferred to the position of the superintendent who did not want to authorize these students to participate in this way. In his own view, the home school families were correct and the board members should have held their ground against the position held by the superintendent.

Second, Legislator 5 has long been frustrated that "the business community is completely removed" from the process of school district governance, although he sees this gradually changing. He said that the business community trusts his own opinions in his role as a legislator and party chairman, but wishes that they were more highly involved in school board politics. Third, he believes that teachers and teachers unions have become excessively powerful. "Those people [the teachers] get annual salary and step increases and don't realize how everyone on the outside world lives," he said.

Finally, Legislator 5 believes that school board service is a useful way to prepare for service in the General Assembly, noting that being on the school board "helps prepare you to work with your constituency." In his view, "school board service helps with learning the meaning of your constituency, what their needs are, and knowing how to address their concerns."

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This section included five highly informative interviews with current Pennsylvania legislators who served as members of their local school boards prior to

being elected to the General Assembly. As demonstrated throughout the course of these interviews, these members each had their own useful and intriguing story to tell regarding their experiences serving on their public school boards, how they personally became candidates for a school board seat, and how their school board experience helped shape or inform their work in the General Assembly. Additionally, each of the five members explained their own reasons for seeking school board seats, recruitment efforts that may have influenced their candidacies, their prior involvement in their communities, the issues or causes that may have motivated them to run for the school board, and the main challenges that they see facing school boards in Pennsylvania. These members also provided their own perspectives concerning their conception of school district management and board member relations with the district superintendents as well as whether the school board is a viable springboard to higher public office.

Although none of the five stories presented in this chapter were similar, several fascinating patterns emerged based on the content of these interviews. Table 13 below provides a basic summary of how these former board members-turned state legislators characterized their own school board candidacies, the issues that mattered most to them, as well as their views on district management, recruitment, and the school board as a "base office."

Table 53	Legislator (former SB Member) Perspectives on School Board Politics and Service				
Attributes	**Legislator 1**	**Legislator 2**	**Legislator 3**	**Legislator 4**	**Legislator 5**
Member Description	*Civically Engaged Parent*	*Concerned Former Teacher*	*Ambitious Public Servant*	*Advocate for Teachers*	*Upstart-Turned-Party Leader*
Party Affiliation	Republican	Republican	Republican	Democrat	Republican
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
District Type	Rural	Rural/Suburban	Suburban/Urban	Urban/Suburban	Rural/Suburban
Professional Background	Government	Teacher, small business owner, government	Teacher, military, government	Teacher, government	Small business owner
Prior Involvement	PTA, youth sports, politics	Party committee person, education issues	Community volunteer, church volunteer, politics	Politics, education issues	Business community
Motivating Issues Leading to Candidacy	School safety, education policy	Labor unrest, own child attending schools, civic duty, party support	Learn about government & politics, impact education decisions	Anti-teacher sentiment among board members	Fill seat held by ailing father, careful budget management
Personal Recruitment Source	Party	Party	Party	Self	Incumbent Board Member
How SB Helped Prepare Member for Legislative Work	Budgeting, long hours on the job	Budgeting, constituent service	Limits of power, meeting preparation, teamwork, budgeting	Budgeting and finance, links between state and local education issues	Constituent service
Perceived Sources of Recruitment in SB Races	Self-starters, unions, anti-tax activists, public meeting "groupies"	Parties	Parties, Single issue concerns, Rotary Club	Parent groups organized in response to specific issues	Parties, unions
Main Challenges Facing Board Members	Budgeting, declining school funding	Budgeting, constituent interaction	Budgeting	Budgeting, dealing with state legislature	Budgeting, taxation, spending
Management Perspective	Think independently, but trust administrators	Think independently, but defer to professional administrators	Board & Superintendent are mutually dependent	Varies by District	Boards overly subservient to administrators; more board independence needed
SB as Springboard to Higher Office	No	No	Potentially	No	Potentially

Although these members represent only a third of the former school board members serving in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, they reflect several similar patterns observed among those currently serving on Pennsylvania school boards: they are predominantly Republican, the majority are men, and they tend to represent districts that are rural or suburban (if not a mix of both). Aside from these demographic or political items, several useful patterns emerge.

First, four of the five members interviewed have a professional background that includes working in government. These experiences varied depending on the member as two of the four served in an elected county government offices while one served in an elected municipal position. At least one—perhaps two—also worked in county government before holding an office at that level of government. Three of the five also boast experience in the teaching profession *prior to seeking* a position on the school board. Meanwhile, two of the five had experience as small business owners. These professional experiences are noteworthy because of the necessary overlap associated with the skills required to succeed in these types of occupations and school board politics and policy.

As educators, these individuals were likely to have an intimate perspective of how schools are managed as well as the duties and expectations of school teachers. As small business owners, these individuals were likely to have knowledge of the nuances associated with managing a budget and handling the complexities of finance. Lastly, given that four of the five had some other government experience either before or after running for the school board, yet prior to being elected to the legislature shows that these individuals are collectively more experienced than the average citizen—or even average

school board member—in the art of managing a government agency or at least understanding what government service entails.

There were several other observable patterns based upon these five interviews. First, three of the five believe that political party organizations are instrumental in recruiting school board candidates in their districts and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Three of the five report to having been recruited to run for the school board by a political party (the other two say that they were self-recruited while the other was recruited by an incumbent board member who happened to be the member's father). Furthermore, four of the five stated that they were personally involved in local politics in their communities before their first campaign for the school board, meaning that even if they weren't recruited by a party organization, they were "plugged in" to the local political scene from day one. The fifth member's father was an incumbent who was politically active, thus likely providing Legislator 5 with a higher-than-usual level of name identification and in-roads with politically aware individuals within the community.

The consensus among this group of board members is that school board service is not necessarily a reliable springboard to higher political office. In fact, three of the five rejected outright the notion that the school board is a helpful "base office" for those seeking to ascend the political ladder. The other two members indicated that school board service could potentially benefit an ambitious individual, but neither suggested that school board service is necessary for advancement. Despite this, four of the five suggested that their service on the school board did prepare them for serving in the legislature by providing meaningful experience in handling complex and sometimes controversial public budgets. Likewise, when prompted to consider the main challenges

that these current state legislators see facing contemporary school board members across Pennsylvania, all five were in agreement that budgeting is perhaps the most important concern.

Lastly, these five board members-turned legislators were all highly interested in the subject of the superintendent-school board relationship. Many of the interview subjects voluntarily raised this topic without being prompted to do so during our discussions. For the most part, these legislators generally argued that board members should maintain some level of independence from their district superintendents, with two of them suggesting that although it is important to work with the administrators, board members must remember that they are the ones elected and thus accountable to the public. Another member—Legislator 5—was even more vocal about the concept of board member independence, arguing that board members should be highly skeptical of the information being given to them by their district administration and that they should adamantly stand up to their superintendents. One of the others said that such a relationship should vary depending on the board and the superintendent in each district while another member noted that the board and superintendent exist in a mutually dependent atmosphere with the board needing quality information from the superintendent while the administrator relies upon the board's confidence to properly carry out his or her job.

In summation, these interviews with former board members who did successfully ascend the political ladder to the General Assembly have enhanced the previously discussed findings of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey by providing additional richness and depth regarding the school board service experience that was not possible to

ascertain from the survey-based portion of this study alone. Having the opportunity to candidly interview these individuals reinforced the importance of considering Pennsylvania school board members as individuals who are civically active in their communities, exceptionally active in the political process, seek office for a variety of reasons, and are expected to meet the serious challenges of crafting and balancing their school district's budget. Additionally, these interviews confirmed the notion that school board seats may not be the most desirable launching point for a politically ambitious officeholder, which comports with the survey data showing that less than a quarter of Pennsylvania's sitting school board members view themselves as progressively ambitious.

Understanding the School Board-Superintendent Relationship

The majority of General Assembly members interviewed in the two proceeding sections offered their assessments of school district leadership and the interactions that may occur between school board members and those serving in the position of district superintendent. The legislators indicated that the relationship between school boards and the superintendents were extremely important when evaluating governance in the school district, the type of information provided to school board members who lack their own personal or policy staff people, and ways in which board members may view their positions within the district and community. The third and final section of Chapter 8 will examine data generated by three questions within the Pennsylvania School Board Survey regarding superintendent-school board relations and will conclude with a discussion of the findings.

Survey Data Review

One of the initial research questions posed in Chapter 1 was labeled "Governance" and asked "Do factors related to motivation, recruitment, and ambition affect how school board members conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent?" This final section of Chapter 8 will present data from the Pennsylvania School Board capable of providing a response to this question. Following a review of the three survey questions and the responses offered by school board members, this section concludes with an examination of the data as well as an analysis of the implications of the survey findings as it pertains to school district governance.

Survey questions 27 through 29 allowed respondents to offer their feedback regarding the job performance of their district's superintendent, to determine who holds the most influence over the final decisions made in their district, and to weigh in on the management approach that best characterizes leadership within their school district. These questions not only allow for the examination of trends regarding the way respondents view management and policymaking in the district, but they also provide for a way to better comprehend whether board members believe themselves to be independent of their district superintendents.

Table 54: Question 27- Overall, would you say your district's superintendent is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent job	54.2%	199
Good job	32.2%	118
Fair job	10.6%	39
Poor job	3.0%	11
	answered question	**367**
	skipped question	**13**

A combined 86 percent of school board members believe that their district's superintendent is doing either a good or excellent job. The majority of respondents—54 percent—feel that their superintendent is doing an excellent job while 32 percent believe their superintendent is doing a good job. Just 11 percent believe their superintendent is doing a fair job and only three percent rate their district's superintendent job performance as being poor. Overall, 96.5 percent of respondents provided an answer to this question.

Table 55: Question 28- Overall, who would you say holds the most influence over the final decisions made in your district?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The School Board	54.3%	200
The Superintendent	28.8%	106
Other (please specify)	16.8%	62
	answered question	**368**
	skipped question	**12**

The majority of respondents—54 percent—believe that the school board holds the most influence over the final decisions made in their districts. A much smaller number of respondents—29 percent—sense that the superintendent holds the most influence over final decisions made in the districts. Another 17 percent provided an alternative response. Included among the 62 open-ended responses were these eight responses:

- The school district business manager
- A combination of the board and administration working collaboratively
- A cohort of members among the school board
- The chief decision-maker changes depending on the issue at hand
- Public sector labor unions
- State and federal government

- The media
- Politicians in general

Table 56: Question 29- In general, which of the following would you say best describes your view of how the school district you serve is managed?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The school board decides on policies and the superintendent implements them.	8.7%	32
The superintendent proposes policies and the school board mostly approves them.	34.6%	127
The school board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions for the school district.	56.7%	208
answered question		**367**
skipped question		**13**

The majority of school board members who participated in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey believe that the school board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions for the school district, a response favored by nearly 57 percent of respondents. Another 35 percent suggested that the district's superintendent proposes policies and the school board mostly approves them while nine percent said that the school board decides on policies and the superintendent implements them. 97 percent of participants responded to this question.

Analysis

School board members in Pennsylvania give extraordinarily high marks to their district superintendents. They also believe that the school board holds the most influence over final decisions made in the district rather than the superintendent by a 25 percent margin. Lastly, 57 percent of respondents said that the board and the superintendent are equal partners in managing the school district, which is 22 percent more than those who

say that the superintendent proposes policies and the board generally implements them (implying that the superintendent is generally responsible for driving policy) and 48 percent more than those who say that the board decides on policies and the superintendent mostly implements them (implying that the board perceives the superintendent to be an extension of the board, which drives policy).

These findings can best be summarized in the following way: Pennsylvania school board members see themselves as the chief decision-makers in their districts and believe that the superintendents they have hired are largely successful in carrying out decisions made by the board. However, the school board members view their superintendents as partners in managing the affairs of the school district since they are hand-selected by the board.

The initial research question from Chapter 1 asked if factors such as recruitment and ambition impact how board members regard their relationship with their district superintendent. The table below provides a comparison between recruited and self-starting (non-recruited) members on the three questions about board member-superintendent relations. As the table indicates, recruited members are six percent more likely than self-starting members to say that the superintendent is doing an excellent job while self-starters are more likely to say that the superintendent is doing either a good or poor job by just a few points. Either way, 86 percent of self-starters and 89 percent of recruits say that their superintendent is doing an excellent or good job. The superintendents appear to have broad support from the school board members responsible for hiring or firing them.

Likewise, there are only negligible differences between these members when asked about the major decision-making source within the district, with 54 and 55 percent of self-starters and recruits answering that the school board is the chief decision-making source, respectively. Lastly, self-starters are nine percent more likely to say that the board decides on policies while the superintendent implements them while recruits are four percent more likely to say that the superintendent proposes policies with the board mostly implementing them. Recruits are also four percent more likely than non-recruits to say that the board and superintendent are equal partners. Very few significant differences exist between recruited and self-starting members in this department, some of which are highlighted in Table 57.

Table 57: Assessments by Recruitment and Ambition Status

	Recruited %	***Non-Recruited %***	***Ambitious %***	***Unambitious %***
Superintendent Job Rating				
Excellent	58.6%	52.7%	58.0%	53.1%
Good	29.9%	33.0%	31.8%	32.0%
Fair	10.3%	10.8%	8.0%	11.6%
Poor	1.1%	3.6%	2.3%	3.3%
Chief Decision-making Source				
School Board	55.1%	54.3%	59.8%	52.7%
Superintendent	25.8%	29.5%	21.8%	31.0%
Other	19.1%	16.2%	18.4%	16.2%
Management Approach				
School board decides on policies/superintendent implements	2.3%	10.8%	14.9%	6.5%
Superintendent proposes policies/school board mostly approves	37.5%	33.5%	28.7%	37.0%
School board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions	60.2%	55.8%	56.3%	56.5%

When considering variations in outlook between ambitious and unambitious board members, differences in job approval ratings are again negligible as 90 percent of ambitious members and over 85 percent of unambitious members say that the superintendent is going an excellent or good job. There are just two areas where there are mild discrepancies between ambitious and unambitious members. First, ambitious members are seven percent more likely to say that school board is the chief decision-maker in the district while unambitious members are nine percent more likely to say that the superintendent is the chief decision-maker. Second, ambitious members are eight percent more likely to say that the board decides on policies while the superintendent implements them while unambitious members are eight percent more likely to say that superintendent proposes policies and the board mostly approves them.

These findings indicate that ambitious board members are slightly more inclined to demonstrate a higher level of independence from their district superintendent than those who are unambitious. Ambitious members are more likely than their unambitious peers to declare that they are the "deciders" in the school districts and that the superintendent is perceived to be an employee of the school board. A probable explanation for this phenomena suggests that an ambitious public servant likely desires to project an image of independence before the voters and citizenry, especially since they are considering advancing up the political ladder. I would justify this theory by arguing that members who are ambitious could possibly find it advantageous for their future political careers or a future candidacy for higher office to show that they are "in charge" or self-reliant rather than taking cues from an unelected appointee. Meanwhile, their less

ambitious peers potentially have fewer qualms about appearing to govern based upon cues from another actor, who in this case would be the district superintendent.

Conclusion

Research question 4 asked "Do factors related to recruitment and ambition effect how school board members conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent?" Based on these data and the overwhelming similarities between recruited and self-starting as well as ambitious and unambitious members when assessed based upon their attitudes towards district management and school board (legislative branch) and superintendent (executive branch) relations, the answer to this question is a resounding "no".

Factors related to recruitment and ambition have very little influence over how school board members perceive their relationship with the district superintendent. These findings are important as it shows that there is a high level of uniformity among members in the area of board-superintendent relations. Additionally, this sort of uniformity demonstrates that school boards in Pennsylvania appear to enjoy generally harmonious relations with their chosen district superintendents, allowing for a sense of cooperation and stability among the various stakeholders within the school districts due to what appears to be a united front when it comes to district management.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Review of Original Research Agenda

The purpose of this study was to enhance the discipline's understanding of public school boards, those who serve on them, and the circumstances which led to their decision to seek election to these positions. A research agenda was carefully formulated that sought to help address these phenomena. Specifically, this project sought to achieve five main research goals. First, this study endeavored to explain the various political, personal, and policy factors motivating individuals to become candidates for public school board positions in Pennsylvania. Second, it intended to explain how candidates for school board positions are recruited to run for office, examine which individuals or organizations are chiefly responsible for recruiting them as candidates, and explore why some school board candidates are self-recruited.

Third, the project offered to examine whether individuals serving on Pennsylvania's school board have a history of political engagement, public participation, and experience in electoral politics, working in government institutions, or being active participants in a political party. Fourth, the study sought to determine if individuals serving on Pennsylvania's school boards have ambition to seek higher political office or offices. Lastly, the study planned to investigate whether Pennsylvania's elected school board members are generally ambitious actors who are pursuing political careers or if they are common citizens who become exceptionally involved and active in local politics as a result of an interest in policy, political, or personal concerns related to the school district's governance.

Four individual research questions were then developed to help advance this research agenda. The first question dealt with the topic of ***motivation*** and asked "What political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?" The second question addressed the topic of ***recruitment*** and asked "Are candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community?" Question three addressed the topic of ***engagement*** and asked "Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system? Likewise, do they have ***experience*** working in or for government agencies or departments?" The fourth question focused on political ***ambition*** and asked "Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future?" Finally, the fifth question addresses ***management and governing*** and asks if variables such as ambition level and recruitment impact the way in which board members perceive of their relationship with their district superintendents during the decision-making process.

Efforts to address these specific questions were carried out through the creation and distribution of the 2013 Pennsylvania School Board Survey to each one of the Commonwealth's 4,477 school board members as well as interviews with five current members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly who began their careers in elective office on their local school board before advancing up the political ladder to the State House or Senate in Harrisburg. Previous chapters have provided an overview of the academic literature covering the areas noted in the research agenda, the methodology by

which this study was carried out, detailed assessment of the survey findings, and material uncovered during interviews with five elected legislators who once served on their local school boards. This chapter will tie together the research agenda, the hypotheses offered in Chapter 1, and the research questions noted above. The following section contains an analysis of whether or not each of the nine hypotheses were confirmed by the results of the study. Once this task has been completed, each of the research questions will be restated and given a definitive answer.

Examination of Hypotheses

This section will provide a review of each of the four types of hypotheses offered in Chapter 1. Three of these hypotheses address candidate recruitment and emergence, three address recruitment and engagement, and three address the concept of political ambition. Three additional hypotheses address the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of school district governance. Each of the original hypotheses will be clearly stated in bold and will be followed by a brief explanation of whether the hypothesis has been confirmed or disproven through the course of this study.

1—Candidate Recruitment and Emergence Hypotheses

H1a: Self-recruited board members are more likely than their recruited peers to be found in sparsely populated or rural districts and are most likely to emerge in districts featuring weak political party organizations, sedentary community organizations, and generally inactive interest groups.

The majority of self-recruited board members are from rural districts with weaker party organizations than those who have been recruited to run for school board seats in

Pennsylvania. Additionally, self-recruited members tend to be less engaged in political and non-political affairs within their communities than recruits. Although we cannot necessarily say that the community organizations and interest groups are "sedentary" or "inactive" in any district, it is possible to conclude that based on the survey data, these organizations do not hold a significant amount of sway over local elections in districts containing self-starting members, nor are self-starters as highly involved in these types of organizations as their recruited peers. H1a is confirmed.

H1b: Party-recruited board members are more likely than their self-recruited or non-political group-recruited peers to be found in districts featuring active political party organizations that commonly endorse candidates for school board seats and other local races. These candidates will most likely emerge in districts where people are concentrated and easy to organize such as urban areas or regions of the state featuring the greatest population density.

Party-recruited members are more likely than their peers to be found in districts featuring active party organizations and report that these organizations hold a great amount of influence over local elections in their districts, possibly indicating that these organizations routinely endorse candidates at the school board level.[20] Although we cannot confirm that party-recruited members are the most likely to emerge in urban areas due to a minimal number of responses from members representing urban Pennsylvania districts, we can confirm that party recruits are less-rural than any other types of members

[20] Although the survey did not ask if the party organizations in the districts directly endorse candidates, the survey did ask members to identify whether different types of organizations or committees were extremely or very influential in their districts, which is over 24 percent higher than any other subset of recruited board members. Party recruited members also reported that non-political community organizations, labor unions, church groups, and school or education organizations tend to be less influential over elections in their districts than in districts containing other types of recruits. In the absence of an endorsement question, the data regarding party influence was used to help gauge whether or not "active" party organizations were present in the districts.

whether self-starters or those recruited by other types of organizations. H1b is mostly confirmed.

H1c: Board members who were recruited by agents other than political parties are more likely than other types of members to be found in suburban, medium-density, fast growing areas. In these areas civic associations, neighborhood or community associations, business organizations, labor unions, parent groups, and other similar organizations are likely to supersede weak, loosely organized, or nearly non-existent political parties.

Although members who have been recruited by non-party sources generally come from suburban areas, the evidence *does not* suggest that these members are most often found in suburban, medium-density, fast growing areas as asserted in this hypothesis. Instead, non-party recruits seem to emerge most often in rural parts of the Commonwealth. Based on the survey data, party organizations still appear to be more active across the board in suburban, urban, and rural districts than non-party organizations. H1c is not proven.

2—Recruitment and Engagement Hypotheses

H2a: Self-recruited board members will be more likely than recruited members to have a personal history of involvement or engagement in education or community-related activities rather than in political parties, political organizations, or electoral activities.

The data confirms that members who are self-recruited appear to be more likely to have a personal history of involvement or engagement in education or community-related activities than in political parties, organizations, or electoral activities. However, the findings indicate that recruited members are collectively more active in *both* political and

non-political organizations and activities when compared to their self-starting colleagues. As such, H2a is not proven.

H2b: Party-recruited board members will be more likely than non-party recruits to have a personal history of involvement or engagement in political parties, political organizations, or electoral activities rather than in education or community-related activities.

H2b is confirmed as party-recruited board members have a personal history of involvement and engagement in political parties, political organizations, and electoral activities that surpasses the levels of involvement of non-party recruits in such entities and activities. Additionally, party recruits are also more highly engaged in numerous non-political activities within their districts and communities at a higher degree than non-party recruits. Although this was not originally predicted within H2b, it is an intriguing finding which demonstrates the extremely high level of engagement in both political and non-political activities by party-recruited board members.

H2c: Board members who were recruited by agents other than political parties will likely have a greater history of personal engagement in either education or community-related activities rather than in political or electoral activities. Their level of engagement in education and community-related activities will be greater than those recruited by political party organizations.

H2c is partially confirmed as the data demonstrates that board members who were recruited by agents other than political parties have a clear history of personal engagement in either education or community-related activities rather than in political or electoral activities. However, as noted in H2b, there is a noteworthy finding associated with this prediction. Although these board members were highly involved in education or

community-related (i.e. non-political) activities, party-recruited board members were collectively the *most active* in both political and non-political causes or entities within their communities, rendering this hypotheses only partially confirmed.

3—Ambition Hypotheses

H3a: School board members with discrete ambition will commit to a short term of service as the duties of holding office conflict with other interests or requirements. They are likely to be older professionals, women, retirees, or parents with children currently in the schools. Members with discrete ambition will likely have a personal history of engagement that is education-related or rooted in community involvement that is apolitical, rather than political, in nature.

The data accumulated by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey shows that women who serve on school boards in the Keystone State are almost equally as likely to report having either discrete or static levels of ambition. These members tend to have school-age children at home and represent either a plurality or majority of all members who indicated that they belong in an age range over 50 years of age. Discretely ambitious members are predominantly self-starters with a history of engagement that is education-related or rooted in apolitical rather than political activity. H3a is confirmed.

H3b: School board members with static ambition will most likely view their role on the board as an advocate for a specific type of education-oriented policy or cause within the district. Members with static ambition will likely have a personal history of political, educational, or community engagement that is commensurate with the type of organization that initially recruited them to seek office. These officeholders are likely to have become involved in the process out of a sense of civic duty and will likely be an equal mix of men and women.

Members with static ambition are more likely to have a history of civic engagement that is community or education-oriented rather than political in nature. Among those who were recruited, members with static ambition were the least likely to have been recruited by a party organization. Although men comprise a majority of members of this category, there is greater parity between the genders among those with static ambition than any other ambition classification. All of these items are aligned with the original hypothesis. However, members with static ambition are most likely to report to have sought a school board seat in order to manage the district while children from their own families are in attendance rather than for policy advocacy purposes. As such, H3b is mostly confirmed.

H3c: School board members with progressive ambition will seek to gain policy expertise, generate public exposure, build a base of political support, and enhance their own political credentials for a future political career in order to begin ascending the political ladder. These officeholders likely have a personal history of engagement in politically, educational, and community oriented organizations and activities. They will likely be young to middle-aged members of the community and are more likely to be men than women.

Members with progressive ambition are highly involved and engaged in political, education, and community-oriented affairs. Overall, they are the most active among all members (static, discrete, or ambitious) in both the political and non-political life of their

communities. They are also collectively younger than their peers and more likely to be men than women when compared to those with discrete or static ambition. H3c is confirmed.

4—School Board (Legislative) and Superintendent (Executive) Relationship Hypotheses

H4a: Self-recruited board members and those with discrete ambition are likely to be evenly split between those who view the superintendent as an employee of the school board charged with carrying out the board's agenda and those who see the superintendent as a "co-partner" in managing the district.

H4b: Party-recruited board members and those with static ambition will likely take cues from the district superintendent, viewing the superintendent as a "co-partner" in managing the district rather than as an employee of the board.

H4c: Board members who were recruited by agents other than political parties and those with progressive ambition will likely view the role of district superintendent as that of an "employee" of the school board rather than as a "co-partner" in managing the district.

Pennsylvania school board members almost universally rate their district superintendent as doing an "excellent" or "good" job. They also suggest that the school board is the chief decision-maker in the district and that the school board and superintendent are co-partners in governing. As such, H4a and H4c are not proven. However, H4b contends that members who are recruited by political parties as well as those with static ambition will likely view the superintendent as a "co-partner" in managing the district rather than as an employee of the board. This indicates that H4b is confirmed.

Assessing the Research Questions

Having assessed each of the original hypotheses offered at the outset of this study, this section of Chapter 9 will proceed to examine the original research questions stated in Chapter 1 while succinctly stating whether each question has been answered as well as how the answer was determined.

Research Question 1—Motivation

What political, policy, and personal issues drive citizens to seek positions on public school boards in Pennsylvania?

School board members serving in Pennsylvania are motivated to run for their positions for a variety of reasons. However, the plurality of Pennsylvania school board members indicated that they decided to run for a seat on their local school board because of a sense of civic duty. The second most likely reason offered by school board members was the desire to help manage the school district while children from their own families were attending school in the district. A considerably smaller percentage of members—a combined 18 percent—said that they ran for policy related reasons connected to either the district's curriculum or budget and finance. A negligible number of members—only three out of 380 respondents—said that they ran for seats on the school board because they wanted to use that position as a springboard to run for a higher office.

Research Question 2—Recruitment

Are candidates for public school board elections self-recruited or recruited to run for office by individuals or organizations within the community?

This study has proven that about three quarters of school board members serving in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were self-recruited while the remaining quarter were recruited to run for their positions by another entity within their community.

Although there is some evidence of recruitment efforts being undertaken by non-political community organizations and incumbent school board members, the bulk of the recruitment activity at the school board level is being carried out by local political party organizations. Conversely, there was minimal evidence suggesting that labor unions, church groups, business organizations, or fraternal organizations are active in the recruitment of members of public school boards in Pennsylvania.

Research Question 3—Engagement:
Do individuals currently serving on public school boards have a history of political engagement, public participation, experience in party or electoral politics, or direct experience in the education system?

This study has found that the individuals serving on public school boards in Pennsylvania demonstrate an inordinate amount of engagement in political, civic, and community affairs prior to running for seats on the school board in their community. Although levels of participation in political and non-political activity vary between each member and even members based on their reasons for running for office, it is possible to conclude that school board members in Pennsylvania are highly engaged and highly participatory in the political and civic life of their communities.

Research Question 4—Ambition:
Do individuals serving on Pennsylvania's public school boards have aspirations to seek higher public offices in the future?

This study has proven that the vast majority of Pennsylvania's public school board members—about three quarters of them—are not politically ambitious and are not likely to be found in the "candidate pool" for future elections for higher office such as the state legislature, United States Congress, or other county-level positions. It has been

demonstrated here that a quarter of respondents who are politically ambitious share a number of demographic traits, political attributes, and geographic similarities that differ from those of their unambitious peers. A series of interviews conducted with former school board members currently serving in the Pennsylvania legislature have confirmed that school boards provide a reasonable "training ground" for future service in the General Assembly because members are exposed to the challenges related to budgeting, constituent service, and preparing for public meetings and hearings, yet school board seats do not provide a springboard to higher elective office.

Research Question 5—Governance:
Do factors related to recruitment and ambition influence how school board members conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent?

This study has proven that factors related to whether board members have been self-recruited or recruited by a political or non-political organization within their district does not influence how they conceive of their relationship with the district superintendent. Likewise, factors related to whether board members are politically ambitious or unambitious have minimal influence on how they conceive of that relationship. Pennsylvania school board members—regardless of their recruitment or ambition status—provide their district superintendent with exceptionally positive job performance evaluations. Likewise, the data presented in this study demonstrate that recruited, non-recruited, ambitious, and unambitious members all report that in their districts, the school board itself is the chief decision-maker within the districts. Finally, members within each of these subgroups concur that the school board and the superintendent are "co-partners" in power when it comes to actually managing the school districts. The only slight variation in responses occurs between ambitious and

unambitious members as the former were somewhat more likely than their peers to report a slightly higher level of independence from their superintendents, noting that the school board is the most significant decision-maker in managing the district.

What Have We Learned?

This study has enabled us to learn a plethora of information regarding the public officials who serve on Pennsylvania's public school boards, their demographic and political profiles, and their history of engagement in the community in both political and non-political contexts. We now have an enhanced understanding of the point of development at which citizens emerge as candidates for public school board seats. We are also able to make an informed conclusion about whether or not these elected officials are ambitious actors who are considering ascending the political ladder. Additionally, this study has given us a greater understanding of how school board members in Pennsylvania perceive of their own relationships with the superintendents in their school districts as well as their perspectives towards management and accountability.

Pennsylvania's school boards—as demonstrated by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey—are predominately comprised of Republican-leaning men with a center-right ideological orientation. School board members largely come from districts with at least one—and often two—active political party organizations. School board members in Pennsylvania are exceptionally active and engaged in civic, community, and political affairs within their districts. They are collectively wealthier and more highly educated than the average Pennsylvania citizen and they chiefly view their school board service as either an opportunity to fulfill a civic duty or to ensure that their school districts are well-managed

while children from their own families are in attendance. They are unlikely to say that they are serving in order to advance a specific policy or cause. School board members in Pennsylvania are concerned with a variety of issues, but the majority believe that issues pertaining to education and curriculum, budget and finance, or a desire to strike a balance between these types of policies are the most important items on their agendas.

Three quarters of those serving on Pennsylvania's school boards are self-starters while the remaining quarter was recruited by another entity within their districts, most often a political party organization. Somewhat surprisingly, the study revealed only negligible levels of candidate recruitment by organized labor groups, church-based organizations, or business groups. Only a quarter of Pennsylvania's school board members are politically ambitious, instead indicating that they desire to remain in their positions as school board members for a lengthy, undisclosed period of time or they intend to serve for a short period of time before stepping aside from public service. School board members are largely satisfied with the performance of their district superintendents while the vast majority believe that either the school board or a co-partnership between the board and the superintendent is responsible for managing the school district. Despite this, board members believe that they are the final decision-making source within the districts.

The remainder of Chapter 9 will address several important themes which emerged during the course of this study. The following sections will analyze the "Cincinnatus Effect" which suggests that school board members are a collective group of selfless public servants who intend to serve in the spirit of public service before receding back to private life. The second section will return to the concept of school boards as "little legislatures" that was discussed at length in Chapter 2. Lastly, the study will conclude with a discussion

of why school boards, school board members, and school board politics are important and why the public as well as the discipline of Political Science will benefit from our continued study and analysis of these institutions and actors.

Discussion and Conclusion

Addressing the "Cincinnatus Effect"

The ancient folklore surrounding Cincinnatus tells the tale of the retired Roman general who was living comfortably on his farm on the outskirts of the city when emissaries from the Senate sent for him with dire news about a crisis facing his country. According to historian Robert Hardy, when Cincinnatus "learned of the emergency facing Rome, he left his plow standing in the field, bid farewell to his wife, and led the Romans to victory against the Aequians. Fifteen days after assuming the dictatorship, Cincinnatus resigned and returned to his plow" (n.d., n.p.). The supposed lesson conveyed by the Cincinnatus story is that a truly humble public servant seeks to leave his or her proverbial plow in the field for short period of time in order to serve the interests of public without turning said opportunity into a means of self-service.

Based on what we have learned from the Pennsylvania school board survey, over 76 percent of the individuals serving on the state's school board chose to run without being recruited by political, non-political, or interest group organizations and just 24 percent say that they intend to use their position as a springboard to higher office. Likewise, a plurality of 42 percent said that they sought a seat on the local school board because of a desire to serve the public or due to civic responsibility. Over half of those

surveyed reported that they desire to serve no more than 12 years in office while another 10 percent say that they will be finished with their school board service either in the very near future or after their present term concludes. Only 16 percent report to have already served more than 12 years (or three terms) as elected members of their district's school board.

On the surface, these figures suggest that those who pursue seats on Pennsylvania's school boards are influenced by the Cincinnatus Effect.[21] They are citizens who tend not to have school-aged children, are highly engaged in their communities in both political and non-political life, serve in unpaid positions without plans to catapult themselves to a higher office, and do not appear willing to serve the interests of any entity beyond the public. The majority appear to be poised to serve their communities for a period of time and then recede from public life to return to their lives as private citizens.

Without implying or insinuating that these members are not serving their school districts and communities for purposes that are anything but altruistic in nature, it is crucial to ask whether the Cincinnatus Effect is the most suitable way to summarize why citizens pursue seats on the public school boards in Pennsylvania. The table containing a comprehensive menu of opportunities and motives identified in Chapter 6 provided a concise summary of seven broad categories and nearly 30 potential reasons why individuals may choose to seek a seat on the public school board. The category of "Civic Duty," of which a plurality of members said motived them to run for a school board seat, can and should be interpreted more broadly than the basic assumption that these

[21] Gaddie (2004) actually argues that any politician with discrete ambition is comparable to Cincinnatus

individuals decided to run simply because it appeared to be the patriotic thing to do. Quite candidly, we don't know if respondents who reported to having run because of "civic duty" did so because they truly felt it to be their genuine duty to give back to their communities, because they felt that it was a "safe" answer, or because they did not want to reveal what may have been overtly political or personal motives behind their candidacies.

Concluding that the Cincinnatus Effect is best capable of explaining why nearly 5,000 Pennsylvania citizens serve on public school boards without compensation does not necessarily account for the fact that these individuals are highly involved in their communities and are also extremely likely to report to being involved politically in the lives of their communities. Over 88 percent of respondents—regardless of their level of ambition or whether they were recruited to run—indicated that they were engaged in some form of political or governmental activities before running for a seat on the school board. Over 44 percent said that these experiences included volunteering on political campaigns, nearly 34 percent reported to have organized people in their communities to take action regarding an issue or concern, and over 30 percent said that they had lobbied or contacted a government official or agency in support or opposition of a policy. Nearly 13 percent said that they served as a party committeeperson, which in Pennsylvania is a publicly elected position and a function performed by just a sliver of the state's populace.[22]

[22] Pennsylvania has 9,186 precincts spread across its 67 counties. Although there are some exceptions, there are typically two party committee seats per precinct (this is true of all Democratic seats, although some county Republican organizations allot more seats based on the party's performance in each precinct). This means that if all of the party committee positions are filled statewide—which they are not—roughly 36,700 citizens out of more than 12 million (or about .003 percent) of the state's population could serve in this capacity at one point in time. The fact that 13 percent of school board members report to having served as

It is again necessary to emphasize that these activities were undertaken *before* the respondents ran for their school board positions. At the community level, nearly half of all respondents said that they participated in education-oriented organizations, about 30 percent reported to have participated in community organizations, participated in social or fraternal organizations, and many regularly attended public meetings of elected officials in their districts. In short, the individuals serving on Pennsylvania's school boards can best be described as highly engaged self-starters who, unlike Cincinnatus, did not wait for the citizens of Rome (or in this case, their own communities) to recruit them into service. They represent among the most highly engaged and participatory citizens in the Commonwealth, among which nearly three quarters decided to run *without* recruitment or prodding by their neighbors, associates, or organized interests within their communities.

The purpose of this discussion is not to sully the public service record of those serving without compensation on Pennsylvania's school boards, but to instead postulate that while these members may not seek or hold office for the purpose of advancing a political career, serve the interests of a party or political organization, or intend to serve for an inordinate amount of time, they are individuals whose life experiences within their communities have made them highly aware of where power is concentrated and how it can be wielded. They are also very much aware of which individuals at the political and non-political levels are capable of "making things happen" locally and are experienced in interacting with these types of actors. It should not be forgotten that although Cincinnatus

a party committee person is intriguing and further demonstrates that Pennsylvania's school board members—regardless of their recruitment status or ambition level—are exceptionally involved in both the political and non-political lives of their communities.

left his plow behind in the field and recommitted to a brief period of service to Rome, he was also deeply connected, well-known, and lived his life in close proximity to the levers of power of his country. While it is certainly true that Pennsylvania's local school board members are far removed from Roman generals, they are very much cognizant of where power is located at the local level and are aware of how it is employed.

School Boards as Legislative Bodies

The findings presented in this study are significant for a variety of reasons and can possibly have implications for the way we conceptualize school boards as legislative or policymaking institutions, how we comprehend their legal and political responsibilities, and our expectations of these boards and those who serve on them from the standpoint of democratic responsiveness. First, I will address the issue of school boards as legislative institutions.

School boards were assessed in Chapter 2 as arena rather than transformative legislatures based on Polsby's classic explication of these two different types of legislative bodies and those serving within them. In short, Polsby argued that transformative legislatures are generally recognizable based upon their complex structures, a clear and consistent division of labor among members (such as a regular committee system), legislators commonly working to advance their own preferences, and a process of socialization that helps strengthen a member's identity as part of that institution. Meanwhile, Polsby described arena legislatures as institutions in which the actions of the legislative bodies and their members are strongly influenced by social, personal, and political factors rather than those which are organizational in nature. These factors (social,

personal, or political) enable arena legislatures to become permeable and open to influence by the attributes of their members such as behind-the-scenes persuasion and negotiation, eloquence during public meetings, or rhetorical skills capable of convincing other members to decide a certain way on an issue or a vote during a public meeting, the prestige of service within the institution, and the individual personalities of those serving.

At the outset of the study we understood that unlike their legislative counterparts in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the United States Congress, school board members in the Keystone State serve in institutions that are best described as "citizen legislatures"[23] rather than professional legislative bodies. School board members in Pennsylvania are not compensated for their service nor do they have their own individual staff members. Additionally, Pennsylvania school board members are not subject to any requirements in the area of specialized knowledge concerning the education system.

The findings of the Pennsylvania School Board Survey along with the interviews with former school board members who now serve in the Pennsylvania General Assembly (Chapter 8) further enhance our ability to diagnose Pennsylvania school boards as arena legislatures. The findings demonstrate that Pennsylvania's school boards are largely comprised of individuals who are self-starters (non-recruited) that largely seek office due to a sense of civic duty or to oversee the schools while children from their own families are in attendance. These members are also best classified as non-careerists, meaning that they are not intending to use the school board as a springboard to higher political office or to make a career out of serving on the school board. Aside from an above average number

[23] State legislative bodies which feature low compensation and small staffs are referred to as "part-time" legislatures by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) as opposed to "full-time" legislatures in which members are well-paid and have large staffs.

of members who identified themselves as educators or possibly retired educators, the majority of board members do not appear to have a specialization in the field of education policy or public finance.

Another piece of evidence uncovered by the Pennsylvania School Board Survey and the interviews discussed in Chapter 8 is that nearly 90 percent of school board members provide strong approval ratings for their district superintendents. Likewise, when probed regarding their views of how their districts are managed, just nine percent of members said that "The school board decides on policies and the superintendent implements them" while a combined 91 percent said that either the superintendent proposes polices and the board members mostly approve of them or that the board and superintendent are "equal partners" in making policies and decisions for the school district. These findings also augment the characterization of school boards as arena rather than transformative legislative bodies because they are highly reliant on the superintendent and possibly the district business manager for professional advice and information related to budget and financial matters. The findings indicate that boards rely on their appointed administrators rather than unilaterally or independently forging policy without the input or guidance of the professional staff comprised of individuals with specialization in the field of education and finance.

These attributes of non-professionalization, non-careerist intent for service, civic duty or self-interested related motivations for service, and the reliance on district superintendents are strong indicators of arena legislative status. As noted in Chapter 2, Polsby (1975) describes transformative legislative bodies as those with an "independent capacity, frequently exercised, to mold and transform proposals from whatever source into

laws" (277). Based on the findings of the aforementioned findings of this study coupled with our prior understanding of the legal authority vested in school districts and their mandated duties as noted in Chapter 1, there appears to be little doubt that school boards in Pennsylvania are arena legislatures since the structure of the bodies themselves do not easily allow for transformative legislative behavior to occur.

It is my assessment that the structure of the Pennsylvania school board system itself leads these local legislative bodies to fall into the classification of arena legislatures, making them very likely to attract members who are not ambitious career politicians as well as those who often lack specialized knowledge of education or public finance policy. Based on the findings associated with this study, I would also argue that the constraints placed on school board members such as the inability to receive compensation for their time and work, the lack of personal staff for either constituent affairs or policy research, and the inability to make transformative change within the confines of the policymaking process in accordance with state law are likely to influence—at least to some extent—the potential pool of candidates in school board races.

This conjecture may also help explain how arena legislative status of Pennsylvania school boards likely alters the calculus for political parties, interest groups, and other types of organizations that may typically recruit individuals to run for various elected positions or the calculus employed by self-recruits who are considering seeking a public office. In other words, the trappings of the office of the public school board do not serve as a valuable inducement for potential recruits or potential self-starters.

For example, if Charlie Rice, Chairman of the Mercer County Democratic Committee, is speaking with a possible recruit about running for a school board seat in the

Hermitage School District, he will need to convince said recruit that the school board is worth running for despite the fact that it is not a transformational body and that the position comes with a number of constraints on the policymaking process. Unlike the efforts that are likely employed to recruit candidates for a seat in the state legislature or an elected position in the county courthouse, the recruiting agent would not be able to dangle the possibility of full-time status, a salary, staff, reimbursed gas mileage or a government vehicle, a pension, and health care benefits in front of the potential school board recruit. The recruitment agent would be forced to appeal to the potential recruit on grounds of civic duty, good government, sound management of the schools, and the ability to simply hold a public office.[24]

In conclusion, the research connected to this study informs me that the lack of professionalization and the structure of these bodies help shape the school boards to be arena rather than transformative legislatures. As arena legislatures, Pennsylvania's school boards are conducive to attracting members who are self-starters, non-careerists, and amateur politicians rather than careerists, political professionals, policy experts, and those interested in using their position on the board as a springboard to higher office.

Implications for Governance

Chapter 1 discussed the fact that Pennsylvania school boards are charged with a wide variety of responsibilities under Article V of the School Code. The nonpartisan Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC) provided a detailed list of the powers and

[24] This is not to say that such a calculus only applies to recruiting agents and potential recruits. A self-starter who is weighing the possibility of seeking public office is undoubtedly considering very similar concerns regarding the benefits associated with holding office.

duties of the school boards as prescribed by state law. As noted in the opening chapter, these responsibilities include "Adopting policies to manage the district, Establishing schools and programs, Determining the school calendar, Adopting the curriculum, Adopting textbooks, Appointing and dismissing the superintendent, Appointing and dismissing all other professional staff, Adopting an annual budget, Levying and collecting taxes, Borrowing money, Determining depositories for school funds, Entering into contracts, Determining salaries of all personnel, Purchasing and selling land, Determining the location of school buildings, Operating School Cafeterias, Organizing school safety patrols, Adopting policies to govern student organizations, Authorizing staff participation in professional conferences, and Authorizing student field trips" (13-14).

Among these powers, duties, and responsibilities, very few are as consequential as the budgeting and taxation requirements. As discussed throughout this study, public school boards in Pennsylvania are increasingly charged with the responsibility of providing revenue for instructional and non-instructional programs within their districts in the face of declining state support, particularly in the area of instructional costs. According to EPLC, "School boards raise substantial tax revenues to sustain this system and are empowered by the General Assembly to make significant decisions about the use of public funds from local, state, and federal sources. The impact of effective educational programs on the lives of individual children is significant" (6).

As of the 2012-13 fiscal year, Pennsylvania school boards were responsible for raising $16.7 billion in education dollars at the local level in the Commonwealth, amounting to 59.5 percent of all dollars spent on public education in Pennsylvania (PA Department of Education, 2013). This represents a highly disproportionate share of the

overall education budget within the local school districts and puts Pennsylvania in the position of providing a substantially smaller share of education funding than the national average. Meanwhile, National Center for Education Statistics (2013) data show that as of 2010, Pennsylvania school districts were responsible for providing an average of 53.3 percent of all education revenue at the district level, which was already 12.3 percent higher than the national average.

As state lawmakers have scaled back appropriations to the school districts—such as the 20 percent drop in instructional expenses over the past four decades discussed in an earlier chapter—locally elected school boards are forced to choose between a series of distressing options. They can either pare back non-mandated educational or instructional expenditures, thus risking a decline in the quality of their district's education program or they can raise local property taxes to help protect their district's instructional and non-instructional programs. Some may choose a mix of both options, risking the possibility of satisfying very few of the stakeholders within their districts.

An October 2013 report by Pennsylvania's Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) found that between 1993 and 2013, Pennsylvania "school property taxes have increased by 146 percent. The Pennsylvania average weekly wage has increased by 80 percent during that same period" (Pennington, 2014, n.p.). School property taxes are determined by the locally elected school boards and set through a majority vote. While the reasons for these increases may vary across districts for expenditures such as classroom instruction, athletic and extracurricular programming, burgeoning public sector pension costs, and construction-related expenses, school boards comprised of locally elected members are ultimately held

accountable at the ballot box by voters who are conceivably frustrated with cuts in programming or continued property tax enhancements.

This study has deep implications for our comprehension of the role of school boards from the vantage point of governance and responsiveness in Pennsylvania since these individuals are charged with providing on average nearly 60 percent of the revenue required to finance the state's system of public education. Locally elected school board members are expected to bear an increasing amount of the burden of funding the schools, meeting federal and state mandates, and perpetuating an acceptable or successful academic program. As property taxes for education rise at a level greater than the wages earned by their constituents, school board members could likely feel increasing pressure to tamp down on property tax increases from voters in their communities, thus putting the quality of the educational programs in their districts or the financial well-being of their constituencies at risk.

Although this study does not address the specifics of how school boards may go about responding to the public's concerns over declining educational quality, constituent frustration with increasingly high property taxes, or ways that board members may seek to lobby the legislature for additional education funding, it does convey a considerable amount of information related to the policy issues and motivating factors that influence individuals to seek election to their local school boards, factors related to the recruitment of these individuals, political ambition, community and political engagement among members, and perspectives on school district governance. Additionally, this study has filled a substantial void in current scholarship surrounding Pennsylvania's school boards by

presenting valuable and previously undocumented demographic data about who currently serves on these elected boards.

I would like to raise one final consideration regarding the composition of the school boards as determined through this study and the serious challenges related to school district governance discussed in this section. As previously noted, Pennsylvania school boards are comprised of largely unambitious, self-staring members who report to have run out of civic duty or to ensure that the district is well-managed. They also have a propensity to trust the advice of the education professionals such as the superintendents who provide them with advice regarding the management of the districts. With this said, it is worth considering a few alternative scenarios related to the main research questions from this study. First, would it make a difference for school district governance if the majority of Pennsylvania's school board members had turned out to be ambitious politicos seeking to use the school board as a springboard to higher office rather than exhibiting static or discrete ambition? Second, what if the majority of school board members in the state happened to have been recruited by a certain type of organization such as a political party or an interest group rather than deciding to run on their own?

Although it is impossible to predict a certain outcome under such a scenario, I foresee a troubling outcome if Pennsylvania's public school boards were dominated by ambitious politicos who hoped to use the school board as a launching pad for a seat in the General Assembly, the U.S. Congress, or some other higher office. Recall for a moment that the Pennsylvania School Board Survey revealed that a majority of school board members in Pennsylvania are conservative-leaning Republicans. We know from the education finance data and press reports that school districts around the state have opted to

increase local taxes to maintain their educational programs. One possible danger of having a slew of ambitious conservative, Republican school board members throughout the Commonwealth is that these members may be far less likely to vote for tax increases, especially if they believed that such a vote would jeopardize their ability to win a Republican primary election or a general election.

While an unambitious school board member—regardless of his or her party—may see the need to balance out tax hikes and education program cuts or to consistently support revenue enhancements in the face of diminishing state support, an ambitious conservative politician would likely position themselves on the side of preventing tax increases or even working to roll back earlier tax increases for the purpose of political expediency and to keep their anti-tax record clean in order to adhere to something like the Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) Taxpayer Protection Pledge during a future election. Conversely, one could argue that ambitious members may be more likely to side with supporting greater education funding and the tax increases necessary to sustain or enhance the educational programs offered by the districts. I am hesitant, however, to concur with this justifiable, yet improbable view. Simply put, the partisan and ideological composition of the current Pennsylvania school board as indicated through the survey leads me to believe that politically ambitious, conservative Republican board members are unlikely candidates to support raising school property taxes.

Similarly, it is not possible to predict whether a school board population comprised chiefly of recruited members would perform better or worse with regards to the current challenges afflicting school boards and school board members in the Commonwealth. One of the main considerations of such a scenario would inevitably be the agenda or interests

of the recruitment agents. Should a member be recruited by an organized labor union, a PTA, or even a Democratic Party committee, he or she would likely be willing to make choices that were in alignment with the values or interests of that recruitment agent. Likewise, members recruited by anti-tax organizations like the local chapter of ATR, the Christian Coalition organization noted in the Preface, a business group, or a Republican Party committee would likely make choices in alignment with the values and interests of that type of recruitment source. Conversely, the personal ambition level of these members may ultimately impact the likelihood of them voting in lock-step with the interests of the recruitment agents in question. My supposition, however, is that a larger number of recruited board members would result in a greater propensity to side with the narrow views of a recruitment agent rather than making choices from the standpoint of a somewhat independent-minded "freelancer" who was self-recruited into this process.

Thanks to the findings presented here, we have learned that the individuals who are being confronted with declining state revenues, difficult choices about local property tax rates, cuts to the education programs in the districts, and citizen frustration over these problems are amateur politicians who are exceptionally engaged in their communities, not seeking to forge political careers through their school board service, and are self-starters who ran for their positions largely due to civic pride or an interest in managing the districts while their own kids are in the schools.

Having devoted a considerable amount of time to researching and considering Pennsylvania school board members in the context of governance and the need to address issues of great importance, it is my belief that the types of individuals currently serving on Pennsylvania's school boards are well suited to meet the challenges—especially those of a

financial nature—that are currently afflicting their school districts. As noted earlier, school board members such as those characterized in this study have repeatedly stepped up in the face of declining state revenues to fill the gaps. By providing nearly 60 percent of the funds needed to run the schools and failing to back away from the authorization of tax increases to salvage their academic programs in times of fiscal uncertainty is a sign that Pennsylvania's current citizen-legislator led school board system comprised of self-starting and unambitious individuals has not failed in this current crisis.

The message, however, ought to be clear to policymakers both at the local district level and in the General Assembly. Board members indicated in the Pennsylvania School Board Survey that the most important issue they face is harmonizing the educational needs of their districts with the delicate task of crafting an annual balanced budget. The strain imposed on local school boards under the lopsided funding arrangement that expects an inequitable amount of revenue to be raised locally is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term as annual local tax increases are simply not plausible for an extended period of time. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania must reform its system of education finance to relieve the burden placed on the shoulders of these citizen-legislators at the school district level of government.

As demonstrated by the budget numbers presented in this chapter, these local leaders have worked aggressively to address the funding shortfalls that have materialized through the gradual decline in state support for public education in Pennsylvania by raising property taxes rather than simply taking a sledgehammer to the education programs in the areas they represent. My own normative conclusion is that Pennsylvania's current self-starting, unambitious citizen-legislators are doing the best possible job that they can to

manage the school districts, despite certain restraints imposed by state and federal law as well as the aforesaid decline in state funding. Given that the Commonwealth has nearly 4,500 elected school board members spread across 499 districts, I cannot conclude that every board in every district has responded well to these challenges. However, on the whole, board members appear to be up to the job of raising revenue (at least for the time being), running the districts effectively with the input of administrators with specialization in the field of education and budgeting, and improving or at least maintaining the status quo in their districts during this vexing time of diminishing education dollars.

In conclusion, given the increasing responsibility being placed on the school boards as well as the diverse and extensive list of responsibilities covered in this chapter and elsewhere in this study, it is necessary for the discipline of Political Science to know who these public servants are, what drives them to seek and hold office, where they emerge from within their communities, and whether they are potential candidates for higher office. This study has achieved these goals and has contributed to the discipline's ability to explain numerous fundamental, yet previously unexamined questions concerning public school boards and those who serve on them.

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APPENDIX A

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BOARD SURVEY INSTRUMENT

2013 Pennsylvania School Board Survey

Part 1: Introductory Questions

1. How many years have you served on the school board?

2. Were you elected to your current term on the school board, or were you appointed to the board?

- ◯ Elected
- ◯ Appointed

3. Which of the following statements best describes the main reason you originally decided to run for a seat on the school board?

- ◯ To gain governmental and political experience in order to seek higher office
- ◯ Concerns over local taxes or school district budget
- ◯ To affect school district curriculum decisions
- ◯ To help ensure that the education system was well managed while children in my family are/were in school
- ◯ Desire to serve the public/civic responsibility
- ◯ Other (please specify)

4. How would you best describe your school district?

- ◯ Rural
- ◯ Urban
- ◯ Suburban

Part 2: Campaigns and Elections

5. On which party's primary election ballots did your name appear during your first successful campaign for the school board?

- ◯ Democratic
- ◯ Republican
- ◯ Both
- ◯ Neither. I ran as a write-in or third party candidate in the general election

6. Which party's nomination did you win during your first successful primary election campaign for the school board?

- ◯ Democratic
- ◯ Republican
- ◯ Both
- ◯ Neither. I ran as a write-in or third party candidate in the general election

7. Before your first campaign for the school board, did any organizations contact you to encourage you to run?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

8. If yes, which type of organization or organizations contacted you (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Political party committee or organization
- ☐ A non-political community/neighborhood group or organization
- ☐ A church-affiliated organization
- ☐ A labor organization
- ☐ A business organization
- ☐ A fraternal organization
- ☐ Other (please specify)

9. Have you ever run for election or reelection to the school board as part of a slate of candidates?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

10. If yes, who organized this effort?

- ◯ A political party or an official affiliated with a political party
- ◯ A non-political community/neighborhood group or organization
- ◯ A church affiliated organization
- ◯ A labor organization
- ◯ A business organization
- ◯ A fraternal organization
- ◯ Friends and neighbors
- ◯ An incumbent member of the school board
- ◯ Other (please specify)

11. If you ran with a slate, were all members of the slate of candidates successful...

- ◯ In the primary election
- ◯ In the general election
- ◯ In both the primary and general elections

12. Which of the following have you used in your past campaigns (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Door knocking/canvassing
- ☐ Raised money
- ☐ Displayed campaign signs or billboards
- ☐ Organized poll workers for Election Day
- ☐ Recruited/organized volunteers
- ☐ Webpage or Facebook page
- ☐ Direct mail
- ☐ Radio advertising
- ☐ Television advertising
- ☐ Campaigning in person at community events
- ☐ Other (please specify)

13. What issue is the most important to you as a school board member?

Part 3: Organizational Activity In Your District

14. Based on your own assessment of your school district, what percentage of the voters in your district would you say are Democrats? What percentage would you say are Republicans? What percentage would you say are independent or third party members?

Democratic Party %	
Republican Party %	
Independent/Other Parties %	

15. Which of the following options most closely describes the political parties in your district?

- ◯ Both political parties have very active organizations in my district
- ◯ My district has a very active Democratic Party organization only
- ◯ My district has a very active Republican Party organization only
- ◯ Neither political party has a very active organization in my district

16. Which types of organizations have the most influence over local elections in your district? For each of the organizations listed below, please select whether these groups are extremely influential, very influential, somewhat influential, or not at all influential over local elections in your district.

	Extremely influential	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential
Political party committees or organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community and neighborhood groups or organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯
Church affiliated groups and organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organized labor groups	◯	◯	◯	◯
Business organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fraternal clubs and organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯
School or education-oriented organizations	◯	◯	◯	◯

17. Which types of individuals have the most influence over local elections in your district? For each of the types of individual actors listed below, please select whether these individuals are extremely influential, very influential, somewhat influential, or not at all influential over local elections in your district.

	Extremely influential	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential
Local, county, or state officeholders/politicians	◯	◯	◯	◯
Political party leaders	◯	◯	◯	◯
Law enforcement officials	◯	◯	◯	◯
Business leaders	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organized labor leaders	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community or fraternal organization leaders	◯	◯	◯	◯
Individual parents	◯	◯	◯	◯
Education organization leaders (other than teachers union leaders)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Clergy men or women	◯	◯	◯	◯

Part 4: Personal Experience and Participation

18. When you were in high school or college, did you ever run for office, such as class representative or president?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

19. How many of your district's school board meetings would you say you attended before running for a seat on that board?

20. Are you active in any religious or church-based organizations?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

21. Were you engaged in any of the following political or governmental activities prior to running for a seat on the school board (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Ran for public office in the past
- ☐ Held public office in the past
- ☐ Served as a party committeeperson
- ☐ Volunteered on other political campaigns
- ☐ Helped raise money for political candidates
- ☐ Involved in campaigns through a business, labor, or professional organization
- ☐ Worked for a government office, agency, or other public official
- ☐ Lobbied or contacted a government official or agency in support/opposition of a policy
- ☐ Organized people in my community to take action regarding an issue or concern
- ☐ Other (please specify)

22. Were you engaged in any of the following community activities prior to running for a seat on the school board (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Regularly attended public meetings of elected officials in my community
- ☐ Participated in my neighborhood association or community organization
- ☐ Participated in a fraternal or social organization in my community
- ☐ Participated in a church or religious-affiliated organization in my community
- ☐ Participated in an education-oriented organization in my community
- ☐ Was or is a member of a labor union
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Part 5: Public Service

23. About how many years would you like to serve on the school board?

24. Do you think you will ever run for an office other than the one you currently hold?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

25. If yes, which type of office would you be most likely to seek (please select all that apply)?

- ☐ A different local office
- ☐ A countywide position
- ☐ A state office like State Senator or State Representative
- ☐ A federal office like U.S. Congress
- ☐ Other (please specify)

26. In what way do you hope that your service on the local public school board has prepared you to serve in a different public office should you choose to run for such a position (please select all that apply)?

- ◯ Provided experience in dealing with budgets
- ◯ Allowed me to gain experience in working with the public
- ◯ Gave me exposure to key political actors and organizations
- ◯ Allowed me to formulate a platform to help propel me to a higher office
- ◯ Challenged me to work together with others to seek consensus for policymaking
- ◯ Other (please specify)

Part 6: School District Leadership and Policymaking

27. Overall, would you say your district's superintendent is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job?

- ◯ Excellent job
- ◯ Good job
- ◯ Fair job
- ◯ Poor job

28. Overall, who would you say holds the most influence over the final decisions made in your district?

- ◯ The School Board
- ◯ The Superintendent
- ◯ Other (please specify)

29. In general, which of the following would you say best describes your view of how the school district you serve is managed?

- ◯ The school board decides on policies and the superintendent implements them.
- ◯ The superintendent proposes policies and the school board mostly approves them.
- ◯ The school board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions for the school district.

Conclusion: Demographic Questions

30. Please list the county in which your school district is located:

31. Gender?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

32. What is your race and ethnicity

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Hispanic/Latino
- ◯ Native American
- ◯ Other (please specify)

33. Please select which of the following age groups you belong to.

- ◯ Under 30
- ◯ 30-39
- ◯ 40-49
- ◯ 50-59
- ◯ 60-69
- ◯ Over 70

34. What is your marital status?

- ◯ Single
- ◯ Unmarried, living as a couple
- ◯ Married
- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Separated
- ◯ Divorced

35. Which political party do you currently belong to?

- ◯ Democratic
- ◯ Republican
- ◯ Other (please specify)

36. Which of the following best describes your political views?

- ◯ Conservative
- ◯ Liberal
- ◯ Moderate

37. Do you currently have school-age children?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

38. If yes, where do they go to school?

- ◯ In the same public school district where I serve
- ◯ Another public school district
- ◯ A public charter school
- ◯ A public cyber school
- ◯ A private or parochial school
- ◯ They are being home-schooled

39. Which of the following options best describes your own level of education?

- ◯ Did not complete high school
- ◯ High school graduate or GED
- ◯ Some college or post-secondary education (including AA or AS training)
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Advanced degree (MA, MS, Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, JD, etc)

40. Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income?

- ◯ Less than $25,000
- ◯ $25,000 to $49,999
- ◯ $50,000 to $99,999
- ◯ $100,000 to $200,000
- ◯ More than $200,000

41. Which of the following options best describes your current employment status?

- ◯ Employed full-time
- ◯ Employed part-time
- ◯ Retired
- ◯ Self-employed
- ◯ Homemaker
- ◯ Unemployed

42. Please list your current occupation:

43. How long have you lived in the district you currently represent?

- ◯ My entire life
- ◯ More than 20 years
- ◯ 10 to 19 years
- ◯ 5 to 9 years
- ◯ Less than 5 years

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Temple University Letterhead

October 30, 2013

Dear Pennsylvania School Board Member,

My name is Nathan Shrader and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Temple University, where I study state and local government, campaigns and elections, public policymaking, and political parties. Originally from Westmoreland County, I lived in Mercer County while a student at Thiel College and have resided in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and now Southeastern Pennsylvania. I am highly interested in the unique political, economic, and geographic diversity of the Commonwealth and how it affects politics and policy in the state.

I have a tremendous amount of respect for the invaluable public service that you voluntarily perform as a member of your school board and would appreciate your participation in a project designed to improve our understanding of the work done by school board members like you throughout Pennsylvania.

My project looks to assess how school board members perform their duties, explain how school boards interact with political parties and community organizations in their districts, understand the issues that are important to school board members like you, and to determine which types of organizations within the community are responsible for helping recruit candidates to run for school board seats.

Would you please help me by answering a survey about your school board service? The web site address at the end of this letter will take you to an anonymous online survey. The survey should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes of your time, all of which will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions about the survey or the project in general you may contact me directly via phone at 724-433-2168 or via email at NRS@temple.edu.

Thank you for your service to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, your local school district, and the citizens of your community. And thank you in advance for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Nathan R. Shrader
PhD Candidate, Temple University
NRS@temple.edu
Tel: 724-433-2168

Instructions for completing the anonymous online survey:

1) **Go to the web page www.PAschoolboardsurvey.com**
2) **Enter the security code "2013" and press the Enter key.**
3) **Click the button that says "TAKE the Anonymous Pennsylvania School Board Survey." After answering each question on the page, click the "next" button to proceed to additional questions.**
4) **After completing all of the questions, click the "Done" button to submit your responses.**
5) **Please contact Nathan Shrader directly at either 724-433-2168 or via email NRS@temple.edu if you have any questions regarding the project or the survey.**

APPENDIX C

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER EMAIL BLAST

Dear Pennsylvania School Board Member:

Several weeks ago you received a letter from me regarding my PhD dissertation project at Temple University that seeks to better understand the policy and politics of serving on Pennsylvania public school boards.

I wanted to take a moment to let you know that the anonymous, online survey will remain open for your convenience at www.paschoolboardsurvey.com until March 1, 2014.

Please follow these easy instructions to complete the Pennsylvania School Board Survey:

1) Go to the web page www.PAschoolboardsurvey.com

2) Enter the security code "2013" and press the Enter key.

3) Click the button that says "TAKE the Anonymous Pennsylvania School Board Survey." After answering each question on the page, click the "next" button to proceed to additional questions.

4) After completing all of the questions, click the "Done" button to submit your responses.

The survey should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes of your time, all of which will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions about the survey or the project in general you may contact me directly via phone at 724-433-2168 or via email at NRS@temple.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance as well as your service to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Nathan R. Shrader
Temple University
Email: NRS@temple.edu
Tel: 724-433-2168

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW UP POSTCARD FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

February 1, 2014

Dear Pennsylvania School Board Member:

Several weeks ago you received a mailing regarding my PhD dissertation which seeks to better understand the policy and politics of serving on public school boards in Pennsylvania.
I wanted to inform you that the survey site, **www.PAschoolboardsurvey.com**, will remain open until March 1, 2014 for those who have not had a chance to participate. Your responses to this anonymous, web-based survey about the public service that you perform will be extremely helpful to me as I complete my dissertation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly via phone at **(724) 433-2168** or email at **NRS@temple.edu** if you have any questions about this project or the survey itself.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Nathan R. Shrader, MS

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®
Institute for Public Affairs
1114 W. Polett Walk
840 Anderson Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6090

Instructions for completing the anonymous online Pennsylvania School Board survey:

1) Go to the web page www.PAschoolboardsurvey.com

2) Enter the security code "2013" and press the Enter key.

3) Click the button that says "TAKE the Anonymous Pennsylvania School Board Survey." After answering each question on the page, click the "next" button to proceed to additional questions.

4) After completing all of the questions, click the "Done" button to submit your responses.

5) Please contact Nathan Shrader directly at either 724-433-2168 or via email NRS@temple.edu if you have any questions regarding the project or the survey.

www.PAschoolboardsurvey.com will remain open until March 1!

APPENDIX E

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

I—Comparing Recruited and Non-Recruited Members

Demographic Attributes				
	Recruited	***Recruited %***	***Non-Recruited***	***Non-Recruited %***
Gender				
Male	53	59.6%	174	62.6%
Female	36	40.4%	104	37.4%
Race				
White	80	89.9%	265	96.7%
Black	3	3.4%	3	1.1%
Asian	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
Latino	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Native American	1	1.1%	1	0.4%
Other	4	4.5%	3	1.1%
Household Income				
Less than $25,000	1	1.2%	3	1.2%
$25,000-$49,999	8	9.3%	20	8.0%
$50,000-$99,999	25	29.1%	103	41.4%
$100,000-$200,000	30	34.9%	96	38.6%
More than $200,000	22	25.6%	27	10.8%
Education Level				
Did not complete high school	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
High school graduate or GED	4	4.5%	14	5.1%
Some college or post-secondary	12	13.5%	52	18.8%
Bachelor's degree	29	32.6%	99	35.7%
Advanced degree	43	48.3%	112	40.4%
Age				
Under 30	3	3.4%	6	2.2%
30 to 39	5	5.6%	17	6.2%
40 to 49	10	11.2%	69	25.0%
50 to 59	39	43.8%	101	36.6%
60 to 69	26	29.2%	61	22.1%

Over 70	6	6.7%	22	8.0%
Marital Status				
Single	4	4.5%	10	3.6%
Unmarried, living as a couple	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Married	80	89.9%	245	88.4%
Widowed	2	2.2%	10	3.6%
Separated	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Divorced	3	3.4%	8	2.9%
Employment Status				
Employed Full-Time	36	40.4%	141	51.6%
Employed Part-Time	6	6.7%	15	5.5%
Retired	26	29.2%	65	23.8%
Self-Employed	10	11.2%	36	13.2%
Homemaker	8	9.0%	12	4.4%
Unemployed	3	3.4%	4	1.5%
School Age Children				
Yes	33	37.1%	112	40.3%
No	56	62.9%	166	59.7%

District Attributes				
	Recruited	***Recruited %***	***Non-Recruited***	***Non-Recruited %***
Community				
Rural	32	36.0%	147	51.2%
Urban	6	6.7%	13	4.5%
Suburban	51	57.3%	127	44.3%
Pennsylvania Region				
Allegheny	8	9.3%	27	10.1%
Northeast	8	9.3%	35	13.1%
Southeast	25	29.1%	30	11.2%
Northwest	6	7.0%	31	11.6%
Southwest	13	15.1%	41	15.3%
Central	26	30.2%	104	38.8%
Length of Time Living in District				
Entire life	24	27.0%	73	26.3%
20 years or more	43	48.3%	130	46.8%
10 to 19 years	16	18.0%	60	21.6%
5 to 9 years	5	5.6%	13	4.7%
Less than 5 years	1	1.1%	2	0.7%

Political Attributes				
	Recruited	***Recruited %***	***Non-Recruited***	***Non-Recruited %***
Party Identification				
Democratic	29	33.0%	115	41.8%
Republican	56	63.6%	156	56.7%
Other	3	3.4%	4	1.5%
Ideology				
Conservative	32	36.4%	113	41.5%
Liberal	17	19.3%	36	13.2%
Moderate	39	44.3%	123	45.2%
Party Activity in District				
Both parties have active organizations	29	32.6%	73	26.4%
Active Democratic organization only	13	14.6%	30	10.9%
Active Republican organization only	21	23.6%	55	19.9%
No active party organizations	26	29.2%	118	42.8%
Organizational Influence (Extremely or Very)				
Pol. Party committees/orgs	47	52.2%	88	30.6%
Community groups/orgs	37	41.1%	83	28.8%
Church groups/orgs	7	7.8%	29	10.1%
Organized labor	19	21.1%	42	14.6%
Business orgs	7	7.8%	24	8.3%
Fraternal societies/orgs	3	3.3%	15	5.2%
School or ed. Orgs	42	46.7%	81	28.1%
Individual Influence (Extremely or Very)				
Local, county, state pols	33	36.7%	77	26.7%
Party leaders	33	36.7%	63	21.9%
Law enforcement officials	2	2.2%	10	3.5%
Business leaders	13	14.4%	29	10.1%
Labor leaders	16	17.8%	31	10.8%
Community org. leaders	9	10.0%	28	9.7%
Individual parents	44	48.9%	111	38.5%
Education organization heads	30	33.3%	51	17.7%

Clergy leaders or officials	6	6.7%	15	5.2%
Prior Political Involvement				
Ran for another office	6	6.7%	21	7.3%
Held another office	10	11.1%	32	11.1%
Party committee person	11	12.2%	21	7.3%
Volunteered on political campaign	31	34.4%	84	29.2%
Raised funds for a political cause	19	21.1%	28	9.7%
Involved via an organization I belong to	5	5.6%	23	8.0%
Worked in government	12	13.3%	30	10.4%
Lobbied on behalf of an issue or cause	21	23.3%	57	19.8%
Organized people in my community for an issue or cause	38	42.2%	50	17.4%
Other	9	10.0%	23	8.0%
No involvement	4	4.4%	25	8.7%
Ran as Part of Slate				
Yes	43	47.8%	89	31.1%
No	47	52.2%	197	68.9%
Members of Slate/Victory				
Primary Only	6	14.6%	12	16.7%
General Only	3	7.3%	7	9.7%
Both Primary and General	32	78.0%	53	73.6%
Slate Organizing Source				
Political party organization	19	46.3%	17	21.3%
Community organization	7	17.1%	7	8.8%
Church organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Labor organization	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
Business organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Fraternal organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Friends and neighbors	5	12.2%	19	23.8%
Incumbent board member(s)	8	19.5%	19	23.8%
Other	2	4.9%	17	21.3%
Ambition to Seek Higher Office				
Yes	24	27.3%	65	23.4%

No	64	72.7%	213	76.6%
If Yes, Which Type of Position?				
Local office	12	35.3%	29	26.9%
County office	10	29.4%	28	25.9%
State office (such as legislature)	10	29.4%	35	32.4%
Federal office (such as Congress)	2	5.9%	13	12.0%
Other	0	0.0%	3	2.8%

Community Engagement Attributes				
	Recruited	***Recruited %***	***Non-Recruited***	***Non-Recruited %***
Board Meeting Attendance Prior to Running				
None	9	11.1%	51	19.2%
1 to 10	41	50.6%	132	49.6%
11 to 20	16	19.8%	38	14.3%
21 to 30	8	9.9%	17	6.4%
More than 30	7	8.6%	28	10.5%
Active in Church Organization				
Yes	49	55.1%	144	51.4%
No	40	44.9%	136	48.6%
Ran for High School/College Class Officer				
Yes	46	51.6%	113	40.2%
No	43	48.4%	168	59.8%
Forms of Community Engagement				
Attended Public Meetings	30	33.3%	67	23.3%
Involved in Community or Neighborhood Association	34	37.8%	69	24.0%
Involved in Social Organization	22	24.4%	77	26.7%
Involved in Church Organization	42	46.7%	124	43.1%
Involved in Education Organization	45	50.0%	109	37.8%
Member of a Labor Union	15	16.7%	50	17.4%
Other	6	6.7%	33	11.5%
No Engagement	1	1.1%	8	2.8%

School Board Service and Policymaking

	Recruited	*Recruited %*	*Non-Recruited*	*Non-Recruited %*
Years of SB Service				
Less than 1	4	4.4%	15	5.2%
1 to 4	36	40.0%	103	36.0%
5 to 8	21	23.3%	85	29.7%
9 to 12	12	13.3%	39	13.6%
13 to 16	10	11.1%	24	8.4%
17 to 20	6	6.7%	12	4.2%
More than 20	1	1.1%	8	2.8%
Reason for Running				
Gain experience to seek higher office	1	1.1%	2	0.7%
Tax and budget concerns	8	8.9%	20	7.0%
Curriculum issues	10	11.1%	14	4.9%
Ensure that district was well run while children in my family are/were in school	22	24.4%w	76	26.5%
Public/civic duty	33	36.7%	128	44.6%
Other	16	17.8%	47	16.4%
Top Issue				
Education quality/curriculum	61	67.8%	203	70.5%
Finance/taxes/budget	47	52.2%	148	51.4%
Both education and finance (balance)	28	31.1%	88	30.6%
General district management	17	18.9%	41	14.2%
Personnel concerns	5	5.6%	18	6.3%
Other	6	6.7%	19	6.6%
No single issue most important	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
Superintendent Job Rating				
Excellent	51	58.6%	147	52.7%
Good	26	29.9%	92	33.0%
Fair	9	10.3%	30	10.8%
Poor	1	1.1%	10	3.6%
Decisionmaking				

School Board	49	55.1%	151	54.3%
Superintendent	23	25.8%	82	29.5%
Other	17	19.1%	45	16.2%
Management Approach				
School board decides on policies/superintendent implements	2	2.3%	30	10.8%
Superintendent proposes policies/school board mostly approves	33	37.5%	93	33.5%
School board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions	53	60.2%	155	55.8%

II—Comparing Recruited Members By Source

Demographic and District Attributes										
	Political Party	**Political Party %**	**Non-Political Comm. Org.**	**Non-Political Comm. Org. %**	**Interest Group**	**Interest Group %**	**Incumbent Board Member**	**Incumbent Board Member %**	**Other (not specified)**	**Other (not specified) %**
Gender										
Male	23	60.5%	16	50.0%	9	47.4%	5	62.5%	7	87.5%
Female	15	39.5%	16	50.0%	10	52.6%	3	37.5%	1	12.5%
Type of District										
Rural	9	23.1%	14	42.4%	7	38.9%	2	25.0%	5	62.5%
Urban	2	5.1%	2	6.1%	1	5.6%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Suburban	28	71.8%	17	51.5%	10	55.6%	5	62.5%	2	25.0%
Region										
Allegheny	4	10.5%	3	9.7%	4	22.2%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%
Northeast	2	5.3%	4	12.9%	1	5.6%	1	12.5%	1	14.3%
Southeast	22	57.9%	5	16.1%	1	5.6%	1	12.5%	1	14.3%
Northwest	**2**	5.3%	1	3.2%	2	11.1%	0	0.0%	2	28.6%
Southwest	1	2.6%	5	16.1%	4	22.2%	3	37.5%	2	28.6%
Central	7	18.4%	13	41.9%	6	33.3%	2	25.0%	1	14.3%
Age Group										
Under 30	3	8.1%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%
30 to 39	2	5.4%	3	9.4%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
40 to 49	6	16.2%	2	6.3%	3	15.8%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%
50 to 59	15	40.5%	12	37.5%	7	36.8%	7	87.5%	3	37.5%
60 to 69	9	24.3%	11	34.4%	6	31.6%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%
Over 70	2	5.4%	4	12.5%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Income Level										
Less than $25,000	0	0.0%	11	35.5%	6	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
$25,000 to $49,999	5	13.5%	2	6.5%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%
$50,000 to $99,999	10	27.0%	13	41.9%	6	33.3%	1	16.7%	2	25.0%

$100,000 to $200,000	11	29.7%	2	6.5%	1	5.6%	2	33.3%	1	12.5%
More than $200,000	11	29.7%	3	9.7%	4	22.2%	3	50.0%	4	50.0%

Partisanship, Ideology, and Organizational Strength

	Political Party	Political Party %	Non-Political Comm. Org.	Non-Political Comm. Org. %	Interest Group	Interest Group %	Inc. Board Member	Inc. Board Member %	Other	Other %
Party ID										
Democratic	10	26.3%	12	37.5%	7	36.8%	2	28.6%	1	12.5%
Republican	26	68.4%	20	62.5%	11	57.9%	5	71.4%	6	75.0%
Other	2	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%
Ideology										
Conservative	12	32.4%	12	37.5%	8	42.1%	2	25.0%	4	50.0%
Liberal	8	21.6%	7	21.9%	1	5.3%	1	12.5%	2	25.0%
Moderate	17	45.9%	13	40.6%	10	52.6%	5	62.5%	2	25.0%
Party Activity in District										
Both active	15	39.5%	7	21.9%	6	31.6%	1	12.5%	2	25.0%
Active Democrat	8	21.1%	6	18.8%	4	21.1%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%
Active Republican	12	31.6%	9	28.1%	2	10.5%	2	25.0%	1	12.5%
Neither active	3	7.9%	10	31.3%	7	36.8%	4	50.0%	5	62.5%
Organizational Influence (Extremely or Very)										
Pol. Party committees/orgs	30	76.9%	12	36.4%	10	52.6%	3	37.5%	4	50.0%
Community groups/orgs	14	35.9%	17	51.5%	9	47.4%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
Church groups/orgs	2	5.1%	5	15.2%	3	15.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Organized labor	6	15.4%	6	18.2%	7	36.8%	2	25.0%	1	12.5%
Business orgs	2	5.1%	1	3.0%	3	15.8%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%
Fraternal societies/orgs	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%
School or ed. Orgs	16	41.0%	18	54.5%	12	63.2%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
Individual Influence (Extremely or Very)										
Local, county, state pols	16	41.0%	10	30.3%	8	42.1%	3	37.5%	4	50.0%
Party leaders	17	43.6%	9	27.3%	6	31.6%	3	37.5%	3	37.5%
Law enforcement officials	1	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Business leaders	1	2.6%	4	12.1%	7	36.8%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%
Labor leaders	5	12.8%	5	15.2%	7	36.8%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%

Community org. leaders	3	7.7%	4	12.1%	3	15.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Individual parents	16	41.0%	6	18.2%	14	73.7%	4	50.0%	6	75.0%
Education organization heads	9	23.1%	10	30.3%	11	57.9%	2	25.0%	4	50.0%
Clergy leaders or officials	1	2.6%	3	9.1%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%

Engagement and Ambition

	Political Party	Political Party %	Non-Political Comm. Org.	Non-Political Comm. Org. %	Interest Group	Interest Group %	Inc. Board Member	Inc. Board Member %	Other	Other %
Years of Service										
Less than 1	3	7.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%	0	0.0%
1 to 4	19	48.7%	12	36.4%	10	58.8%	2	25.0%	4	50.0%
5 to 8	9	23.1%	11	33.3%	2	11.8%	2	25.0%	0	0.0%
9 to 12	2	5.1%	3	9.1%	4	23.5%	1	12.5%	2	25.0%
13 to 16	4	10.3%	3	9.1%	1	5.9%	1	12.5%	2	25.0%
17 to 20	2	5.1%	3	9.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Over 20	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Desired Length of Service										
1 term (4 years) or less	2	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%
Between 2 and 3 terms	19	50.0%	11	36.7%	9	47.4%	3	37.5%	2	25.0%
Between 4 and 5 terms	3	7.9%	6	20.0%	2	10.5%	1	12.5%	3	37.5%
More than 5 terms	2	5.3%	4	13.3%	2	10.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
As long as possible/wait and see	9	23.7%	4	13.3%	3	15.8%	4	50.0%	2	25.0%
Finished soon/after current term	3	7.9%	5	16.7%	2	10.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Political, Community, Civic Engagment										
Ran for office	3	7.5%	2	6.1%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%
Held office	3	7.5%	3	9.1%	3	15.8%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%
Party committee person	8	20.0%	4	12.1%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%	0	0.0%
Volunteered on political campaigns	20	50.0%	10	30.3%	8	42.1%	4	50.0%	2	25.0%
Helped raise money for candidates	14	35.0%	7	21.2%	1	5.3%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
Involved in campaigns through orgs.	3	7.5%	1	3.0%	2	10.5%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Worked for government	5	12.5%	5	15.2%	3	15.8%	2	25.0%	0	0.0%
Lobbied or contacted govt official	12	30.0%	10	30.3%	4	21.1%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%
Organized people to take action	17	42.5%	19	57.6%	7	36.8%	1	12.5%	4	50.0%
Other	4	10.0%	4	12.1%	1	5.3%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
None	1	2.5%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Community Involvement										
Attended public meetings	18	46.2%	11	33.3%	8	42.1%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Participated in neighborhood assoc.	14	35.9%	13	39.4%	5	26.3%	1	12.5%	2	25.0%
Participated in fraternal or social org.	11	28.2%	7	21.2%	3	15.8%	2	25.0%	5	62.5%

Participated in church or religious org.	16	41.0%	16	48.5%	11	57.9%	3	37.5%	2	25.0%
Participated in education org.	21	53.8%	19	57.6%	12	63.2%	4	50.0%	2	25.0%
Was or is a union member	4	10.3%	7	21.2%	4	21.1%	3	37.5%	2	25.0%
Other	1	2.6%	3	9.1%	2	10.5%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
None	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Ambition										
Yes	14	37.8%	8	25.0%	4	21.1%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
No	23	62.2%	24	75.0%	15	78.9%	6	75.0%	6	75.0%

Motivation and Management

	Political Party	Political Party %	Non-Political Comm. Org.	Non-Political Comm. Org. %	Interest Group	Interest Group %	Inc. Board Member	Inc. Board Member %	Other	Other %
Main Reason for Running										
Gain experience to run for another office	1	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Taxes/budget	4	10.3%	2	6.1%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%
Affect curriculum decisions	4	10.3%	2	6.1%	2	10.5%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
Manage district while own children are in school	9	23.1%	7	21.2%	3	15.8%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
Public/civic duty	16	41.0%	13	39.4%	9	47.4%	3	37.5%	1	12.5%
Other	5	12.8%	9	27.3%	3	15.8%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Superintendent Job Rating										
Excellent	21	55.3%	15	50.0%	14	73.7%	5	31.3%	6	75.0%
Good	13	34.2%	9	30.0%	4	21.1%	2	12.5%	2	25.0%
Fair	4	10.5%	6	20.0%	0	0.0%	9	56.3%	0	0.0%
Poor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Influence on District Decisionmaking										
School Board	19	50.0%	21	65.6%	12	63.2%	3	37.5%	4	50.0%
Superintendent	10	26.3%	9	28.1%	6	31.6%	3	37.5%	0	0.0%
Other	9	23.7%	2	6.3%	1	5.3%	2	25.0%	4	50.0%
District Management										
School board decides on policy; superintendent implements	2	5.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Superintendent proposes policy; school board mostly approves	12	32.4%	15	46.9%	4	21.1%	2	25.0%	3	37.5%
School board and superintendent are equal partners	23	62.2%	17	53.1%	15	78.9%	6	75.0%	5	62.5%

III—Comparing Members By Ambition Level

Demographic Attributes

	Progressive Ambition	*Progressive Ambition %*	*Static Ambition*	*Static Ambition %*	*Discrete Ambition*	*Discrete Ambition %*
Gender						
Male	64	72.7%	54	55.7%	92	57.5%
Female	24	27.3%	43	44.3%	68	42.5%
Race						
White	78	90.7%	93	93.9%	153	96.2%
Black	3	3.5%	2	2.0%	1	0.6%
Asian	1	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Latino	1	1.2%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Native American	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.3%
Other	3	3.5%	2	2.0%	2	1.3%
Household Income						
Less than $25,000	2	2.4%	2	2.3%	0	0.0%
$25,000-$49,999	10	12.2%	5	5.7%	7	4.8%
$50,000-$99,999	27	32.9%	35	40.2%	55	37.9%
$100,000-$200,000	32	39.0%	31	35.6%	60	41.4%
More than $200,000	11	13.4%	14	16.1%	23	15.9%
Education Level						
Did not complete high school	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
High school graduate or GED	4	4.6%	6	6.2%	5	3.1%
Some college or post-secondary	20	23.0%	15	15.5%	24	15.0%
Bachelor's degree	30	34.5%	40	41.2%	51	31.9%
Advanced degree	33	37.9%	36	37.1%	79	49.4%
Age						
Under 30	8	9.1%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%
30 to 39	13	14.8%	2	2.1%	7	4.4%
40 to 49	30	34.1%	10	10.3%	38	24.1%
50 to 59	27	30.7%	45	46.4%	62	39.2%
60 to 69	6	6.8%	30	30.9%	41	25.9%
Over 70	4	4.5%	9	9.3%	10	6.3%
Marital Status						
Single	8	9.2%	3	3.1%	2	1.3%

Unmarried, living as a couple	1	1.1%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%
Married	73	83.9%	86	87.8%	147	92.5%
Widowed	2	2.3%	3	3.1%	5	3.1%
Separated	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.3%
Divorced	3	3.4%	5	5.1%	3	1.9%
Employment Status						
Employed Full-Time	50	61.7%	43	44.8%	78	49.1%
Employed Part-Time	2	2.5%	7	7.3%	8	5.0%
Retired	11	13.6%	24	25.0%	45	28.3%
Self-Employed	13	16.0%	12	12.5%	17	10.7%
Homemaker	3	3.7%	6	6.3%	10	6.3%
Unemployed	2	2.5%	4	4.2%	1	0.6%
School Age Children						
Yes	50	56.8%	22	22.4%	67	42.1%
No	38	43.2%	76	77.6%	92	57.9%

District Attributes						
	Progressive Ambition	***Progressive Ambition %***	***Static Ambition***	***Static Ambition %***	***Discrete Ambition***	***Discrete Ambition %***
Community						
Rural	50	56.8%	50	51.0%	60	37.5%
Urban	5	5.7%	6	6.1%	7	4.4%
Suburban	33	37.5%	42	42.9%	93	58.1%
Pennsylvania Region						
Allegheny	7	8.3%	12	13.2%	16	10.2%
Northeast	9	10.7%	13	14.3%	19	12.1%
Southeast	11	13.1%	13	14.3%	29	18.5%
Northwest	8	9.5%	14	15.4%	12	7.6%
Southwest	12	14.3%	14	15.4%	26	16.6%
Central	37	44.0%	25	27.5%	55	35.0%
Length of Time Living in District						
Entire life	31	35.6%	30	30.6%	27	16.9%
20 years or more	31	35.6%	49	50.0%	83	51.9%
10 to 19 years	18	20.7%	16	16.3%	39	24.4%
5 to 9 years	6	6.9%	2	2.0%	10	6.3%
Less than 5 years	1	1.1%	1	1.0%	1	0.6%

Political Attributes						
	Progressive Ambition	***Progressive Ambition %***	***Static Ambition***	***Static Ambition %***	***Discrete Ambition***	***Discrete Ambition %***
Party Identification						
Democratic	33	38.8%	37	37.8%	63	39.9%
Republican	49	57.6%	61	62.2%	91	57.6%
Other	3	3.5%	0	0.0%	4	2.5%
Ideology						
Conservative	30	35.3%	39	40.6%	67	42.7%
Liberal	15	17.6%	17	17.7%	17	10.8%
Moderate	40	47.1%	40	41.7%	73	46.5%
Party Activity in District						
Both parties have active organizations	25	28.1%	24	25.3%	45	28.1%
Active Democratic organization only	9	10.1%	10	10.5%	23	14.4%
Active Republican organization only	26	29.2%	14	14.7%	33	20.6%
No active party organizations	29	32.6%	47	49.5%	59	36.9%
Organizational Influence (Extremely or Very)						
Pol. Party committees/orgs	31	34.8%	30	30.6%	66	41.0%
Community groups/orgs	30	33.7%	30	30.6%	51	31.7%
Church groups/orgs	14	15.7%	7	7.1%	12	7.5%
Organized labor	15	16.9%	11	11.2%	30	18.6%
Business orgs	9	10.1%	9	9.2%	10	6.2%
Fraternal societies/orgs	5	5.6%	6	6.1%	5	3.1%
School or ed. Orgs	28	31.5%	32	32.7%	54	33.5%
Individual Influence (Extremely or Very)						
Local, county, state pols	35	39.3%	25	25.5%	43	26.7%
Party leaders	21	23.6%	22	22.4%	48	29.8%
Law enforcement officials	3	3.4%	3	3.1%	3	1.9%
Business leaders	13	14.6%	9	9.2%	16	9.9%
Labor leaders	11	12.4%	10	10.2%	25	15.5%
Community org. leaders	10	11.2%	8	8.2%	16	9.9%
Individual parents	35	39.3%	44	44.9%	67	41.6%
Education organization heads	16	18.0%	26	26.5%	34	21.1%

Clergy leaders or officials	7	7.9%	5	5.1%	8	5.0%
Prior Political Involvement						
Ran for another office	10	11.2%	6	6.1%	10	6.2%
Held another office	12	13.5%	9	9.2%	15	9.3%
Party committee person	17	19.1%	4	4.1%	9	5.6%
Volunteered on political campaign	35	39.3%	25	25.5%	51	31.7%
Raised funds for a political cause	15	16.9%	11	11.2%	21	13.0%
Involved via an organization I belong to	13	14.6%	5	5.1%	10	6.2%
Worked in government	20	22.5%	6	6.1%	13	8.1%
Lobbied on behalf of an issue or cause	27	30.3%	19	19.4%	29	18.0%
Organized people in my community for an issue or cause	30	33.7%	22	22.4%	31	19.3%
Other	6	6.7%	8	8.2%	13	8.1%
No involvement	3	3.4%	11	11.2%	15	9.3%
Ran as Part of Slate						
Yes	24	27.3%	43	44.3%	54	33.5%
No	64	72.7%	54	55.7%	107	66.5%
Members of Slate/Victory						
Primary Only	3	14.3%	8	23.5%	5	10.4%
General Only	2	9.5%	1	2.9%	5	10.4%
Both Primary and General	16	76.2%	25	73.5%	38	79.2%
Slate Organizing Source						
Political party organization	11	47.8%	7	18.9%	17	34.0%
Community organization	3	13.0%	6	16.2%	4	8.0%
Church organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Labor organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Business organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Fraternal organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Friends and neighbors	3	13.0%	6	16.2%	11	22.0%
Incumbent board member(s)	3	13.0%	12	32.4%	11	22.0%
Other	3	13.0%	6	16.2%	7	14.0%
Recruited to Run?						
Yes	24	27.0%	29	29.9%	33	20.5%
No	65	73.0%	68	70.1%	128	79.5%

If Yes, Who Contacted You?						
Political Party Committee/Org.	14	46.7%	10	31.3%	14	34.1%
Non-Political Community Org.	8	26.7%	9	28.1%	13	31.7%
Church Affiliated Organization	0	0.0%	2	6.3%	1	2.4%
Labor Organization	3	10.0%	1	3.1%	3	7.3%
Business Organization	1	3.3%	1	3.1%	0	0.0%
Fraternal Organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Incumbent Member of Board	2	6.7%	4	12.5%	2	4.9%
Education Organization or Person Affiliated with Education in District	0	0.0%	1	3.1%	6	14.6%
Other	2	6.7%	4	12.5%	2	4.9%

Community Engagement						
	Progressive Ambition	***Progressive Ambition %***	***Static Ambition***	***Static Ambition %***	***Discrete Ambition***	***Discrete Ambition %***
Board Meeting Attendance Prior to Running						
None	19	22.6%	17	18.7%	18	11.9%
1 to 10	47	56.0%	43	47.3%	76	50.3%
11 to 20	8	9.5%	17	18.7%	27	17.9%
21 to 30	8	9.5%	3	3.3%	12	7.9%
More than 30	2	2.4%	11	12.1%	18	11.9%
Active in Church Organization						
Yes	48	53.9%	56	57.1%	79	49.4%
No	41	46.1%	42	42.9%	81	50.6%
Ran for High School/College Class Officer						
Yes	40	44.9%	43	44.3%	66	41.0%
No	49	55.1%	54	55.7%	95	59.0%
Forms of Community Engagement						
Attended Public Meetings	30	33.7%	25	25.5%	38	23.6%
Involved in Community or Neighborhood Association	29	32.6%	27	27.6%	39	24.2%
Involved in Social Organization	33	37.1%	26	26.5%	35	21.7%
Involved in Church Organization	38	42.7%	49	50.0%	70	43.5%
Involved in Education Organization	36	40.4%	41	41.8%	67	41.6%
Member of a Labor Union	14	15.7%	19	19.4%	24	14.9%
Other	11	12.4%	9	9.2%	17	10.6%
No Engagement	1	1.1%	3	3.1%	5	3.1%

School Board Service and Policymaking

	Progressive Ambition	*Progressive Ambition %*	*Static Ambition*	*Static Ambition %*	*Discrete Ambition*	*Discrete Ambition %*
Years of SB Service						
Less than 1	10	11.4%	3	3.1%	6	3.7%
1 to 4	33	37.5%	19	19.4%	77	47.8%
5 to 8	22	25.0%	16	16.3%	59	36.6%
9 to 12	15	17.0%	19	19.4%	13	8.1%
13 to 16	6	6.8%	23	23.5%	2	1.2%
17 to 20	2	2.3%	12	12.2%	1	0.6%
More than 20	0	0.0%	6	6.1%	3	1.9%
Reason for Running						
Gain experience to seek higher office	2	2.3%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Tax and budget concerns	7	8.0%	4	4.1%	16	9.9%
Curriculum issues	4	4.5%	8	8.2%	11	6.8%
Ensure that district was well run while children in my family are/were in school	24	27.3%	28	28.6%	36	22.4%
Public/civic duty	41	46.6%	35	35.7%	76	47.2%
Other	10	11.4%	23	23.5%	21	13.0%
Superintendent Job Rating						
Excellent	51	58.0%	59	60.2%	83	52.5%
Good	28	31.8%	28	28.6%	51	32.3%
Fair	7	8.0%	7	7.1%	19	12.0%
Poor	2	2.3%	4	4.1%	5	3.2%
Decisionmaking						
School Board	52	59.8%	48	49.0%	86	53.8%
Superintendent	19	21.8%	26	26.5%	57	35.6%
Other	16	18.4%	24	24.5%	17	10.6%
Management Approach						
School board decides on policies/superintendent implements	13	14.9%	2	2.1%	12	7.5%
Superintendent proposes policies/school board mostly approves	25	28.7%	31	32.0%	67	41.9%
School board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions	49	56.3%	64	66.0%	81	50.6%

IV—Comparing Members Based on Ambitious/Unambitious Categorization

Demographic Attributes				
	Ambitious	***Ambitious %***	***Unambitious***	***Unambitious %***
Gender				
Male	64	72.7%	159	57.6%
Female	24	27.3%	117	42.4%
Race				
White	78	90.7%	264	96.4%
Black	3	3.5%	3	1.1%
Asian	1	1.2%	0	0.0%
Latino	1	1.2%	1	0.4%
Native American	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Other	3	3.5%	4	1.5%
Household Income				
Less than $25,000	2	2.4%	2	0.8%
$25,000-$49,999	10	12.2%	17	6.8%
$50,000-$99,999	27	32.9%	98	39.2%
$100,000-$200,000	32	39.0%	95	38.0%
More than $200,000	11	13.4%	38	15.2%
Education Level				
Did not complete high school	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
High school graduate or GED	4	4.6%	14	5.1%
Some college or post-secondary	20	23.0%	42	15.2%
Bachelor's degree	30	34.5%	97	35.1%
Advanced degree	33	37.9%	122	44.2%
Age				
Under 30	8	9.1%	1	0.4%
30 to 39	13	14.8%	9	3.3%
40 to 49	30	34.1%	49	17.9%
50 to 59	27	30.7%	112	40.9%
60 to 69	6	6.8%	80	29.2%

Over 70	4	4.5%	23	8.4%
Marital Status				
Single	8	9.2%	6	2.2%
Unmarried, living as a couple	1	1.1%	1	0.4%
Married	73	83.9%	250	90.6%
Widowed	2	2.3%	9	3.3%
Separated	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Divorced	3	3.4%	8	2.9%
Employment Status				
Employed Full-Time	50	61.7%	127	46.4%
Employed Part-Time	2	2.5%	15	5.5%
Retired	11	13.6%	78	28.5%
Self-Employed	13	16.0%	32	11.7%
Homemaker	3	3.7%	17	6.2%
Unemployed	2	2.5%	5	1.8%
School Age Children				
Yes	50	56.8%	94	34.1%
No	38	43.2%	182	65.9%

District Attributes				
	Ambitious	***Ambitious %***	***Unambitious***	***Unambitious %***
Community				
Rural	50	56.8%	123	44.4%
Urban	5	5.7%	13	4.7%
Suburban	33	37.5%	141	50.9%
Pennsylvania Region				
Allegheny	7	8.3%	28	10.5%
Northeast	9	10.7%	33	12.4%
Southeast	11	13.1%	43	16.1%
Northwest	8	9.5%	30	11.2%
Southwest	12	14.3%	42	15.7%
Central	37	44.0%	91	34.1%
Length of Time Living in District				
Entire life	31	35.6%	64	23.1%
20 years or more	31	35.6%	141	50.9%
10 to 19 years	18	20.7%	58	20.9%
5 to 9 years	6	6.9%	12	4.3%
Less than 5 years	1	1.1%	2	0.7%

Political Attributes				
	Ambitious	***Ambitious %***	***Unambitious***	***Unambitious %***
Party Identification				
Democratic	33	38.8%	110	40.0%
Republican	49	57.6%	161	58.5%
Other	3	3.5%	4	1.5%
Ideology				
Conservative	30	35.3%	114	41.9%
Liberal	15	17.6%	37	13.6%
Moderate	40	47.1%	121	44.5%
Party Activity in District				
Both parties have active organizations	25	28.1%	75	27.5%
Active Democratic organization only	9	10.1%	33	12.1%
Active Republican organization only	26	29.2%	50	18.3%
No active party organizations	29	32.6%	115	42.1%
Organizational Influence (Extremely or Very)				
Pol. Party committees/orgs	31	34.8%	101	36.3%
Community groups/orgs	30	33.7%	89	32.0%
Church groups/orgs	14	15.7%	22	7.9%
Organized labor	15	16.9%	46	16.5%
Business orgs	9	10.1%	22	7.9%
Fraternal societies/orgs	5	5.6%	13	4.7%
School or ed. Orgs	28	31.5%	95	34.2%
Individual Influence (Extremely or Very)				
Local, county, state pols	35	39.3%	73	26.3%
Party leaders	21	23.6%	73	26.3%
Law enforcement officials	3	3.4%	8	2.9%
Business leaders	13	14.6%	28	10.1%
Labor leaders	11	12.4%	36	12.9%
Community org. leaders	10	11.2%	27	9.7%
Individual parents	35	39.3%	119	42.8%
Education organization heads	16	18.0%	65	23.4%

Clergy leaders or officials	7	7.9%	14	5.0%
Prior Political Involvement				
Ran for another office	10	11.2%	18	6.5%
Held another office	12	13.5%	28	10.1%
Party committee person	17	19.1%	15	5.4%
Volunteered on political campaign	35	39.3%	80	28.8%
Raised funds for a political cause	15	16.9%	33	11.9%
Involved via an organization I belong to	13	14.6%	15	5.4%
Worked in government	20	22.5%	22	7.9%
Lobbied on behalf of an issue or cause	27	30.3%	52	18.7%
Organized people in my community for an issue or cause	30	33.7%	58	20.9%
Other	6	6.7%	24	8.6%
No involvement	3	3.4%	27	9.7%
Ran as Part of Slate				
Yes	24	27.3%	104	37.5%
No	64	72.7%	173	62.5%
Members of Slate/Victory				
Primary Only	3	14.3%	14	15.7%
General Only	2	9.5%	8	9.0%
Both Primary and General	16	76.2%	67	75.3%
Slate Organizing Source				
Political party organization	11	47.8%	24	25.5%
Community organization	3	13.0%	11	11.7%
Church organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Labor organization	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Business organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Fraternal organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Friends and neighbors	3	13.0%	19	20.2%
Incumbent board member(s)	3	13.0%	24	25.5%
Other	3	13.0%	15	16.0%
Recruited to Run?				
Yes	24	27.0%	64	23.1%
No	65	73.0%	213	76.9%

If Yes, Who Contacted You?				
Political Party Committee/Org.	14	46.7%	24	32.0%
Non-Political Community Org.	8	26.7%	24	32.0%
Church Affiliated Organization	0	0.0%	3	4.0%
Labor Organization	3	10.0%	4	5.3%
Business Organization	1	3.3%	1	1.3%
Fraternal Organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Incumbent Member of Board	2	6.7%	6	8.0%
Education Organization or Person Affiliated with Education in District	0	0.0%	7	9.3%
Other	2	6.7%	6	8.0%

Community Engagement				
	Ambitious	***Ambitious %***	***Unambitious***	***Unambitious %***
Board Meeting Attendance Prior to Running				
None	19	22.6%	40	15.4%
1 to 10	47	56.0%	126	48.5%
11 to 20	8	9.5%	46	17.7%
21 to 30	8	9.5%	16	6.2%
More than 30	2	2.4%	32	12.3%
Active in Church Organization				
Yes	48	53.9%	143	51.6%
No	41	46.1%	134	48.4%
Ran for High School/College Class Officer				
Yes	40	44.9%	118	42.6%
No	49	55.1%	159	57.4%
Forms of Community Engagement				
Attended Public Meetings	30	33.7%	67	24.1%
Involved in Community or Neighborhood Association	29	32.6%	73	26.3%
Involved in Social Organization	33	37.1%	66	23.7%
Involved in Church Organization	38	42.7%	126	45.3%
Involved in Education Organization	36	40.4%	116	41.7%
Member of a Labor Union	14	15.7%	45	16.2%
Other	11	12.4%	28	10.1%
No Engagement	1	1.1%	8	2.9%

School Board Service and Policymaking

	Ambitious	*Ambitious %*	*Unambitious*	*Unambitious %*
Years of SB Service				
Less than 1	10	11.4%	9	3.2%
1 to 4	33	37.5%	100	36.1%
5 to 8	22	25.0%	80	28.9%
9 to 12	15	17.0%	36	13.0%
13 to 16	6	6.8%	27	9.7%
17 to 20	2	2.3%	16	5.8%
More than 20	0	0.0%	9	3.2%
Reason for Running				
Gain experience to seek higher office	2	2.3%	1	0.4%
Tax and budget concerns	7	8.0%	20	7.2%
Curriculum issues	4	4.5%	20	7.2%
Ensure that district was well run while children in my family are/were in school	24	27.3%	71	25.5%
Public/civic duty	41	46.6%	118	42.4%
Other	10	11.4%	48	17.3%
Top Issue				
Education quality/curriculum	55	61.8%	201	72.3%
Finance/taxes/budget	48	53.9%	143	51.4%
Both education and finance (balance)	26	29.2%	88	31.7%
General district management	13	14.6%	43	15.5%
Personnel concerns	5	5.6%	18	6.5%
Other	5	5.6%	19	6.8%
No single issue most important	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Superintendent Job Rating				
Excellent	51	58.0%	146	53.1%
Good	28	31.8%	88	32.0%
Fair	7	8.0%	32	11.6%
Poor	2	2.3%	9	3.3%
Decisionmaking				
School Board	52	59.8%	146	52.7%
Superintendent	19	21.8%	86	31.0%

Other	16	18.4%	45	16.2%
Management Approach				
School board decides on policies/superintendent implements	13	14.9%	18	6.5%
Superintendent proposes policies/school board mostly approves	25	28.7%	102	37.0%
School board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions	49	56.3%	156	56.5%

V—Comparing Members Based on Reason for Running

Demographic Attributes												
	Pol. Ambition	***Pol. Ambition***	***Taxes & Budget***	***Taxes & Budget %***	***Curric-ulum***	***Curric-ulum %***	***Manage While Kids Are in School***	***Manage While Kids are in School %***	***Civic Duty***	***Civic Duty %***	***Other***	***Other %***
Gender												
Male	3	100.0%	18	66.7%	9	37.5%	65	68.4%	97	61.4%	35	64.8%
Female	0	0.0%	9	33.3%	15	62.5%	30	31.6%	61	38.6%	24	40.7%
Race												
White	3	100.0%	26	96.3%	21	87.5%	91	96.8%	148	94.3%	55	96.5%
Black	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	4	2.5%	1	1.8%
Asian	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Latino	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	1	0.6%	0	0.0%
Native American	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.5%	0	0.0%	3	1.9%	1	1.8%
Household Income												
Less than $25,000	0	0.0%	1	4.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.4%	1	1.9%
$25,000-$49,999	1	33.3%	2	8.7%	5	21.7%	4	4.5%	12	8.4%	4	7.4%
$50,000-$99,999	2	66.7%	9	39.1%	8	34.8%	30	33.7%	52	36.4%	27	50.0%
$100,000-$200,000	0	0.0%	6	26.1%	9	39.1%	34	38.2%	61	42.7%	16	29.6%
More than $200,000	0	0.0%	5	21.7%	1	4.3%	21	23.6%	16	11.2%	6	11.1%
Education Level												
Did not complete high school	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.6%
High school graduate or GED	0	0.0%	2	7.4%	4	16.7%	7	7.4%	5	3.2%	0	0.0%
Some college or post-secondary	1	33.3%	4	14.8%	4	16.7%	14	14.7%	30	19.2%	11	18.0%
Bachelor's degree	2	67.7%	13	48.1%	5	20.8%	32	33.7%	51	32.7%	25	41.0%
Advanced degree	0	0.0%	8	29.6%	11	45.8%	42	44.2%	70	44.9%	24	39.3%
Age												
Under 30	2	67.7%	2	7.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.7%
30 to 39	0	0.0%	3	11.1%	0	0.0%	10	10.5%	5	3.2%	3	5.1%
40 to 49	1	33.3%	5	18.5%	3	12.5%	31	32.6%	30	19.2%	7	11.9%
50 to 59	0	0.0%	9	33.3%	10	41.7%	35	36.8%	51	32.7%	21	35.6%
60 to 69	0	0.0%	7	25.9%	8	33.3%	14	14.7%	70	44.9%	23	39.0%
Over 70	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	3	12.5%	5	5.3%	0	0.0%	4	6.8%

Marital Status												
Single	2	67.7%	2	7.4%	1	4.2%	1	1.1%	6	3.8%	2	3.3%
Unmarried, living as a couple	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%	1	1.7%
Married	1	33.3%	23	85.2%	23	95.8%	89	93.7%	139	88.5%	50	83.3%
Widowed	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.1%	6	3.8%	4	6.7%
Separated	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.3%	0	0.0%
Divorced	0	0.0%	2	7.4%	0	0.0%	3	3.2%	3	1.9%	3	5.0%
Employment Status												
Employed Full-Time	3	100.0%	18	69.2%	5	20.8%	47	50.5%	79	50.6%	26	43.3%
Employed Part-Time	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	4	16.7%	9	9.7%	5	3.2%	2	3.3%
Retired	0	0.0%	4	15.4%	11	45.8%	15	16.1%	38	24.4%	22	36.7%
Self-Employed	0	0.0%	2	7.7%	2	8.3%	14	15.1%	21	13.5%	7	11.7%
Homemaker	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.2%	6	6.5%	10	6.4%	3	5.0%
Unemployed	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	1	4.2%	2	2.2%	3	1.9%	0	0.0%
School Age Children												
Yes	1	33.3%	9	33.3%	6	25.0%	59	62.1%	52	32.9%	18	30.0%
No	2	67.7%	18	66.7%	18	75.0%	36	37.9%	106	67.1%	42	70.0%

District Attributes

	Pol. Ambition	*Pol. Ambition*	*Taxes & Budget*	*Taxes & Budget %*	*Curric-ulum*	*Curric-ulum %*	*Manage While Kids Are in School*	*Manage While Kids are in School %*	*Civic Duty*	*Civic Duty %*	*Other*	*Other %*
Community												
Rural	1	33.3%	12	42.9%	12	50.0%	53	53.5%	66	40.7%	36	58.1%
Urban	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	4.2%	5	5.1%	10	6.2%	2	3.2%
Suburban	2	66.7%	15	53.6%	11	45.8%	41	41.4%	86	53.1%	24	38.7%
Pennsylvania Region												
Allegheny	0	0.0%	3	11.5%	3	13.0%	5	5.4%	19	12.5%	4	7.0%
Northeast	1	33.3%	5	19.2%	4	17.4%	7	7.5%	15	9.9%	11	19.3%
Southeast	0	0.0%	3	11.5%	3	13.0%	19	20.4%	21	13.8%	9	15.8%
Northwest	0	0.0%	3	11.5%	7	30.4%	12	12.9%	12	7.9%	4	7.0%
Southwest	0	0.0%	2	7.7%	2	8.7%	12	12.9%	31	20.4%	7	12.3%
Central	2	66.7%	10	38.5%	4	17.4%	38	40.9%	54	35.5%	22	38.6%
Length of Time Living in District												
Entire life	2	66.7%	9	33.3%	10	41.7%	19	20.0%	45	28.7%	12	19.7%
20 years or more	1	33.3%	9	33.3%	11	45.8%	41	43.2%	76	48.4%	35	57.4%
10 to 19 years	0	0.0%	5	18.5%	3	12.5%	26	27.4%	32	20.4%	10	16.4%
5 to 9 years	0	0.0%	3	11.1%	0	0.0%	8	8.4%	4	2.5%	3	4.9%
Less than 5 years	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	1	1.6%

Political Attributes

	Pol. Ambition	*Pol. Ambition*	*Taxes & Budget*	*Taxes & Budget %*	*Curric-ulum*	*Curric-ulum %*	*Manage While Kids Are in School*	*Manage While Kids are in School %*	*Civic Duty*	*Civic Duty %*	*Other*	*Other %*
Party Identification												
Democratic	0	0.0%	8	29.6%	11	45.8%	27	29.0%	70	44.9%	27	45.0%
Republican	2	66.7%	19	70.4%	11	45.8%	64	68.8%	85	54.5%	32	53.3%
Other	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	2	8.3%	2	2.2%	1	0.6%	1	1.7%
Ideology												
Conservative	2	66.7%	20	74.1%	13	54.2%	39	41.5%	55	35.5%	17	29.8%
Liberal	0	0.0%	4	14.8%	2	8.3%	9	9.6%	21	13.5%	17	29.8%
Moderate	1	33.3%	3	11.1%	9	37.5%	46	48.9%	79	51.0%	23	40.4%
Party Activity in District												
Both parties have active organizations	1	33.3%	12	44.4%	5	21.7%	23	25.0%	48	30.0%	13	21.7%
Active Democratic organization only	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	3	13.0%	9	9.8%	22	13.8%	7	11.7%
Active Republican organization only	0	0.0%	8	29.6%	5	21.7%	23	25.0%	36	22.5%	4	6.7%
No active party orgs.	2	66.7%	6	22.2%	10	43.5%	37	40.2%	54	33.8%	36	60.0%
Prior Political Involvement												
Ran for another office	1	33.3%	1	3.6%	4	16.7%	7	7.1%	13	8.0%	2	3.2%
Held another office	1	33.3%	4	14.3%	4	16.7%	10	10.1%	17	10.5%	6	9.5%
Party committee person	0	0.0%	5	17.9%	*6*	25.0%	*7*	7.1%	*12*	7.4%	***3***	4.8%
Volunteered on political campaign	1	33.3%	8	28.6%	9	37.5%	27	27.3%	49	30.2%	21	33.3%
Raised funds for a political cause	0	0.0%	5	17.9%	4	16.7%	10	10.1%	21	13.0%	7	11.1%
Involved via an organization I belong to	1	33.3%	3	10.7%	2	8.3%	2	2.0%	12	7.4%	7	11.1%
Worked in government	1	33.3%	1	3.6%	6	25.0%	8	8.1%	23	14.2%	3	4.8%
Lobbied on behalf of an issue or cause	1	33.3%	9	32.1%	5	20.8%	19	19.2%	33	20.4%	12	19.0%

Organized people in my community for an issue or cause	1	33.3%	7	25.0%	6	25.0%	25	25.3%	32	19.8%	16	25.4%
Other	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	0	0.0%	5	5.1%	15	9.3%	10	15.9%
No involvement	0	0.0%	3	10.7%	2	8.3%	6	6.1%	13	8.0%	6	9.5%
Ran as Part of Slate												
Yes	0	0.0%	11	39.3%	8	33.3%	30	30.3%	58	36.0%	25	40.3%
No	3	100.0%	17	60.7%	16	66.7%	69	69.7%	103	64.0%	37	59.7%
											62	
Members of Slate/Victory												
Primary Only			0	0.0%	1	12.5%	6	20.0%	4	6.9%	7	29.2%
General Only			2	18.2%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	4	6.9%	3	12.5%
Both Primary and General			6	54.5%	5	62.5%	20	66.7%	39	67.2%	14	58.3%
Slate Organizing Source												
Political party organization			3	27.3%	2	25.0%	9	30.0%	18	31.0%	3	12.0%
Community organization			1	9.1%	1	12.5%	3	10.0%	4	6.9%	5	20.0%
Church organization			0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Labor organization			0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	0	0.0%
Business organization			0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Fraternal organization			0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Friends and neighbors			2	18.2%	2	25.0%	5	16.7%	9	15.5%	6	24.0%
Incumbent board member(s)			3	27.3%	3	37.5%	8	26.7%	9	15.5%	5	20.0%
Other			0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	10.0%	9	15.5%	6	24.0%
Ambition to Seek Higher Office												
Yes	2	66.7%	7	25.9%	4	16.7%	24	25.3%	41	25.8%	10	17.2%
No	1	33.3%	20	74.1%	20	83.3%	71	74.7%	118	74.2%	48	82.8%
If Yes, Which Type of Position?												
Local office	1	50.0%	3	42.9%	2	50.0%	12	50.0%	19	46.3%	3	30.0%
County office	2	100.0%	2	28.6%	3	75.0%	9	37.5%	19	46.3%	2	20.0%
State office (such as legislature)	2	100.0%	5	71.4%	2	50.0%	11	45.8%	18	43.9%	6	60.0%
Federal office (such as Congress)	1	50.0%	4	57.1%	0	0.0%	2	8.3%	5	12.2%	3	30.0%
Other	0	0.0%	6	85.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	7.3%	0	0.0%
Recruited?												
Yes	1	33.3%	8	28.5%	15	36.5%	22	22.4%	33	20.3%	12	25.0%
No	2	66.7%	20	71.5%	26	63.5%	76	77.6%	129	79.7%	36	75.0%

Recruitment Source?												
Political Party Committee/Org.	1	100.0%	4	50.0%	7	46.7%	10	45.5%	16	48.5%	3	25.0%
Non-Political Community Org.	0	0.0%	2	25.0%	4	26.7%	7	31.8%	13	39.4%	7	58.3%
Church Affiliated Organization	0	0.0%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	0	0.0%
Labor Organization	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	6.7%	3	13.6%	1	3.0%	2	16.7%
Business Organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	0	0.0%
Fraternal Organization	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Incumbent Member of Board	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	13.3%	2	9.1%	3	9.1%	1	8.3%
Education Organization or Person Affiliated with Education in District	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	20.0%	0	0.0%	4	12.1%	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%	2	25.0%	3	20.0%	2	9.1%	1	3.0%	12	100.0%

Engagement Attributes

	Pol. Ambition	*Pol. Ambition*	*Taxes & Budget*	*Taxes & Budget %*	*Curric-ulum*	*Curric-ulum %*	*Manage While Kids Are in School*	*Manage While Kids are in School %*	*Civic Duty*	*Civic Duty %*	*Other*	*Other %*
Board Meeting Attendance Prior to Running												
None	2	66.7%	5	19.2%	1	4.3%	19	20.9%	24	16.0%	9	16.7%
1 to 10	0	0.0%	12	46.2%	11	47.8%	47	51.6%	83	55.3%	21	38.9%
11 to 20	0	0.0%	5	19.2%	3	13.0%	14	15.4%	18	12.0%	13	24.1%
21 to 30	1	33.3%	4	15.4%	3	13.0%	6	6.6%	10	6.7%	1	1.9%
More than 30	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	21.7%	5	5.5%	15	10.0%	10	18.5%
Active in Church Organization												
Yes	0	0.0%	14	51.9%	16	66.7%	45	47.4%	90	56.6%	29	47.5%
No	3	100.0%	13	48.1%	8	33.3%	50	52.6%	69	43.4%	32	52.5%
Forms of Community Engagement												
Attended Public Meetings	1	33.3%	10	35.7%	10	41.7%	22	22.2%	39	24.1%	15	23.8%
Involved in Community or Neighborhood Association	1	33.3%	8	28.6%	7	29.2%	23	23.2%	50	30.9%	14	22.2%
Involved in Social Organization	3	100.0%	5	17.9%	4	16.7%	23	23.2%	47	29.0%	16	25.4%
Involved in Church Organization	3	100.0%	14	50.0%	13	54.2%	37	37.4%	74	45.7%	26	41.3%
Involved in Education Organization	1	33.3%	4	14.3%	12	50.0%	31	31.3%	77	47.5%	29	46.0%
Member of a Labor Union	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	7	29.2%	21	21.2%	24	14.8%	11	17.5%
Other	1	33.3%	1	3.6%	2	8.3%	8	8.1%	16	9.9%	11	17.5%
No Engagement	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	4	2.5%	2	3.2%

School Board Service Attributes

	Pol. Ambition	*Pol. Ambition*	*Taxes & Budget*	*Taxes & Budget %*	*Curric-ulum*	*Curric-ulum %*	*Manage While Kids Are in School*	*Manage While Kids are in School %*	*Civic Duty*	*Civic Duty %*	*Other*	*Other %*
Years of SB Service												
Less than 1	1	33.3%	2	7.1%	2	8.3%	4	4.1%	10	6.2%	0	0.0%
1 to 4	1	33.3%	15	53.6%	5	20.8%	31	31.6%	57	35.4%	31	49.2%
5 to 8	1	33.3%	8	28.6%	9	37.5%	31	31.6%	42	26.1%	15	23.8%
9 to 12	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	6	25.0%	14	14.3%	23	14.3%	7	11.1%
13 to 16	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	4.2%	7	7.1%	14	8.7%	10	15.9%
17 to 20	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	7	7.1%	10	6.2%	0	0.0%
More than 20	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.2%	4	4.1%	5	3.1%	0	0.0%
Top Issue												
Finance/taxes/budget	2	66.7%	25	89.3%	11	45.8%	49	49.5%	83	51.2%	25	39.7%
Education quality/curriculum	2	66.7%	15	53.6%	16	66.7%	74	74.7%	112	69.1%	44	69.8%
Both education and finance (balance)	2	66.7%	13	46.4%	7	29.2%	33	33.3%	44	27.2%	17	27.0%
Personnel concerns	0	0.0%	3	10.7%	3	12.5%	4	4.0%	10	6.2%	4	6.3%
General district mangament	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	6	25.0%	10	10.1%	26	16.0%	15	23.8%
Other	1	33.3%	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	5	5.1%	8	4.9%	10	15.9%
No single issue most important	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.6%
Superintendent Job Rating												
Excellent	2	66.7%	13	48.1%	12	52.2%	50	52.6%	91	57.6%	30	50.0%
Good	1	33.3%	13	48.1%	6	26.1%	30	31.6%	49	31.0%	19	31.7%
Fair	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	3	13.0%	12	12.6%	15	9.5%	8	13.3%
Poor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	8.7%	3	3.2%	3	1.9%	3	5.0%
Decisionmaking												
School Board	3	100.0%	19	70.4%	12	50.0%	46	48.4%	88	55.7%	32	52.5%
Superintendent	0	0.0%	6	22.2%	7	29.2%	32	33.7%	46	29.1%	15	24.6%
Other	0	0.0%	2	7.4%	5	20.8%	17	17.9%	24	15.2%	14	23.0%

Management Approach												
School board decides on policies/superintendent implements	0	0.0%	5	18.5%	2	8.3%	6	6.3%	16	7.9%	3	4.9%
Superintendent proposes policies/school board mostly approves	0	0.0%	11	40.7%	11	45.8%	41	43.2%	87	43.1%	23	37.7%
School board and superintendent are equal partners in making policies and decisions	3	100.0%	11	40.7%	11	45.8%	48	50.5%	99	49.0%	35	57.4%