Spring 2005

School governance in New Hampshire: Revisiting a study of school board-superintendent relations in small rural school districts

Betsey Stebbins Cox-Buteau

University of New Hampshire, Durham

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SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE: REVISITING A STUDY OF SCHOOL BOARD - SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS IN SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education

May 2005
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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April 20, 2005
Date
DEDICATION

For my Parents, Donald and Carol Cox.
My children, Geoffrey, Katherine, Amy, and Rebecca Stebbins
And my husband, Brandon L. Buteau
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this document would not have been possible without the assistance of the following people to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude.

I want to truly thank my doctoral advisor, Dr. Barbara Krysiak, a relentless cheerleader for women struggling to break the glass ceiling of education administration. Without her words of encouragement and consistently being there whenever I needed her, it would have been very difficult to complete this study.

I want to thank each member of my doctoral committee for taking time out of his/her busy life to read and dissect this work, particular Dr. Michael Middleton who reviewed it in advance to keep me on the right track.

I am especially grateful to my four children, mostly Rebecca, who tiptoed around the house, prepared meals, took care of everyday business so that I could concentrate, and to my husband, Brandon, who met me when I was beginning this process, encouraged me all the way through it to the end, and married me three days later.
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ABSTRACT

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE: REVISITING A STUDY OF SCHOOL BOARD - SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS IN SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By

Betsey Stebbins Cox-Buteau

University of New Hampshire, May 2005

The purpose of this study was to replicate the dissertation of Dr. Phillip McCormack of 1988 and to compare the results of that study to the results of this study of 2004, fifteen years later. Dr. McCormack's original research questions were used but modified to include the comparison of data fifteen years apart.

A descriptive research design was used. It was based upon the design used by Dr. McCormack. The study used both a quantitative component and a qualitative component. Information was gathered, as it had been in 1988, through (1) questionnaires given to school board members and superintendents and (2) follow-up interviews with board members and superintendents. The same written survey instruments were used. The same interview questions were used with the addition of several questions that inquired about changes affecting the field of education that had come about in the last fifteen years.

A list of the significant findings include:
The top three issues that affect superintendent–school board relations in 1988 were Personnel, Fiscal / budget, and Superintendent / School Board relations. In 2004, it was Fiscal / budget, and Personnel and Superintendent / School Board relations were tied for second place.

Personnel / teacher evaluation has become more contentious whereas tension over the structure of the SAU has diminished since 1988. Financial / budget issues remain at the top of the list with these other two and now collective bargaining has also become more of an issue.

Superintendents see themselves more often now primarily as instructional leaders. School Board members now see the superintendent more often as a decision-maker and less of a professional advisor or functionary. Superintendents see themselves as more of political strategists and less as decision-makers now than in 1988.

The school board today believes that the superintendent is generally more likely to dominate the decisions made regarding educational program, personnel / personnel policy, finance / fiscal, school closings / construction, and superintendent / school board roles, whereas the superintendents feel that they are less likely to dominate decision-making in those areas.
"There is something [in the system] that does not allow good people on boards and as superintendents to do their job."

(Leadership for Student Learning, 2001, pg. 11)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that Usdan’s statement is true, but is it really or does it only seem that way lately? In 1988, Phillip McCormack, an administrator in the Plymouth, New Hampshire school district set out to study the state of relations between school boards of small school districts in New Hampshire of less than 2500 students, and their superintendents. Fifteen years have passed since his study. Many new influences on schools and on school governance have arisen in New Hampshire and across the nation in those fifteen years. Some of these influences include the Claremont school funding decision, the institution of statewide testing (the NHEIAPs) and along with it - school ranking, the safe school laws, Senate Bill 2, and now the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. This study will attempt to examine the present answers to McCormack’s research questions of 1988, and to determine what changes if any in superintendent-board relations have occurred over this time period in small school districts in the State of New Hampshire.

"The basic premise of this study is that school boards in rural New Hampshire school districts play a significant and meaningful role in the governance of the public schools in New Hampshire” (McCormack, 1988 p. 5).
Although New Hampshire has experienced heavy growth in the past fifteen years, the vast majority of the school districts in the state (87%) are still small, rural districts and therefore remain as significant to the state of education in New Hampshire as they were fifteen years ago.

Purpose of the Study

Research Questions

Schools are political institutions (McCormack, 1988) and the answer to the question of "Who governs the public schools?" has grown increasingly influenced by new forces on top of old forces in increasingly complex ways since 1988. To remain faithful to the original study, the following research questions were drawn directly from McCormack’s study (p. 6), and augmented to ask the same question and to provide for comparison between the studies.

(1) What is the nature of school board-superintendent relations in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire and what changes, if any, have occurred in these relationships during the last fifteen years?

(2) How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

(3) What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?
What factors impact upon the school board’s and the superintendent’s respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

Research Hypothesis

Much has changed in public education over the past fifteen years. With these changes, school boards and superintendents have had to write new policy based upon an ever increasingly complex set of circumstances. Between legislation, growth, and the changing dynamics of the school board itself, the role of each party has had to realign to these new circumstances. If the basic roles of a policy-making body and of an administrator are still in play, then the necessary adjustments would cause conflict as these adjustments are made. Also, as roles are challenged, the shifting sands of expectations would cause conflict and concern as the parties grapple for what they feel are their rightful territories of control. Individuals, personalities, and leadership styles may work for or against these adjustments. Yet, in the climate of change, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that conflict has necessarily increased and perhaps shifted to different or even new areas as the influence of these changes on school governance trickles down.

Therefore, in light of the remarkable number of forces affecting the relationship between the school board and the superintendent over the past fifteen years, this relationship must be in state of higher conflict than it was in 1988.
Research Sites

The questionnaires used to collect data for this study were mailed to the superintendents and school board members of each district in the State of New Hampshire with a student enrollment of 2500 students or less. This remained consistent with McCormack's original study. These surveys were followed up with interviews of five superintendents and five school board members from their boards. Although this is not consistent with McCormack's study where he interviewed seven superintendents and seven school board members, it was felt that considering the difficulty of arranging that number of interviews; five sets would be adequate for the purposes of this study. McCormack limited his number to seven for the same reason. "Given the constraints of time and money, this writer made the decision to limit the number of interviews to fourteen individuals – seven superintendents and seven school board members." (McCormack, p. 65)

The interviewees were chosen based upon the same criteria that Dr. McCormack used in 1988:

1. Geographic location, with the purpose to spread out responses to reflect a variety of parts of the state, and
2. Questionnaire response, whether or not the superintendent and at least one school board member returned a questionnaire, and
3. Responses to key questions such as:
   For Superintendents:
   a. How often do you attempt to make major policy changes other than what you perceive the community to want?
b. What is your perception of the appropriate role for school board members?

c. If the superintendent wanted major policy changes in the area of educational program, personnel, school finance, school closings/construction, and/or superintendent-school board role and the board initially disagreed with the change, how likely is it that the board would eventually approve the change anyway?

d. What types of issues are most likely to result in conflict between the superintendent and the school board in your district?

e. How many years have you been in your present position as superintendent?

For school board members:

a. How often does the school board give in to recommendations of the superintendent on major policy issues or proposals relative to educational program, personnel, school finance, school closings/construction, and/or superintendent-school board roles even if it initially disagreed with the superintendent’s recommendations?

b. How likely is it that the board would give in to the superintendent’s recommendations relative to educational program, personnel, school finance, school closings/construction, and/or superintendent-school board roles even if it initially disagreed with the superintendent’s recommendations?

c. How critical is the community with regard to board actions or decisions? Does the community trust the board or does it or certain
community “groups” exercise some level of control over the board and its actions?

d. How many years have you served as a board member?

e. What is your perception of appropriate role behavior for a school board member?

f. What is your perception of the role of your superintendent? Of the SAU?

Research Methods

A letter of introduction and a letter of support from the New Hampshire School Administrators’ Association and the New Hampshire School Boards Association was sent along with questionnaires to each superintendent and each school board member serving districts of 2500 students or less. For his dissertation, McCormack obtained permission from Joseph Hentges to replicate the written questionnaires that he used for his study of superintendent-board relations (with minor exceptions). I took the same questionnaire that McCormack developed and use it again.

After these questionnaires were sent and returned, a decision was made, based upon the aforementioned criteria, to interview ten people, five superintendents and five school board members. I conducted these interviews in person, at a time of mutual convenience. The identities of the persons interviewed will remain entirely anonymous in the reporting process.

The questions used in the interview process are the ones used by McCormack in his study as well as any other questions that seemed relevant to discovery of the intended information during the interview process.
The data gathered from the responses to the questionnaires and the interviews were then disaggregated to answer the research questions.

**Significance of the Study**

The politics of education continue to be an area of interest to social scientists for the past century let alone the last fifteen years after McCormack's study, as evidenced by the continuous stream of literature addressing this area (Carter, 1997; AASA 2000; Hayden, 1986; McNeil, 1996; Spring, 1993; Ziebarth, 1999). Continued study of school governance provides school boards and school administrators with a better understanding of the existing political system surrounding the governance of schools and allows them to better serve the student population and the community.

McCormack put forward that “There are two predominant points of view relative to political influence” (p. 6). The first of these two points of view is that of those who have legal authority to make decisions regarding schools. The second point of view is that of those who are employed by a district as educational experts (p. 7). This refers to the position of school board and its legal authority to make decisions regarding the schools, and the superintendent who is employed by the district to serve as an educational expert.

These two forces working to make decisions for the school district are often in conflict with each other, and continually beg the question, “Who really governs the public schools?” (p. 7).

“Prior to the early 1950’s, the prevalent viewpoint held was that the educational establishment was strongly influenced by the value system of the dominant social class in each community (Callahan, 1966; Cistone, 1975). The predominant viewpoint found in the research of the 1960’s and 1970’s was that
there was a considerable increase in the public’s dependency on the technical expertise of the professionals, i.e., superintendents. This view is highlighted in Zeigler’s and Jennings’ work (1974) in which they conclude that superintendents control education decision-making and school boards merely legitimate policy recommendations to the community.” (McCormack, pg. 1)

Later studies present an alternate viewpoint to the argument presented by Zeigler. “Hentges and Cunningham conducted a study (1982) of the American public school superintendent and concluded that the issue of control remains unsettled. Further work by Hentges suggests that school boards were exerting greater control over superintendents. This viewpoint was supported by others (e.g., Mitchell, 1980; Lutz, 1980; Boys, 1976; McCarty, 1971) who have devoted considerable time and energy to a study of this issue.” (McCormack, p. 2)

Fifteen years after McCormack’s study, we find that similar factors continue to influence the governance of public schools (e.g. demographics, national awareness, economic growth, and legal mandates). Many new names appear to be revisiting the age-old question of, “Who governs the schools?” The demographics and economics of the State of New Hampshire have changed as the state has grown over the years from 1988-2004. The resulting change in the role of the state in school funding under the findings of the Claremont lawsuits has resulted in a new dynamic for school boards and superintendent relations. The uncertainty of funding formulas plagues the budget process each year; testing the ability of both parties to make accurate decisions regarding the long-range planning for their school system.

The adoption of the alternative form of school district governance known as “Senate Bill 2” has placed school boards and superintendents in the position of
beginning the budget process even earlier in the school year, requiring the decisions made regarding school funding for the coming school year be made at the very beginning of the preceding school year. The pressure of building an appropriate budget under such circumstances is high as it is difficult to predict needs a year in advance. Also, it is difficult to predict just how much funding the State will be providing for the following year.

As the baby boomlet has moved through the schools over the last fifteen years, the number of students vying for the top colleges has increased. (Wright, 2004) This has put pressure on some districts to improve their curricula so that their students will have the coursework necessary to compete. Community status in New Hampshire is now tied to the results of mandated statewide testing (NHEIAPs – New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program until 2003 and now the NECAPs – New England Consortium for Assessment and Programs for grades 3 through 8 in 2005) of students in grades three, six, and ten. The purpose of these tests is to determine how well the school district is teaching the state frameworks for education. The state frameworks were instituted in the early 1990s to meet the requirements of block grants coming to New Hampshire under the federal entitlement programs to give proof of progress toward the educational goals of the federal government. These requirements then go back to the question of proper curriculum. The school board and superintendent have had to wrestle with this additional sphere of influence in their decision making, which places even greater pressure on the school board and superintendent.

The Safe School Laws regarding the state legislature’s desire to make the physical and emotional environment of the school safe for all students have put
legal reporting and intervention requirements on superintendents and school boards. Reporting laws have required the compiling of numerous statistics for annual reports, but also the requirement that school administration must act quickly and decisively when students or personnel break the law. As these laws are applied and case law evolves, superintendents must keep their knowledge and expertise up-to-date. The new processes, procedures, and policies required to administer them properly have become increasingly complex. Superintendents must be prepared to instruct school boards as to their legal responsibilities under these laws and they need to work together to protect the district from litigation.

Under The No Child Left Behind Act, new standards for teacher and paraprofessional qualifications have further affected the roles of the superintendent and school board. Under these new requirements, teachers and paraprofessionals who currently are working in schools may no longer be considered qualified to teach the subject(s) to which they have been assigned, some for many years. Although it is considered the professional responsibility of the individual teacher to meet the requirements of certification, the struggle to fill teaching positions with “highly qualified” individuals continues to make governing the schools even more difficult in the present age of a national teacher shortage.

This law also requires proof of adequate yearly progress in student achievement. The burden of this progress has been placed squarely on school boards and superintendents who will be held accountable to these goals or face the prospect of state takeover of “failing” schools. This burden is only beginning to be understood by boards and central offices across the state as the law draws closer to total enactment in the 2005-2006 school year. Many superintendents are
waiting for the inevitable emergence of case law to better understand their responsibilities and to administer the new law.

With these new influences on school board/superintendent relations having arisen after McCormack’s 1988 study, a readdressing of the direction of governance of the school, of power and decision-making in the running of our schools in New Hampshire might reveal trends that lead to greater understanding of the present dynamics of this system. This understanding can only act to assist school boards and superintendents in doing a better job collaborating to improve our schools, or at the very least, point to guidelines that will assist in smoothing the process of governance under these new dynamics.

Limitations of the Study

Survey research can be refuted by some as not truly representative, and such research does have its limitations. Yet, it is a widely used format and when carefully interpreted can clearly reflect general trends. In the case of this study, personality conflicts and personal biases may affect the participant’s perceptions of their circumstances and therefore affect their responses. Also, the ability of the parties queried to accurately recall events could affect results of individual questionnaires as well.

Interviews have the advantage of face-to-face contact with the party giving the researcher the opportunity to judge the state of mind of the interviewee when giving data. The interviewer also has the advantage of being able to clarify the questions so that the interviewee can better answer them. Yet, as always, the researcher can only hope for honesty on the part of the interviewee and their willingness to “lay it on the line.” Politics and other personal issues may interfere in the “slant” given to any response. Lastly, a
limited number of interviews can be conducted limiting the validity of the pool of data.

The transferability of the information gleaned and interpreted in this study is limited as it will reflect only small districts of 2500 or less students and that New Hampshire is a unique state in many ways.

Glossary of Key Terms

(1) School Board – a board in charge of local public schools. (Merriam-Webster, 2002) These boards are made up of elected citizens who have duties, primarily regarding policy and budget, in control of the local school district.

(2) Superintendent - one who has executive oversight and charge of the schools. (Merriam-Webster, 2002) This person is often considered the “CEO” of the school district and therefore responsible to the school board for enacting policy and the spending of the budget.

(3) Relations - an aspect or quality (as resemblance) that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working together. (Merriam-Webster, 2002) For the purposes of this study these relations occur between school boards and their superintendent.

(4) NHEIAPs – (New Hampshire Education Improvement and Assessment Program) These statewide tests were instituted in 1995 to meet the Federal accountability requirements to receive continued Federal grants. They were given in grades 3, 6, and 10 in May until 2004 when the state moved to a new test. These tests were intended to measure the alignment of teaching in each school district to the state curriculum frameworks.
(5) SB2 (Senate Bill 2) – This piece of legislation, passed in 1998, sometimes called the "ballot bill", allows towns to elect to have school budgets voted on by ballot at the voting booth on election day instead of at the traditional town meeting.

(6) No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 rewrote and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The law is a comprehensive law running over 1200 pages in length and putting into law many new requirements for schools districts who wish to continue to receive federal funding.
CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Since Dr. McCormack's initial study in 1988 of the relations between superintendents and their school boards in New Hampshire school districts of 2500 students or less, much has changed in New Hampshire and the country with regard to the governance of the public schools. Although the basic formula of superintendent and school board still remains in effect, mandates resulting from a variety of new state and federal laws since 1988 have changed how some of the processes and procedures that were in place then work themselves through the school governance processes today. These distant legislative bodies have thrust their influence upon the canon of "local control" of our schools and what used to be sacred local domination of a town's schools has become the ending touch spot for the long fingers of educational politics in our state and nation.

The purpose of this section is to review the recent literature on school governance with reference to the past literature of the previous study, and in general, superintendent-school board relations, and the major changes in school governance that may or may not have influenced those relations since McCormack's 1988 study. Building upon the information given in Dr. McCormack's dissertation to the present day, literature revealing the present
view from the superintendent’s office will be explored. In the first section, works by Carter, Glass, Bjork, Brunner, Chapman, and Lashway will be given attention.

The second section on superintendent-board relations will draw a foundation from Dr. McCormack’s 1988 study and then move on to what has been written since 1988. This section will include a study of works by Andero, Dawson, First, Glass, Bjork, Brunner, McAdams, McCormack, Quigley, Seder, Krysiak, Goodman and Zimmerman. This section will focus on the present status of these relations and school governance under this status.

The third strand of this study will cover the major influences new to the arena of superintendent-school board relations and governance in the last fifteen years that make this study significant. Literature by McCurdy, Russo, Andero, McNeil, Spring, Anthes, and DeMitchell will be included in the third section of the review. This section will include a discussion of the Claremont I and II decisions, Senate Bill 2, No Child Left Behind, and other recent factors. How these factors have affected or not affected superintendent-school board relations will not be addressed here but in the study itself. This section will instead lay out what influence these factors have on the procedures and processes of governing New Hampshire schools. From there the study will move on to the question of the state of relations fifteen years since McCormack.

Strand # 1 - School Governance and New Hampshire

Dr. McCormack’s dissertation cites the work of various researchers regarding the evolution of the role of the school superintendent in the State of New Hampshire. Studies by Bishop (1930), Brunelle (1972), Marten and Kilmister (1986), and Cronin (1987) are brought to light in this section of his review of the literature. Bishop’s study firmly asserted that the New England ideal of “local
control” was nowhere further entrenched than in New Hampshire. His study traces the development of public education through legislation, town chronicles, and papers through to the present day organization of school administrative units. Dr. McCormack states that Bishop found that, “The belief that it was necessary to involve experts in the supervision of schools in New Hampshire was not quickly adhered to nor accepted in New Hampshire.” (McCormack, p.14) Local control by laymen who lived in the district was the longstanding practice.

Eventually, larger districts moved toward the employment of a “superintendent of schools.” The city of Manchester led the way and hired its first in 1855. By the later part of the century, the vast majority of larger districts had followed suit. Finally, in 1899, a general law was passed for the “purpose of employing a superintendent of the public school therein, which shall perform in each town the duties prescribed by law and by the regulations of the school board (Bishop, p. 79” (McCormack, p. 16). Finally, in 1919, the legislature passed a law mandating “professional supervision” in all school districts. This legislation not only set up the qualifications necessary for the post but also the duties of superintendent.

Although the law of 1919 made professional supervision of school districts compulsory, the job description of the superintendent in the State of New Hampshire changed dramatically in the ensuing years. Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire are states where school districts may join together into “supervisory units” and share a common superintendent and central office. In New Hampshire, these are known as School Administrative Units. These “SAUs” (School Administrative Units) are a dynamic group. School districts are
consistently evolving, realigning themselves, and reconfiguring the SAU with which they are associated as the populations grow and the demographics change. Although the legislative conversations on SAU alignment in 1988 were leaning toward reducing the number of SAUs, this has not happened. In fact, the number of SAUs has increased. This conversation continues to this day as the state strives to contain the costs associated with education.

At the time that Dr. McCormack was writing his study in 1988, Cronin, Gelles and Lachat had recently completed a study of the SAU system for the Center for Resource Management in Hampton, New Hampshire. This study had been requested by a joint commission of the New Hampshire Legislature to "look at the status of SAU organization in New Hampshire" (McCormack, p. 20). Cronin et al. concluded that, "The organization of SAUs in New Hampshire is greatly influenced by two prevalent and at times conflicting values - fiscal restraint and local control (Cronin, 1987, p. 11)" (McCormack, p. 21). This ideal of local control permeates the literature written on school governance in the state.

Another interesting note is that "prior to the 1980's, the state Department of Education paid a portion of SAU expenses..." (McCormack, 1988, p.22) Of course, now each SAU is fully responsible for its own expenses. Cronin goes on to discuss the varying ability of towns to pay for central offices services, which unfortunately left some SAUs short staffed at the time of the study. Because of this, some building principals in small districts were forced to take on responsibilities commonly associated with central office.

Cronin also noted that in the twenty years (1967-1987) preceding the commissioned study, the increase in time demands on superintendents was significant, particularly in multi-district units. Also, "This study indicates that
although the current SAU structure is working well in all single district SAUs and many multi-district units, larger multi-district SAUs are experiencing problems” (McCormack, p. 24).

Cronin outlined their options as reorganization or increasing personnel at the SAU level. Therefore, the ideal of fiscal restraint comes into play in this problem. Paul Fillion (1983) explored this in detail in his study, “The State System of School Finance in New Hampshire 1912-1982, A Historical Study.” Also, Judith Fillion (1983) looked at school governance with regard to finance in her “An Evaluation of the Current Program of State School Finance in New Hampshire”.

Foundation Aid was established at the state level in 1947, but was never fully funded leaving the major part of the burden of school expense to the local municipalities. In fact, until the Claremont II decision, New Hampshire was last in the country in state support for education, and it remains so today. The property owners through the local property tax carried this burden. Now, this burden is shared through the state property tax as well as the local property tax and the other general revenue sources for education, the lotteries. Yet, as this is being written, the elimination of the state property tax is a continuing topic of debate between the legislature and the governor’s office.

At the time of Dr. McCormack’s study, property poor districts were suffering under burdens of high property taxation and a resistance on the part of taxpayers in those districts to fund education adequately. “Cronin’s report does recommend that action be implemented that would provide the funding necessary to help districts offer quality education as well as effective
administrative service and sound educational leadership (Cronin, p. 71-72)" (McCormack, 1988, p. 28).

This is where Dr. McCormack's study leaves off on the study of the superintendency and governance in New Hampshire. As it illustrated in 1988, the problems of time, money, and outside demands were becoming increasingly burdensome to the superintendent in New Hampshire, but also elsewhere. What weighed particularly heavily on New Hampshire superintendents was the prevailing culture of local control.

In 1997, both Chapman and Carter wrote separately about the beleaguered superintendency. Each book discussed the changes in the 1990's and the growing demands on the office of the superintendent across the nation, as the public became more invested and more involved in education.

The 1990's have seen a significant increase in the number and variety of groups that have focused attention of educational issues, even though their primary interest is elsewhere. The schools have become the focal point for the resolution of broad economic, ideological, and societal issues." (Carter, 1997, p. 32)

Carter went on, on page 33, to state that, "Decisions are being made less and less on the values of the benefits of the alternatives and more on the basis of political rhetoric." These two statements are clearly continuing to play out in New Hampshire as the state continues to become more populous and differing interest groups lobby for political position in education.

Within the last decade at least two candidates for governor in the state of New Hampshire have run entirely on an income tax platform to alleviate the educational funding reorganization crisis, which began under Claremont II. Others have called for a constitutional amendment declaring education the responsibility of local governments. In this political atmosphere, superintendents
find themselves forced “to deal with conflicting expectations, multiple political agendas, and varying ideas without unduly creating enemies or distrust” (Carter, 1997, p. 35).

This unfolding situation has come to the table at school board meetings across the state, taken up much of the conversation between superintendents and their boards, and caused great anxiety among the stakeholders in education. School boards and superintendents have wrestled with the unstable school-funding climate in New Hampshire for a number of years now. Because of the lack of clarity in the political direction of funding, it has been difficult to set accurate budgets and tax impacts during this time.

In the year 2000, the American Association of School Administrators commissioned a tenth-year out study on the state of the superintendency. This study was a repeat of earlier studies in 1982 and 1992. In the report on this survey, Glass, Bjork and Brunner discuss the results of their findings. The findings conclude that the results do not differ dramatically from those of the 1982 and 1992 studies. As noted in the ERIC abstract (ED440475), this study contained responses from the largest number of superintendents ever, 2,262. Of these, 1,953 were male and 297 were female.

Subcategories of this study include some areas pertinent to the research question at hand: school board relationships, stress in the superintendency, important problems facing superintendents and boards, and superintendent working with boards. This study shows that the average tenure of the superintendent as five to six years. The school superintendent now spends an average of three hours per week communicating with board members, and among effective superintendents, the numbers are almost double that.
The study finds that on superintendent-school board relations, 

In general, boards and superintendents get along quite well. Few superintendents are terminated, and few boards rate their superintendent less than good or excellent...both groups are quite concerned about pressures from state assessment programs to constantly raise test scores...” (Glass et al., 2000, p. 75)

For stress in the superintendency, the findings were,

Pressures caused by lack of adequate funding, competing community and school groups, employee unions, state-legislated mandates, intrusive board members, and the public’s perceived dissatisfaction with performance of schools can all cause stress for superintendents...Stress levels perceived by superintendents in the 2000 Study show a disturbing, but largely predictable trend. Fully 51.5% of all reporting superintendents indicated that they feel considerable or very great stress in the superintendency.” (Glass et al., 2000, p. 72)

For problems facing the superintendency in the year 2000, Glass et al. found that school finance is listed as the number one issue. “Assessment and testing, as well as accountability and credibility, also are viewed as critical problems” (Glass et al., 2000, p. 66). Another problem indicated was time management.

This study also investigated how well superintendents and boards were working together, an essential question. The findings here concluded that in the year 2000 most superintendents viewed their position working with the board as that of professional advisor and initiator of policy initiatives. Only one-third saw themselves as managers.

The 2000 Study refers to many questions that Lashway considers in his work on the increasing complexity of the position under the new ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind) where “superintendents must take on curriculum and instruction as a major part of their job” (Lashway, 2002, p. 4). Lashway takes a look at the superintendency
and the new era of accountability. Not only are superintendents responsible for
the logistics of running a district in the long accepted sense of buildings, budgets,
and busses, but also now the requirements of standards based accountability set
up a turbulent and stressful job climate for these leaders (Lashway, 2002).

In conclusion, the office of the superintendent has continued after 1988 to
take on an increasingly complex number of responsibilities from curriculum to
dealing with political interest groups in an ever increasingly turbulent era of
accountability. Pressures from new legislation, community interest groups,
taxation and funding concerns, and demographical changes all find influence
upon the school system which in turn affects the relationship between schools
boards and their superintendent. In New Hampshire, this evidences itself as well
in the new legislation on the state and national level, the political rhetoric of
candidates, demographics and the shifting, unstable tax policies regarding school
funding.

Strand #2 - The Status Superintendent-School Board Relations

Strong, collaborative Leadership by local school boards and school
superintendents is a key cornerstone of the foundation for high student
achievement. That leadership is essential to forming a community vision
for children, crafting long-range goals and plans for raising the
achievement of every child, improving the professional development and
status of teachers and other staff, and ensuring that the guidance, support,
and resources needed for success are available. (Goodman & Zimmerman,
2000, p. 1)

The potential for conflict in the relationship between the superintendent
and the school board is high (Quigley, Sharp, Alvey, Dawson, Beni, Vail,
Goodman, Hayden, Hentges, McAdams, Spring, Norton et al., McCurdy,
Houston, and Ziebarth). “Strengths, thoughtfulness and professionalism should
be what a board expects of its superintendent/partner, and that will sometimes
lead to conflict between strong partners” (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. 74). Also, “A frequent cause of conflict between the school board and the superintendent is the misconception of the roles and responsibilities of the other” (Quigley, p. vi).

In McCormack’s 1988 study, one question he used to approach superintendent – school board relations was “Who governs the public school?” He cites the earliest study of this question by Neil Gross in 1958. The significant problems that Gross identified through his analysis of the data include: the findings that some school boards are “irresponsible or ineffective” (Gross, p. 136), that roles are frequently a source of tension, the quality of leadership that some superintendents provided to their communities was low, and that the nature of school governance was highly political. Apparently, in 1958, small town boards were willing to resist the dominance of the superintendent and that when there was a conflict the board grew in strength rather than the superintendent, whereas in metropolitan areas, it was the opposite.

McCormack goes on to cite studies (Boyd, Hentges, Zeigler, Jennings, and others) who refute various aspects of Gross’ findings on school governance. There does not seem to be a dispute about the tension of role conflict. This continues to be a clear finding. Questions arise about the dominance of any one side.

They present the perspective that there is a struggle for power between the superintendents and school board and that power that has evolved in the office of the superintendent has significantly impacted upon the policy-making role of the school board (Zeigler, p. 19). (McCormack, p. 33) McCormack goes on to state that their findings are irregular regarding power relationships between board members and superintendents. Yet, in the end they conclude that this is due to the continued increase in complexity of the problems
and the alternatives that the school boards face. They find themselves forced to turn to the recommendations of professional administrators.

The study from which McCormack borrows his surveys (Hentges, 1984), studies the interactions between superintendents and school boards in districts of 25,000 students or more. McCormack chose to apply these instruments with some modification to New Hampshire districts of 2,500 or less students. McCormack cites Hentges' study and others as seriously challenging the views presented by Zeigler (McCormack, p. 39). To more clearly understand the superintendent – school board relationship, Hentges differentiates between internal and external issues. This clears up the concern McCormack had with Zeigler's study which seemed to vacillate somewhat in its findings in this area. Hentges goes on to provide clear definitions of role orientation on the part of board members. Hentges concludes that “superintendents and school boards share in the balance of power” (McCormack, p. 43).

Lastly, McCormack considers a study by Boyd (1976). Boyd positions himself with other researchers in concluding that the politics of the 1960s eroded the dominance of the superintendent in the role of decision-maker (McCormack, p. 44). He also finds that one factor influencing which party has the power in making decision-making “is the type of issue or policy question being addressed” (McCormack, p. 45).

McCormack concludes with comments regarding the conflict in the findings between Zeigler and Jennings, and Hentges and Boyd. Thus, he begins his data collection with the literature in disagreement.

From there, in 1988, the literature continues to be prolific regarding superintendent-school board relations and the question of governance in the
public schools. More recent writings by Andero, Dawson, First, Goodman, Glass, Bjork, Brunner, McAdams, Quigley, and Seder continue the discussion of this question and reflect how it is viewed in the context of the last fifteen years.

Again, “A frequent cause of conflict between the school board and the superintendent is the misconception of the roles and responsibilities of the other” (Quigley, p. vi). This statement sums up the major points of most literature on the subject of superintendent – school board relations.

Several studies (Seder, 1991; Quigley, 1993; Goodman, 1997; Glass et al, 2000) are in depth looks at the state of the superintendent and schools boards of Connecticut, Massachusetts, other states and the nation in general. Along with the articles, books, and commentaries by countless others, this topic has continued to be thoroughly examined since McCormack’s 1988 study.

These articles, books, and commentaries cover the continuing conversation on school governance from a variety of standpoints. The most frequently asked question seems to be that of, “Who is responsible for what decisions, when? The board or the superintendent?” Yet, there continues to be much grey area around the question of the role distinction that the school board writes policy and the superintendent administers that policy.

The line in the sand of policy versus administration is not that difficult to see and yet shifts with the individual superintendent and the make up of his/her school board. At issue can be the use of the superintendent’s expertise by the board in making policy that blurs that line at times. Also, the obligation of the superintendent to keep the board informed on how their policies are being administered and the board’s desire to be involved in that process can blur that line at times (Sharp, Cuban, Dawson, Beni, McAdams, Andero). How far over the
line each party chooses to wander may or may not create tension between them and there the articles, books, and commentaries begin to make suggestions and give advice.

In an article by McAdams (1997) on his study of Pennsylvania superintendents and their boards, he finds that

Clearly, the potential for role conflicts among PA school officials in 1995 is greater than the potential for such conflicts found by Alvey in 1985. Such high levels of disagreement about basic role definitions, if replicated nationally, do not bode well for the future quality of school governance in America’s schools. (McAdams, p. 47)

McAdams continues by stating that in Pennsylvania there are significant differences in role perceptions of superintendent and school board members and that Hentges (1986) found that initially school boards were in control. Superintendents filled clerical roles for the board. Alvey states that findings on this role function had changed by the Hentges study and then had begun to reverse as the “School boards want more of the responsibility in the operation of the school system than they feel they now have” (McAdams, p. 47).

Most superintendents seem pretty clear in their perception of the major source of conflict with the school board: the attempt of school boards to micromanage and become inappropriately involved in administration rather than limiting their role to policy formation. (Norton et al, p. 35)

McCurdy states that Hentges also found that educational governance has become increasingly politicized over the past several decades. When school boards are elected with a “mandate” because there is true competition for a seat, this “contributes to a predisposition on the part of the school board to resist superintendent control” (McCurdy, 1992, pp. 11-12). McCurdy stresses that the textbook definition of the roles of the superintendent and the school board will never be easily defined or regulated and that there should be flexibility in those
roles (McCurdy, pp. 12-13). AASA’s 10-year “Study of the American School Superintendency,” published in 1992, says that during the 1980’s and early 1990’s, the policy making pendulum has swung back and forth between the superintendent and school board, reflecting the fact that education leaders and theoreticians disagree about what constitutes policy making and what constitutes management. (McCurdy, p. 16)

McCurdy, McAdams and others point out the continuing conflict of role definition for the superintendent and the board. In the studies by Seder, Quigley, and Glass this continuing saga is addressed in the Northeast, in two sister states to New Hampshire as well as across the nation.

In her 1991 study of the separation of responsibilities between school board members and superintendents in Connecticut, Marlene Seder sent out a single survey to both superintendents and school board members. The purpose of her research was “to determine whether the perceptions of board members and superintendents agree or disagree regarding who decides and who should decide issues across four Areas of Governance: Administration, Financial Management, Personnel, and Curriculum (Alvey and Underwood, 1985)” (Seder, 1991, p. 4). Seder intended to determine how the responsibility for decision-making in each of these four areas was perceived to be divided between superintendents and school boards. The survey did have questions in it designated for superintendents only or school board members only, but each party knew what the other party was being asked to consider. Her rate of return from school board members was 66% and from superintendents was 49%.

Her findings with respect to the research questions were that there was a significant difference between how board members and superintendents perceived their responsibilities with respect to administration. Therefore, this is
an area where superintendent-school board conflict is more likely to occur. She found that in districts with larger enrollments, both the superintendent and the schools felt that the superintendent should have more responsibility in decision-making regarding personnel and financial management. Interestingly enough, there were no significant differences in the perceptions of school board members and superintendents when it came to where the responsibility lay for curriculum.

In her summary, Seder finds that the results of the study show that school board members and superintendents perceive that superintendents have and should have more responsibility than board members. Even though that is the perception, board members wanted more responsibility for themselves. She found that significant differences appeared in how administration, personnel, and financial management should be delegated, but not in curriculum. She noted that demographics were reflected in some differences of perceptions. The wealth of the community affected the perceptions of school board members and student enrollment affected the perceptions of superintendents.

In her Summary and Conclusion, Seder concluded, “Connecticut board members and superintendents perceive more responsibility is and should be the superintendent’s in the four areas of governance than board members. No disagreement was found between board members and superintendents” (Seder, p. 144).

This begs the question of Seder’s conclusion that school board members want more responsibility for themselves. There, in itself, is a basis for conflict within the governing body that would affect relations with the superintendent in, perhaps, a subconscious way. This desire to have more responsibility but, at the same time, stating that the division of responsibility is appropriate might
cause internal conflict among board members and create unexpected and unforeseen tension.

In 1997, Edward Quigley did a study of "The perceptions and ideal expectations of Massachusetts school superintendents and school committee members of their roles, relationships, and responsibilities," This study was a follow-up of a 1975 study by L. D. Lynch. Quigley's purpose was to determine if there were any differences in current perceptions and ideal expectations from Lynch's study almost 20 years earlier. Quigley sent out a questionnaire to every superintendent with two copies to be given to two school board members. These copies included a stamped addressed envelope so that no one ever saw the answers on anyone else's survey.

Quigley found that school governance continued to be a shared responsibility between the board and superintendent. At the same time, he found that there had been a significant change in the make-up of the school committee in general since 1975. In 1991, women made up almost half of school board membership, the board had a slightly higher educational level, and boards had grown in size in single community districts.

Quigley also found a significant change in the superintendent profile. The percentage of female superintendents had grown from less than one percent in 1975 to almost ten percent in 1991. In 1991 superintendents were also older with a drop in those superintendents under 45 years old dropping from just under 33 percent 20 percent in 1991. These superintendents were better educated with twenty percent more holding doctorates in 1991 than in 1975.

Significant differences were found in five of eight categories of perceptions of roles, etc., explored: budget, communication, management skills,
professionalism, and superintendent-school board interaction. In ideal expectations, there were three areas of significant differences: school board internal interaction, school board-superintendent interaction, and superintendent-school board interaction.

In the area of communication, school board members felt that the superintendents did not keep them well informed. Superintendents felt that was not the case, that school board members were well informed in the areas in which they had responsibility. This misunderstanding of the roles, etc. of each party was apparent in Lynch's study as well in 1975. He had suggested that boards and superintendents meet regularly to discuss roles, etc., but this was not taking place and the problem continued. It seems that there was agreement that this type of meeting would resolve the situation, but that no one was doing it (Quigley, 1993, p. 111).

Quigley's follow-up of Lynch's study shows that there can be statistically significant differences in the arena of school boards and superintendents over time. In Massachusetts, this study illustrated the accepted change in society of more women in executive positions and on community service boards. It also indicates that the issue of role, etc., delineation remains a problem even after the Lynch's study made recommendations that were agreed upon by participants as a reasonable remedy.

Returning for another look at the AASA's ten-year study in 2000, it is clear to see that the subject of school board superintendent relations remains at the forefront of the discussion of the roles of these parties. Chapter 5 of the study is devoted to this area.
This study claims that the trend of relations between school boards and their superintendents continued from the 1940s as those of the superintendent viewing the board as “interest groups primarily involved in setting general policy” (Glass, 2000, p. 53). This status continued in most school districts into the 1990s, with the exception of districts in which “board members began to be more intrusive into what had been the traditional domain of the superintendency. Often, these efforts on the part of the boards brought about conflict and instability (Carter and Cunningham, 1997)” (Glass, 2000, p. 53). Even so, Glass et al. go on to predict that the partnership of policy maker-administrator of policy will continue into the future.

Glass et al. continued by discussing power struggles between superintendents and school boards. “Many authors cite the differing job expectations held by boards and superintendents as the root cause of most conflicts” (Glass, 2000, p. 54). They went on to draw from McCurdy (1992) that it is likely that a majority of power struggles between boards and superintendents occur when some outside group pressures the board for an action that violates the best interest of the district as perceived by the superintendent. (Glass, 2000, p. 54)

Glass et al. aligned with most of the literature in that tensions between superintendents and school boards arose most frequently when there was no clear demarcation of roles. This was reiterated in Quigley’s repeat of Lynch’s study as well as Seder’s work.

Krysiak (2002) brings up the problem of high turnover rates for both superintendents and school boards as being a major issue in education today. This creates ever shifting priorities on the part of boards and loss of job security for superintendents making the position less desirable for building
administrators to consider. The time spent by the superintendent “Nurturing and communicating with school board members, . . . leaves little time working with staff in fulfilling the mission and vision of the school district” (p. 18). She goes on to draw from Price (2001) and states that “many superintendents are more concerned about developing a collaborative and workable relationship with their boards rather than adhering to the policy-administration divide.” She moves on to discuss the Goodman et al. study of 1997, where it is found that “Too much time is expended at meetings dealing with conflicts and little time is spent on educational issues” (p. 19).

Paul Houston (2001) writes, in a short Phi Delta Kappan Online Article, about the job of the superintendent being a “calling.”

There are a number of reasons why people are not interested in becoming superintendents. They see the “lightning rod” aspect of the job, and they choose not to do it. The superintendency is a job fraught with public criticism, mixed with private moments of triumph. Superintendents are sometimes abused and other times blamed. Expectations are high and often unrealistic. (p. 1)

Cindy Krantz (2004) lists superintendent pay as a primary factor in the difficulty with recruiting. She goes on to remark on high stress, low rewards, changing expectations, increased pressure all as contributing factors to a nationwide shortage of applicants for the positions.

With all the shortcomings of the job and the reasons to avoid it altogether, coupled with the issues of working smoothly with a school board, it is clear that the status of the superintendency is troublesome.

Thomas E. Glass wrote a series of Issue Papers for the Education Commission of the States from August 2001 to May 2002: “Superintendent Leaders Look at the Superintendency, School Boards and Reform” (July 2001),
"The Superintendent Crisis: A Review by Search Consultants" (August 2001), "State Education Leaders View the Superintendent Applicant Crisis" (September 2001), and "School Board Presidents and Their View of the Superintendency." In the first of these articles, Glass refers to his earlier study with Brunner and Bjork (2000), which reported "troubling conditions besetting the superintendency. Such troubling conditions include a large number of insignificant, yet time consuming, demands placed on the superintendent’s time, a third of board members not being well-qualified and problems with finding adequate fiscal and human resources" (Glass, July 2001, p. 1). Glass goes on to list key information given by superintendents in the study. He states that ninety-three percent of the superintendents have a collaborative relationship with their school board and that 88% feel that their board is effective, but only 30% of the superintendents feel that the present model of school governance should continue in its present form. Fifty-two percent felt that it needed serious restructuring and 16% of the superintendents felt that the current system needed to be completely replaced with something else.

In his second Issue Paper "The Superintendent Crisis: A Review by Search Consultants," Glass finds that applicant pools are decreasing in size and quality. The consultants cited several actions that would improve the applicant pools: less board micro-management, transportable retirement systems, better quality boards, higher salaries and benefits, and more positive media coverage among others. They also remarked that applicants were strong in communication, community relationships and leadership skills and weak on instructional leadership and financial management skills. In his third Issue Paper (September 2001) again on the applicant crisis, Glass found that state officers concurred with
the recognition of an applicant pool crisis, and that the applicants were less qualified. State officials suggested that higher pay, portable pensions, community support and paid internships would help to alleviate the problem. State school officers also agreed with a need to restructure school governance.

In his Issue Paper of May 2002, which was the view from the school board chair of the situation, Glass reported that in 2000-2001, 2,096 school districts initiated superintendent searches. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed reported a turnover rate of three or more superintendents in the past ten years, over two-thirds of departing superintendents either retired or voluntarily moved to another district, 15.5% were not renewed or bought out, and in more than half the time an interim superintendent was hired before a permanent replacement was sought. One-third of Board chairs claimed that their board worked well with the superintendent. Sixty percent felt that they worked well "most" of the time. More than 90% of the respondents believed that there was a clear understanding of roles between the board and the current superintendent. Thirty percent stated that they would not run again. Lastly, almost three-quarters (73.7%) felt that there was no need to change the present model of school board governance.

Goodman, Fulbright and Zimmerman (1997, 2000) draw from their studies to write a series of recommendations for school boards and superintendents to follow to improve their collaboration. Their study of five states (Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and Texas) showed a clear correlation between the working relationship of the superintendent and the school board and student achievement. Where school systems were noted as high achievers, there existed good, strong relationships between school boards and their superintendents and the opposite where those relationships were poor. It was
suggested that some changes in law might do well to improve these relationships.

State laws should prohibit school boards from getting involved in day-to-day operations of schools, and require them to focus on what must be done to improve student achievement. School Superintendent, Michigan (Goodman et al. 1997, p. 98)

Role demarcation becomes a critical factor in each of these studies and most of the literature available regarding superintendent-school board relations, sometimes simply because one party feels that it is not a problem and the other party does, and vice versa. Suggestions have been made in several studies on the subject but these recommendations have not been widely acted upon. These tensions, reflected within the superintendent-school board relationship, continue to be covered to this day in just about every journal and in many studies in the area of school governance.

Strand #3 - Major Factors of Influence on School Governance since McCormack’s 1988 Study

Since McCormack’s study of superintendent – school board relations in 1988, much has happened through state and federal legislation and changed in state demographics to influence that relationship (Andero, McNeil, Russo, Spring, DeMitchell & Krysiak, Ziebarth).

Recently, some of the participants responsible for making curriculum policy decisions received great pressure to improve the curriculum at all levels... In response to greater demands in standards and testing. (Andero, 2001, p. 277)

Inroads being made by the state and federal governments into the standard of local control are creating new pressures for school boards and superintendents. These pressures include changes that need to be made regarding programs, curriculum, and safety, to bring these areas into compliance with new legislation,
and in the long run can impact the school system negatively in the area of funds available to the community. McNeil and Andero both discuss these changes. Andero cites politics playing a key part in the changing role of the school board and superintendent. McNeil discusses how the superintendent is losing power and control to court, state, and federal regulations. Ultimately, the school board loses power to educational experts and to the holder of the purse strings of government aid to schools.

Russo brings up the trend across states that more state intervention in low-performing districts is blocking reformer’s efforts to give greater flexibility to local districts. “Respondents also expressed concerns about the diminished trusteeship concept of board service and the growing numbers of special interest representatives who seek election to boards...” (Russo, 1992, p. 12). This erosion of local control creates a school board that must deal with a loss of power, control, and status. Russo comments on the changes in state funding with

... the presence of state funding formulas has erected a mechanism whereby the state controls education at the local level. Local school boards, therefore, assume a problematic function in governance generally and in policymaking in particular. (Russo, p. 154)

This national movement plays itself out in New Hampshire through the Claremont II decision discussed later. In the area of politics, Spring states that during the 1980's and 1990's with the growing concentration of educational policy being made at the state level, state governors moved education to a central focus of their political campaigns. In New Hampshire, the state education funding issue has been the politics of the 1990's due to the Claremont II decision and this issue continues to play a central role in the political rhetoric of the day.
The laws and literature covering some of these influences, those particular to New Hampshire, follow here with explanation for the purpose of clarity and understanding in the reasoning for the significance of this study.

The Official Ballot Law

The New Hampshire Senate Bill No. 2, or the Official Ballot Law, came into existence with its passage in 1995. This law gives towns the option to change the way that the school district is governed from the traditional open meeting format to voting by ballot on Election Day. The traditional open meeting allows interested citizens to attend, as registered voters, a public meeting where they discuss, amend if desired, and vote to pass or not to pass all articles on the school district warrant. These articles are created by the school boards in conjunction with the SAU (and sometimes municipal budget committees) to administer the business of the school district. The primary business of the traditional open meeting is to vote on articles relating to the general operating budget of the school and any bond articles where the school district would be financing large sums of money over time. Under the new Official Ballot Law, interested citizens would be given the opportunity to attend a deliberative session where warrant articles could be discussed and amended before the articles were voted on in the voting booth on election day. (The remaining type of jurisdiction available without a special vote of the legislature today, is that where voters have ceded their right to direct participation to a representative body, usually a city or town council).

In a study completed in February 2000 by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, Douglas Hall and Stephen Knapp found that that towns with larger populations tended to adopt the Official Ballot law more often than
towns of smaller populations. Also, more voters participated in decision-making at the voting booth than at the traditional open meeting. Another finding was that Official Ballot jurisdictions were much less likely to pass bond articles than traditional open meetings districts. A last interesting finding is that Official Ballot jurisdictions were more likely to decrease the requested amount of appropriations presented by the school board than were traditional open meeting jurisdictions. Since the passage of this law in 1995, a change was enacted lowering the traditional two-third majority to pass bond articles to three-fifths because so few school districts were able to reach the supermajority. This change was challenged in court for several years and having finished the appeal process, has been upheld.

This law has had a significant effect on school governance. It requires that the school districts present two budgets to the voters, a proposed budget and a default budget (a budget based upon the previous school year’s funding level only including required increases due to contractual obligations, such as teacher’s contracts). It requires that the budget process start a month earlier (most districts begin working on the next year’s budget in September) to be ready for the required deliberative sessions in the winter. This jump-up in the budget process requires that recommendations for school budgets be made nearly a full year ahead of when they will be put into place. Therefore, the crystal ball aspect of budgeting is even greater under this plan. Hall and Knapp found that deliberative sessions are poorly attended which leads one to conclude that voters are less informed when they mark their ballots in the voting booth. This has required that school boards and superintendents learn to “market” their needs to the community in ways that were unheard of years ago. Flyers, news
articles, coffee klatches, information nights abound. These were not as necessary under the town meeting system, but now are almost required because of the poor attendance at deliberative sessions under Senate Bill 2. The time and effort needed to build materials and set up meetings weighs in on the heavier demands made on both superintendents and school boards since the passage of this bill.

All this plays into making decisions regarding budgets and buildings trickier, less predictable, and therefore, it is more difficult to be accurate to the true needs of the district. Politically, school boards and superintendents have to strive even harder to predict the future, earlier.

The Safe Schools Act

Another law passed in 1995 is the Safe Schools Act. This law assigns two very basic rights to students while at school: the right to be safe, and the right to be in an environment conducive to learning. This act was passed in response to the disturbing national trend of growth in school violence. Under this act, schools were forced to take action to provide for the safety of students. This included the writing of many new policies and the spending of funds on safety measures for the schools and school busses. Items such as metal detectors, locks, mirrors, etc. were brought into play, even video cameras in hallways and on school busses. All of the steps taken to increase the level of safety in the schools required accompanying policy to be written and passed by the local school boards to provide for the proper administration of the new safety devices.

This impacted school boards and superintendents who came together to write and enact policy. Some aspects of the law included timelines for completion and enactment of policy creating a need for additional meetings for boards and superintendents to be in compliance. This has also created more
paperwork for school administrators and superintendents in reporting. It also requires that school boards have more knowledge of what is happening inside their schools.

Claremont I and II

On December 30, 1993, the New Hampshire State Supreme Court rendered a decision in Claremont I on which level of government was responsible for the education of children in the state. They concluded that the Constitution of the State of New Hampshire "imposes a duty" on the state to support public education (DeMitchell et al., p. 92; Claremont School District v. Governor, 1993, Slip Op. p. 4).

Then, the troubled districts pressed on in the courts and on December 17th, of 1997, the New Hampshire State Supreme Court handed down the Claremont II decision. This decision took the responsibility of school funding as defined by what constitutes an "adequate education" away from the local governments and placed it into the hands of the state legislature. The decision, written by Chief Justice C. J. Brock, found that in the second appeal of the original Claremont decision towns were collecting taxes for the education of New Hampshire children in disproportionate amounts and that this disproportionate tax was unconstitutional. The NH State Supreme Court held that the property tax levied to fund education was, by virtue of the State's duty to provide a constitutionally adequate public education, a State tax and as such was disproportionate and unreasonable in violation of part II, article 5 of the New Hampshire Constitution. (Claremont, 1997) This decision threw the existing local structure of school funding into upheaval and created an atmosphere of uncertainty never before experienced by cities and towns across the state.
The legislature enacted a state property tax after considerable debate. Yet, this state property tax is only a portion of the funds needed to be raised to operate the public schools. Towns continue to raise funds beyond the state’s level of “adequacy” through local property taxes.

Due to the nature of the state property tax, some towns became receiving towns and some towns became donor towns where funds were raised in excess of the need of the local school district and distributed to other school districts throughout the state. This new state of school funding influences the local tax rates. School boards and superintendents have had to adjust to this new system and make necessary changes to continue their programs.

**The State Curriculum Frameworks and the NHEIAP**

On the 22nd of June in 1993, The New Hampshire Legislature passed the first legislation that would reach directly into the classroom affecting what was taught, when, and to whom. This law, known as the Statewide Education Improvement and Assessment Program was meant primarily as a school accountability bill. It created statewide assessment testing for the first time. In response to this legislation, throughout the early part of the 1990’s, the State Department of Education formulated the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks. These documents were written by teams of educators, politicians, and laypeople in response to the need to provide some kind of “framework” around which individual school districts could formulate their curricula since New Hampshire was going to begin statewide assessments in grades 3, 6, and 10 in the core subject areas. Although this action was not meant to be the inception of a statewide curriculum in the sense that it spelled out what was to be taught, it did have that effect. All curricula had to be aligned to these new standards for a
school to attain any measure of success in taking these new state assessments. Since the results of statewide assessments are published in the newspapers across the state, political pressure has come to bear on districts to compete for better standings. Ranking of schools according to the results of these assessments has brought a new area of responsibility to the school superintendent and school board. The effect of this action on superintendent – school board relations is yet unmeasured and may be one that would reach into the area of who sets policy for and who governs curriculum decisions. Now again with the reformulation of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), due to the more numerous (grades 3-8) annual assessments required under this act (No Child Left Behind), the Department of Education is formulating individual grade level standards with which school systems must comply in order to be successful and to avoid the penalties involved.

Lastly, in the fall of 2004, the NHEIAP testing was abandoned for a new annual test in grades three through ten (that grade level is still in question). These new tests, known as the NECAPs (New England Consortium Assessment Program) includes the states of Vermont, New Hampshire and Rhode Island as cohorts in a shared, single set of exams in mathematics and language. As the requirements of No Child Left Behind continue to evolve, schools will see further effects of its voluminous text.

No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the largest piece of educational legislation ever created to impact public education (www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov). This is the No Child Left Behind Act, which is
the newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The purpose of this legislation was to advance four key principles:

(1) Accountability for student performance
(2) More flexibility for states, school districts and schools in using federal funds
(3) More options for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds
(4) More use of proven teaching methods.

Katy Anthes, in her report for the Education Commission of the States, writes that the act “both reflects and reinforces a major shift in thinking about the roles and responsibilities of school board members, district superintendents and principals. More and more, school and district leaders are being held responsible for bringing about change and improvement” (Anthes, 2002, p. 1).

The major point of NCLB affecting New Hampshire is the requirement of state educational assessments from grades three through eight and grade ten and that success on these assessments is linked to funding and local control. If a school district opts out of the assessments, it loses all federal education funding. This includes the Title grants such as Title I for the disadvantaged student population. This can represent a significant amount of money in any district. If a district fails to meet the NCLB goals of “Adequate Yearly Progress,” it will eventually fall subject to state control. The school administration can be replaced, teachers can be fired, and even the superintendent is vulnerable. The pressure to meet these goals is immense, particularly since the results of assessments are published in the state papers and made available on the World Wide Web.
This pressure adds to the load currently placed on school boards and superintendents. The Education Commission of the States recommends, "If local leaders are to have a legitimate shot at meeting the requirements of the new federal initiative, state policymakers must address these problems. Toward that end, this report proposes that state leaders (1) enact state policies that create clearer, more specific sets of responsibilities for school boards and superintendents, and (2) create a task force on the effect school boards and superintendents" (Ziebold, 2002 p. 1). Again, this calls back to the work of Goodman, Fulbright and Zimmerman and their recommendation for more clear role development for both school boards and superintendents in the wake of such far-reaching legislative intervention into local school operations.

Anthes states that, "The greater demands and expectations placed on school leaders to raise student achievement will undoubtedly make both recruitment and retention of principals and superintendents an even tougher job than it is today." (Anthes (2002), pg. 1) Clearly, this is reflected in the literature.

**Demographics**

Lastly, the changing demographics of the State of New Hampshire have directly affected each school district in its own way. Some factors include the need for additional space as the student population grows, the need for additional services for students whose first language is other than English, and the high percentage of student turnover during the school year. These factors are all reflected in the United State Census Bureau data between 1990 and 2000 (http://www.uscensus.gov). According to the US Census, one community, Chester, NH, in the southern tier of the state grew forty-one percent in those ten years. The number of multi-lingual households in the southern tier has increased,
particularly in our city school districts. Although this study will be limited to
districts of 2500 or fewer students, some of these multi-lingual families have
moved into districts which have never had an “English as a second language”
student population before. This change, of course, requires new services, even if
it is only for one child, as law requires the services.

**Conclusion**

Each of these new laws deeply impacts school districts in one way or
another. The pressures of the changes and demands on districts come to bear on
the school boards and superintendents on a daily basis and fashion their activity.
It is essential that these two parties work together in concert to meet the
demands of these laws. The question of school board – superintendent relations
has been put to a new test in the past fifteen years.

It seems clear from this history of public administration that we shall
never find a balance of values that will stand indefinitely. Thus, we can
never expect that school board-administrative staff relationships ever will be easily defined or regulated. (Boyd, PSU). (McCurdy, 1992, p. 12)

It . . . is critical that boards and superintendents find a solution to this
problem for the well being of schools and their students. If not, “the needs
of children may be lost in the adult problems and concerns.” (Luvern L.
Cunningham, Ohio State University). (McCurdy, 1992, p.12)
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Description of the Research Design

The purpose of this study was to revisit the 1988 doctoral dissertation of Dr. Philip McCormack and compare the present state of superintendent-school board relations in New Hampshire school districts of 2500 or fewer students to those found in 1988. McCormack's study replicated a study by Dr. Joseph Hentges, *The Politics of Superintendent - School Board Linkages: A Study of Power, Participation, and Control*, sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, begun in 1982, which studied the relationships between superintendents and school boards in school districts with student enrollments of 25,000 or more. The instruments used in this study are the same instruments used in both McCormack's and Hentges' studies. These instruments identify and catalogue personal, situational and contextual variables as they relate to power relations in school governance to answer the research questions:

1. What is the nature of school board-superintendent relations in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire and what changes, if any, have occurred in these relationships during the last fifteen years?

2. How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?
(3) What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

(4) What factors impact upon the school board’s and the superintendent’s respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

This is a descriptive research study. It is designed to gather information relative to the current status of particular phenomena and compare it to the earlier study by Dr. McCormack of 1988.

Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe, ‘what exists’ with respect to variables or conditions in a situation... The methods involved range from the survey which describes the status quo, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, to developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time. (Key, 1997)

“Descriptive studies are frequently utilized in educational research to investigate a little known or unknown territory” (McCormack, 1988, p. 58). The area of interest in this study is no longer little known or uninvestigated in various arenas, but New Hampshire differs from many of these well-investigated areas (such as nationally or in other, more populous states) because it is small and its Yankee character and philosophy of local control is somewhat unique.

As with Hentges and McCormack, this study used a survey research design allowing for the collection of a large quantity of data from a greater population than what otherwise might be possible or convenient. “Survey studies assess the characteristics of whole populations of people or situations” (Key, 1997). Since this study will be using the same instruments as McCormack’s study, the data
gathered from these surveys will provide information that will be immediately comparable to the results from McCormack's surveys of 1988.

The question of validity/reliability of these surveys can be partially addressed through the history of its use. This survey was designed by Dr. Hentges for his national survey (Hentges, 1983) and it was employed again (with minor changes) in 1988 for Dr. McCormack's doctoral research study in New Hampshire. Therefore, for their studies, the make-up and use of the survey proved appropriately valid and reliable.

For this study, the return sample size exceeded the guideline of sixty-percent providing an adequate sample for statistical significance of the target population. Its content revealed the answers to the research questions being asked. Dr. McCormack did a field test in his dissertation. His testing provided a reliable response and that reliability was then transferable to this study for the same survey on the same population. The only variable between the two administrations of the survey was the passage of fifteen years. The obtained results of the survey also appropriately reflect the predicted results. Therefore, it seemed that the survey has continued to prove a reliable and valid instrument for inquiry into the research questions of this study.

As in McCormack's study to “facilitate a phenomenological understanding of superintendent-school board relations and the state of school governance in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire, a qualitative component was included in the design of this study. Qualitative methods provide a research procedure, which promotes an “understanding or an ability to reproduce in one’s own mind the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others” (Bodgan, 1975, p. 14; McCormack, p. 59, 1988).
Questionnaire Development

To compare the data from McCormack’s study and the present day status of superintendent-school board relations, it was necessary to gather data with the same instrument used by McCormack in his 1988 study. The original instruments were designed to gather information from two separate populations: superintendents and school board chairs. Two separate surveys were developed in the Hentges study to deal with the two groups. These two populations were then identified and surveyed. This was necessary due to the specific nature of data needed from each group to answer the research questions. Yet, the two surveys were kept as similar as possible to one another to derive a similar quality of information from each group. The questionnaires used in this study are the same ones used by McCormack and borrowed from Hentges. McCormack fashioned them to reflect the answers needed for the State of New Hampshire and for smaller school districts. The qualitative questionnaires used in this study are the same as those used by McCormack but included several additional questions. (See Appendix I.) These new questions (delineated in the Appendix) provided an opportunity for interviewees to respond directly to the issues facing school boards and superintendents today.

To describe the written questionnaire delivered to superintendents, I will quote directly from McCormack’s 1988 description since the written questionnaire used in this study is identical.

The questionnaire that was administered to the superintendents is one that was initially developed under the sponsorship of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in 1982. Hentges was a research associate involved with this project (p. 90). This survey instrument was developed with the prime focus on maintaining comparability with earlier AASA studies. In addition to information relative to the personal characteristics of superintendents, their
professional experiences, their preparation, and the issues that concern them, the 1982 AASA survey questionnaire was expanded by Hentges and others (e.g., AASA staff, Education Research Service staff). Items were included that would generate information relative to superintendent–school board/community relationships, school district data, and perceptions regarding conflicts and control issues. (McCormack, p. 60)

In the School Board Questionnaire, there are four sections: a section on the characteristics of the person answering the questionnaire such as length of service, the person’s age, etc. There is a section on Electoral Conditions, which address the questions about the climate of the town and how the person was elected to the board. A third section asks questions about the school board and its relationship with the superintendent and the power structure between them. Lastly, there is a section on the board’s relationship with the community at large. A copy of this survey is included in the Appendix D (School Board Questionnaire).

The Superintendent Questionnaire is divided into sections reflecting the differing information needed to answer the research questions. In the written questionnaire that was administered to the superintendents, there are only three sections. The variables surveyed with this instrument included personal characteristics, superintendent interaction, and community interaction. It differs primarily in that it does not have a section on electoral conditions, as that does not apply to the superintendent. A copy of McCormack’s written questionnaire is included in Appendix E (Superintendent Questionnaire).

The limitations of written survey research were addressed by Hentges in his study and reiterated by McCormack. Pulling directly from McCormack’s reasoning and justification:
He drew upon the expertise of the AASA Educational Research Service, and the Polimetrics Laboratory (a research support group located in the Department of Political Science of the Ohio State University) to assist in the validation of the survey instruments. Hentges field-tested and evaluated both survey instruments to identify mechanical or procedural difficulties in gathering the information (Hentges, p. 93). (McCormack, p. 61)

Field-testing of the surveys for this study was not done as McCormack had completed field-testing on this identical instrument for his study. Since it was necessary to repeat McCormack's surveys exactly as they had been administered in 1988, there was no obliging reason to do so.

**Cover Letters**

In his original study, McCormack had sought and received the endorsement of the New Hampshire School Board Association and the New Hampshire School Administrator's Association. Letters were sent soliciting support for this repeat study. Both Betsy Miller-Jones of the New Hampshire School Boards Association and Dr. Mark Joyce of the New Hampshire School Administrators Association were able to provide a letter of support to send with the cover letter and the surveys. Copies of all four cover letters are contained in Appendix B (Letters of Support) and Appendix C (Cover Letters). Contact was made with Dr. Richard Goodman, who was the Executive Director of the NHSAA in 1988 regarding this study. He expressed interest in seeing the results of the repeat study and expressed his support for continued study in this area.

**Sampling Procedures**

The purpose of the study was to repeat and compare data from 2004 to that of the 1988 study of Dr. Philip McCormack. This study, as did McCormack's study, researched information from New Hampshire school districts of 2500
students or less. Districts numbering 2500 students or less were gleaned from a master list of all school districts in the state list (New Hampshire Department of Education, 2004).

A mailing list for the superintendents of the chosen districts was generated from names and addresses of SAU offices listed in the spreadsheet. The New Hampshire School Boards Association provided the names and addresses of school board chair people by generating label sheets to use for the mailing.

Questionnaires were sent to the superintendents and school board chairs that had one or more districts with an enrollment of 2500 or less. The identified sample consisted of 63 superintendents. One hundred and forty-four school board chairs were identified and surveyed.

**Data Collection**

As in McCormack’s study, each participant identified in the sample received a survey packet consisting of the following materials:

1. A cover letter from the New Hampshire School Boards Association or the New Hampshire School Administrators Association;
2. A letter of introduction from this researcher explaining the purpose and significance of the project and requesting their cooperation with the study;
3. A superintendent questionnaire or school board questionnaire;
4. A stamped, addressed reply envelope for the return of the completed survey.

The primary packets were mailed in February 2004. The sample size of returns did not meet the sixty-percent criteria, so a follow-up packet of the same contents
was mailed again to non-respondents in March 2004 at which point the returns exceeded sixty-percent for both surveys.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data**

Data from both the superintendent and the school board member survey instruments were aggregated and processed using Microsoft Excel. The Chi-square ($\chi^2$) statistical analysis formula was used to test for significance. A probability standard of $p < .05$ (or one in twenty chance of occurrence) was adopted for the purpose of this study. "A probability is a percent stated in decimal form, and refers to the likelihood of an event occurring" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 21). A probability of less than .05 was chosen for use in this study as it is a study of the social sciences which is a less exact science which would require a more restrictive probability such as less than .01.

**Participant Observation**

In following with the work of Dr. McCormack, interviews were conducted with a number of superintendents and their respective school board chairpersons. These interviews, which followed the same protocols for each, were conducted using the interview instruments from McCormack’s study with the addition of several questions designed to prompt the discussion of relevant contemporary phenomena. The questions were directly tied in to the research questions and similar to many on the written survey, but they were presented in a mixed order so as to not lead or skew the responses. These instruments and the interview protocol guidelines are included in the Appendices H and I. As stated in McCormack’s study:
The primary purpose for this activity was to make personal contact with superintendents and school board members that would result in an open, comprehensive discussion of the existing superintendent-school board relationships and factors that impact on this relationship. (McCormack, p. 64)

McCormack did not present an analysis of the data from the interviews in his study. The information used from the interviews was presented in prose as anecdotal evidence. The primary function of the interviews appears to be what was quoted above from his study to “make personal contact... that would result in an open, comprehensive discussion. . . .” (McCormack, p. 64)

Therefore, the data for this study were transcribed and used anecdotally as well to address the research questions. The results were not codified or charted in any way as McCormack did not do that in his original study making it impossible to do a direct comparison. So again here, as in McCormack’s study, the interviews were as quoted above, “to make personal contact... that would result in an open, comprehensive discussion” (McCormack, p. 64). Quotes are taking from comments and answers to the survey interview questions to highlight various aspects of superintendent-school board relationship as experienced by these eight participants.

The process for the interviews was contact by letter and included a consent form to return in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope. (See Appendix G) After a positive reply, superintendents and school board chairs were contacted by phone and interviews were arranged to take place at a place comfortable to the interviewee. These were often SAU offices, Dunkin’ Donuts, or participant homes. The interview protocols
were read out loud to each participant and then each question was read in the same order. Interviews were tape-recorded. Interviewees were giving unlimited time to answer the questions. Tapes were then transcribed and used for anecdotal evidence of participant responses to questions formed from the research questions of this study. Since the interview sample size was small, the researcher felt that it would be difficult to derive any significant findings from these interviews. The information garnered had value as personal experiences in a variety of educational settings. The data were used to highlight aspects of the superintendent – school board relationship particular to the different types of SAUs, superintendent styles, and school board chairs represented.

**Participant Selection**

To follow McCormack’s study and utilize both data from written surveys and interviews, arrangements were made for interviews. For the purposes of this study, five pairs were to be chosen; one pair (superintendent/school board chairperson) from each of the five geographic divisions of School Administrative Units (SAU’s) around the state. Therefore the criteria used to choose those pairs that were to be interviewed differed slightly from the original study. Instead, these were the following criteria:

1. **Geographical Distribution.** One superintendent and one school board chair who both returned an answered survey from each of the five statewide SAU geographic areas.

2. **Type of SAU demographics.** The researcher attempted to find, among the pairs of superintendents and school board chairs, different combinations of SAU types: single town with a single board, multiple towns with
multiple boards, co-operative school districts, Senate Bill 2 school districts, extremely small districts versus larger districts, poor districts versus affluent districts, rapidly growing districts versus stable districts.

(3) Questionnaire response. The researcher also considered the responses of the participants on their written questionnaires regarding leadership style of superintendents and the reaction of his/her board to that style.

In the end, those districts from which the researcher received completed surveys and whether or not both a superintendent and a school board chair would submit to an interview primarily drove the choice of district. In one of the five unions, this researcher was unable to enlist the cooperation of any school board chairs where both the superintendent and some school board chairs had responded. Therefore, only four interview sets were completed.

For the other four SAU districts, there was also great limitation on the number of superintendents and school board chairs who both responded to the survey. After filtering out those pairs, a variety of SAU make-up types were chosen to allow for different experiences on the part of superintendent and school board chairs. As there were only four pairs to be interviewed this left the range to these types:

(1) single town, single board make-up of SAU,
(2) multiple towns, multiple boards make-up of SAU,
(3) multiple towns, multiple boards but where central office staff shared responsibility for the various boards, and lastly,
(4) multiple towns, single board.

With these four types, it was not necessary to make choices based upon the survey responses as these two criteria (a matching superintendent and board
chair, and a variety of SAU types) limited the available interviewees adequately enough to make the necessary choice of whom to interview.

**Interviews**

The interview participants were contacted through the spring and interviews took place in May and June 2004. All of the participants were cooperative and appeared eager to share their thoughts. Several participants did ask again for confirmation that their identities would remain anonymous.

At each interview, the researcher read a statement explaining the interview process and reiterating the anonymity feature of the process. A copy of this statement is in Appendix H. Standardized, open-ended interviews were conducted. The same open-ended questions were asked of each participant. The open-ended question, for the purpose of this research can be defined as one where the respondent is free to choose how to answer the question, (i.e., S/he doesn't select "yes" or "no" or provide a numeric rating, etc.); “…this approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared” (McNamara, 2004). The interview questions were read to each participant in the same order and the participants were permitted to respond freely.

Both of the interview questionnaires are located in Appendix I. The new questions added to the School Board Questionnaire are numbers 16-19. Those added to the Superintendent Questionnaire are numbers 14 through 18. These questions are separated from the others by a line of asterisks and are at the end of both sets of questions.

With the permission of each participant, the interviews were audio taped. Interview times ran from twenty to eighty minutes.
Limitations of the Study

Survey research continues to be a mainstay of modern research. This type of research allows the researcher to reach a large number of respondents, include greater amounts of data, and thereby including a significantly higher percentage of the total population of a sample in a shorter period of time, than personal interviews can conveniently allow. Of course, any survey will be affected by the respondent’s personal prejudices and biases or the simple fact that the respondent’s recall may not be that accurate.

Limitations affecting this particular survey include the willingness of superintendents and school board chairs to take the time to respond to the survey. Also, the list of school board chairs provided by the New Hampshire School Boards Association was not completely up-to-date and the researcher was not able to make contact with a very small number of school board chairs. The New Hampshire School Boards Association rightly protects its list for privacy reasons and did not give me other contact information such as phone numbers and email addresses. The Superintendent list provided online by the Department of Education was also not completely up-to-date, but since SAUs are publicly listed, it was much simpler to fill in any gaps in information.

The surveys were long and this limited the number of participates willing to complete and return them. Also, as the survey was circulated a few months before school board elections, some out-going board chairs may have chosen not to reply as well. Despite these limitations, an adequate number of completed surveys were returned to reach statistical significance.

Interview data also have their limitations but it also has its advantages. Although it will allow the researcher to observe the pitch of the voice, the
comfort level, facial expressions, and side comments of the participant, giving more insight into the participant than a written survey can, it also relies heavily on the personal integrity, honesty, and on the memory of the participant. The process of interviewing is time consuming and therefore tends to limit the sample of participants to those who can be accessed and interviewed within the parameters of the research timeline.

Studies including both quantitative and qualitative methods are often used together and

...should be. In survey research, for example, it is common not only to prepare a closed-ended (e.g., multiple-choice) questionnaire for people to answer in writing, but also to conduct open-ended personal interviews with a random sample of the respondents. Descriptive statistics are sometimes used to provide quantitative detail in an otherwise qualitative study. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 443)

Elliot Eisner goes on to say that

...there is no best method. It all depends on what you are studying and what you want to find out. If you want to find out what the majority of the American people think about a particular issue, survey research which relies heavily on quantitative design in picking your sample, designing and pretesting your instrument, and analyzing the data is best. If you want to know about the process of change in a school and how the various school members experience change, qualitative methods will do a better job. Without a doubt there are certain questions and topics that the qualitative approach will not help you with, and the same is true of quantitative research. (Eisner, 1991. p. 204)

Limitations of replication studies not only include the limitations assigned generally to both qualitative and quantitative studies but an additional layer is added. That layer is the limitations of the study being replicated. “Many of these flaws are inherent in the study’s design and implementation and cannot be rectified (Geringer, 1998, p. 6). Therefore, the replicating researcher must consider this in the repetition study and attempt to not repeat the past without invalidating the comparison.
Limitations exist in the ability to generalize from qualitative studies in particular, but the effort of replicating any study is important because of the new study’s ability to validate or invalidate previous data.

A limitation of qualitative research is that there is seldom methodological justification for generalizing the findings of a particular study. While this limitation also applies to many quantitative studies, it is almost inevitable given the nature of qualitative research. Because of this, replication of qualitative studies is even more important than it is in quantitative research. (Fraenkel & Wallen 2003, p. 441)

Since this study was limited to small school districts in the state of New Hampshire, it would be questionable to draw any far-reaching generalizations. It did, however, provide valuable information to those who are involved in the academic climate of the state and those whose actions can have an impact on that climate. Fraenkel & Wallen go on to quote from Elliot Eisner about generalizing and to discuss that

In qualitative studies, on the other hand, the researcher may also generalize, but it is much more likely that any generalizing to be done will be by interested practitioners – by individuals who are in situations similar to the one(s) investigated by the researcher. It is the practitioners, rather than the research, who judges the applicability of the researcher’s findings and conclusions, who determines whether the researcher’s findings fit his or her situation. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 441)

Therefore, the reader for her own benefit may interpret and generalize from the information found here.
CHAPTER 4

SUPERINTENDENT AND SCHOOL BOARD SURVEYS

Introduction

This chapter will compare data from Dr. McCormack’s 1988 study to the data collected under the present study. McCormack used the data from his research to assist him in determining the status of superintendent-school board relations in 1988. His research provides a definitive baseline on which to compare the current data of fifteen years later.

What follows this introduction is a comparison of the data from 1988 and 2004 for those same questions. McCormack’s review of the literature at the time, led him to contradictory points of view regarding the relations between superintendents and school board chairs. Some points of view were that the superintendent was the dominating factor in the decision-making process and school boards were simply the superintendent’s “rubber stamp.” A contrary view pointed toward shared power between the superintendent and school board. Along with that was the point of view that superintendents and school boards worked in “harmony” with one another to serve their stakeholders. Lastly, another perspective brought forth by McCormack leaned toward the idea that role behavior and the tendency of the superintendent to control decision-making had much to do with the power structure that existed in the town.

This study will only compare the findings of the previous study of fifteen years ago to the findings of today and in doing so, hope to shed some light on the
possible effects that changes in education may have had on the nature of superintendent-school board relations in districts of 2500 or less. An analysis of the change, or lack of change, in personal, situational and contextual variables affecting school governance in these districts found through the survey data is presented in this chapter.

Nature of the Responding Samples

As in McCormack’s study, two separate samples were identified and included in this study. The first sample is that of the chairperson of school boards in school districts with student enrollments of 2,500 or fewer students. The second sample is that of the superintendents of school districts in New Hampshire with fewer than 2,500 students.

Surveys were returned from 88 school board chairpersons and 44 superintendents. The numbers reflect a return rate of 61.1% and 69.8% respectively. In McCormack’s study, the respective rate of return among school board chairs was 67.9%, and for superintendents, it was 85.1%.

Profile of New Hampshire School Board Chairpersons

Data were disaggregated from those school chairpersons who returned surveys. Categories such as personal characteristics, electoral conditions, school board-superintendent interaction, and community interaction were laid side-by-side with the corresponding data from McCormack’s study to determine if there had been any changes of significance in the type, age, length of service, etc. of the 2004 school board chair versus that of 1988. (For the purposes of discussion, as in McCormack 1988, school board chairpersons will be referred to as school board members in discussions.)
The surveys included four sections of questions regarding various aspects of serving on the school board: Personal Characteristics, Electoral Conditions, School Board-Superintendent Interaction, and Community Interaction. These four sections, in combination, attempted to answer the research questions:

1. How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

2. How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

3. What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

4. What factors impact upon the school board’s and the superintendent’s respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

The data to answer these research questions are co-mingled throughout the answers to the questions of the surveys. The tables that follow are not reflective of the order in which the questions appear in the respective surveys due to the fact that it was not desirable for the survey questions to lead the respondent in any direction while answering. This chapter begins with an examination of the data from the school board surveys, moves into some comparisons of the data between the school board surveys and the superintendent surveys, moves to presenting the remaining data from the superintendent surveys, and finally

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presents some comparisons with data previously presented with the superintendent survey data. The presentation of data follows the same process of logic that Dr. McCormack used in his study, although here the reader will find the tables directly linked to their survey question and research questions. This was not done in the structure of Dr. McCormack’s study, but is done here to produce clarity, focus, and ease of referencing.

Answers to some survey questions are relevant to different aspects of several different research questions at the same time.

Personal Characteristics

Personal Characteristics is the title of the first section of both questionnaires. The first four questions of the school board questionnaire address a number of questions about the person filling it out.

The tables that follow in this section compare the school board member of 1988 to the school board member of 2004. From this comparison, the reader can also extrapolate how these changes may or may not affect the answers to the remaining research questions.

As can be seen, there are a few differences in the level of education of the school board members. Going down through the figures in Table 1, it becomes evident that the number of members who have studied at the postgraduate level has increased. The table shows a more than 8% increase in the numbers of members who hold a Master’s degree and in an increase of 2.7% in members who hold a Doctoral degree. The number of board members whose highest level of education was graduating from high school has decreased by 6.8%. Therefore, it would seem that our boards are becoming better educated. Yet, Chi² does not indicate that this shift has occurred at the statistically significant level.
Table 1
School Board Chair Level of Education
(School Board Survey Question No 3/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Board Member Level of Education</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from high school</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>-6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree (law, medicine)</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical or trade school</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N = 86
Chi Square 0.06

The occupation of school board members has seen a significant shift over the past fifteen years. There has been a 22.3% increase in members who come from a professional or technical occupation, which now reflects well over 50% of the sampled members. Also, there are significantly fewer unemployed members such as homemakers or retired persons. Other areas experienced only small shifts in population by comparison. These two areas, the “Professional/technical” category going up and “Other” category going down indicated that seats on school boards today are occupied by more people from the workplace and more people in white collar positions. Interestingly, this is not accompanied by an increase in the number of people who hold a college degree.
Table 2

Occupations of School Board Members
(School Board Survey Question No. 4/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations of School Board Members</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/technical</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manager/proprietor</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/sales</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsman/foreman</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative (skilled worker, artisan)</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service worker/laborer</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (housewife, retired)</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>-12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N=86  Chi Square 0.00

The Context of the School Board Position – Electoral Conditions, Board-Superintendent Interactions, and Community Interactions

Length of time served on a school board among this sample indicates small shifts in differing lengths of time but not a change of significance over the fifteen years period, which elapsed between studies. This indicates that overall, most people are choosing to serve approximately the same number of terms as they did in 1988. The mean has changed by only .4 years of service.

School board members generally have some purpose in running for school board. In comparing the purposes of those who ran in the 1988 study versus those who are running today, there is not a significant difference. Back in 1988, people ran mostly to advocate for minor change. That figure has risen somewhat in the 2004 sample but not significantly. [Still, it should be noted that with approximately 30% (κ=0.17) of members desiring to be on the school board to
bring about major change, the question of whether or not these advocates for major change achieve their goal while sitting on the board would be an interesting question.

Table 3

Length of School Board Member Service as Members
(School Board Survey Question No. 5/Research Questions nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st term</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd term</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd term</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th term</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>-4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th term</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th term</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th term</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th term</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th term</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th term</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106 N=88

p<.05 Significant in 1-6 yr terms Chi Square 0.28
Table 4

Extent of Board Member Advocacy for Change
(School Board Survey Question No. 8/Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Advocacy</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for major change</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for minor change</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for maintaining status quo</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106 N=88

p < .05 Chi Square 0.17

In the following table, there is a comparison of the scale of competition for open seats on the school board between 1988 and 2004. This table shows a significant absence of competition for open seats (-18.8%), a significant increase (+32.8%) in open positions that draw a subdued level of competition, and a drop of 13.9% in spirited competition for seats (X=0.00).

This significant shift in competition indicates that there is more competition for seats today than there was fifteen years ago and that although there is more competition, it is of the subdued variety rather than spirited. Whereas when there was competition in 1988, it was often more spirited than it is now as indicated by a -13.9% shift.
Table 5

Board Member Perceptions of Degree of Competitiveness for Available Board Positions
(School Board Survey Question No. 7 / Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Competitiveness</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence of competition</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>-18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdued competition</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirited competition</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>-13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 105  N = 88  
p < .05  Chi Square 0.00

New Hampshire small towns have varying power structures. In 1988, McCormack found that in the towns of small, rural school districts the perception of board members was that there was generally no power structure related to schools at all or if there was power, it was dispersed among many individuals or groups. In 2004, we find no significant change in this perception (p > .05). Most districts do not experience a great deal of power in the hands of a few people or a few sharing groups.
Table 6

Board Member’s Perception of the Existing Power Structure in Their Community
(School Board Survey Question No. 40/Research Questions No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power structure consists of one, or only a few people</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several groups of equal power compete for control important decisions</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no single power structure: power is dispersed among many individuals or groups</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no power structure related to school issues</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>-5.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05
N = 105 N=87
Chi Square 0.19

In observing the character of a small, rural school district along with power structures, it is of interest to note the interactions that board members have with other groups or organizations in the community. The question of influence of ideas comes into play in this arena of contact. In 1988, the sample returned indicated that the majority of members had rare contact with representatives of other community groups (63.5%). This has remained largely unchanged over the years. Today’s figure of 61.9% indicates that school board members still have little contact with representatives of other community groups or organizations but that those members that rarely or never have contact does show a statistically significant drop indicating an increase in school board contact with community groups or organizations since 1988.
Table 7

Frequency of Board Member Contact with Representatives of Community Groups or Organizations
(School Board Survey Question No. 26/Research Questions Nos. 1-4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Board member Contact with Representatives of Community Groups or Organizations</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>-7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 104  N = 84  p < .05  Chi Square = 0.02

Whether or not a board member should take action as part of the decision-making process to include her sense of what the community wants versus what the townspeople may prefer, is an interesting question. In 1988, the vast majority (76.2%) of members indicated that when making a decision their orientation was to combine their judgment with that of the community in a given situation. In 2004, this figure has grown to 86.9%. The Chi$^2$ in Table 8 indicates that this is significant to a <.05 threshold. It can be seen here that board members feel more strongly in 2004 that a combination of their best judgment coupled with input from the community is the preferred decision-making style.
Table 8

Board Members Perceptions of Their Role Orientation/Tension within Their District
(School Board Survey Question No. 26/Research Questions Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Behavior</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The board member should do what</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the public wants him/her to do even</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if it is not his/her own personal preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The board member should use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his/her judgment regardless of what others want him/her to do</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer a combination depending on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the give situation</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=104  N=84  Chi Square 0.01

If one is to consider the idea that if school board members don’t interact
much with other groups or organizations in town (Table 7) and they consider
their individual opinions as valuable or more valuable at times than their
constituent stakeholders (Table 8), then one might believe that there would exist
a certain amount of tension in the community between the school board and the
stakeholders. In 1988, the majority (67.9%) of school board respondents indicated
that they believed that there was little conflict/tension within their district.
Today, despite all the changes in education, the data indicate that there is a small
increase in the percentage of respondents who indicated no conflict/tension, but
this small amount is not considered statistically significant (N=.08). This may
possibly be a sampling result.
Table 9

Board Members’ Perceptions of the Amount of Conflict/Tension within Their District
(School Board Survey Question No. 31/Research Question No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Members’ Perceptions of the Amount of Conflict/Tension Within Their District</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very great conflict/tension</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerable conflict/tension</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little conflict/tension</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No conflict/tension</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106  N = 84  p < .05  Chi Square 0.08

Along with school board members’ perceptions of the community and their relation to it, the question was asked about how the school board member perceives how the community feels about the board and its actions. In 1988, the results of this question indicated that most board members felt that the community was not very critical or only somewhat critical of its decisions. Although the 2004 sample indicated a slight rise in the number of board members who felt that the community was somewhat critical (6.9%) over not very critical (-7.4%), the findings do not indicate a statistically significant change (\( N = 0.1 \)).

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Table 10

Board Members’ Perceptions of Community Reactions to Board Actions (School Board Survey Question No. 30/Research Question No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Reaction</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very critical</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat critical</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very critical</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>-7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all critical</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106  N=86  p < .05  Chi Square 0.10

“One factor that contributes to the potential conflict between the board and the community is the frequency with which the board takes a stand that does not coincide with the perceived community values and interests” (McCormack, p. 84). Table 11 compares the answer to that question in 1988 with that of today. Although the change in percentages does not appear to be significant from the raw data, the Chi² indicates that they are.

In 1988, the respondents indicated that they rarely (.9%) took a stand that was unpopular with the community. That figure has risen to 4.7% in 2004.
Table 11

Frequency with which the Board Takes a Stand that is Unpopular with the Community
(School Board Survey Question No. 37/Research Question Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost Always</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N = 86

p < .05 Chi Square 0.00

To clarify the commitment that board members felt toward the elected office as representatives of their constituents, Table 12 charts out the responses to the question of whether or not or to what extent school board members are conflicted by their responsibility to the public and to the school administration at the same time.

In 1988, the respondents indicated that there was conflict but that it was occasional (50%) or rare (38.7%) in most cases. The results of the same question to board members in 2004 indicates no significant change in this level of conflict with 55.8% respondents indicating occasional conflict and 37.2% indicating rare conflict.
Table 12
Frequency with which Board members feel Conflict between Their Responsibility to the Public and to the School Administration (School Board Survey Question No. 32/Research Questions Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency With Which Board Members Feel Conflict Between Their Responsibility to the Public and to the School Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106  N = 86  
Chi Square = 0.40

The school board members' value of community participation in district decision-making will provide a window into the reasoning behind some of the choices school board members make when casting a vote. If the value were high, the board member would be more likely to vote in accordance with the wishes of the community, if the value were low, the school board member would be more likely to vote in accordance with his/her own values and opinions. Here, school board members were asked to consider whether or not their opinion about the value of community participation in decision-making has changed over the last ten years prior to the respective survey, and if so how.

In 1988, school board members indicated that in the previous ten years prior to the survey that 48.1% of them felt that community participation in decision-making had grown more important over the period. 36.8% felt it had remained the same. Few respondents indicated that it had grown less important over that period.
In 2004, school board members voted that in the previous ten years prior to the survey that 56.2% of them felt that community participation had become more important over the period whereas fewer respondents (34.2%) felt that it had remained the same. This indicates a strong statement that the participation of the community in decision-making has grown more significant as time passes.

Table 13

Value of Community Participation in School District Decision-Making
(School Board Survey Question No. 33/Research Questions Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Importance over previous Period to survey</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More important</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less important</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same importance</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>-5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N = 73 p < .05 Chi Square 0.01

Board members were also queried regarding whether or not they were favorably or less favorably inclined to view individual citizen participation in the decision-making process as valuable. The results of this survey do not indicate a significant change in this viewpoint between 1988 and 2004.

In 1988, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they viewed citizen input into the decision-making process favorably (76.4%). In 2004, this figure rose to 85.5% and fewer respondents were likely to ignore (take it or leave it) comments from citizens.
Table 14
Board Members Views on Citizen Participation in the Decision-Making Process
(School Board Survey Question No. 34/Research Questions Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Citizen Participation</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Favorable</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take it or leave it</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>-9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N=86
p < .05 Chi Square 0.03

Along with the perceptions of school board members regarding community and citizen desire to have input in the school board's decision-making, school board members were asked to provide their perceptions of whether or not a desire on the part of community members and parents to participation in decision-making had changed in any way over the ten years prior to the 1988 survey.

This question was asked again in the 2004 survey and where we see that there was a shift away from increased willingness to participate (-13.2%) to less willing to participate (+4.7%) or remaining about the same (+5.7%).(X = .02)
Table 15

Board Members Perception of Parent/Community Members' Desire to Participate in the Decision-Making Process During the Ten-year Time Period Prior to each Survey
(School Board Survey Question No. 35/Research Questions Nos. 2 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to Participate</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More willing to participate</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>-13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less willing to participate</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire remain about the same</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 105  N = 86  p < .05  Chi Square 0.02

Identifying the board members' sources of information will facilitate the reader’s understanding of the relationships between the school board and the community and the school board and the superintendent. The perceived value of the information received by board members from respective sources is enhanced by the board members' perception of the source's credibility. (McCormack, p. 89)

In 1988, parents and the superintendent were the most important, credible sources of information for the school board. Since then, the credibility of these two groups has diminished in the eyes of the school board, parents more so than the superintendent, though. Other groups that have seen a large fall in credibility include teacher organizations, advisory committees, and other school employees. The only group whose credibility has improved is “Students” (4.3%).

School board members indicated in Table 16 that the superintendent continues as an important source of information, and the amount of time that the school board members spend discussing business with the superintendent has not changed significantly in the past fifteen years.
Table 16
Sources of Information Identified by Board Members As Important for Decision-Making Purposes (Rank Ordered)
(School Board Survey Question No. 28/Research Questions Nos. 2, 3, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source identifying It as Important</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>-10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central office staff</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher organizations</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>-11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory committees</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>-10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school employees</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>-12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayer groups</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>-7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School board organizations</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>-3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business leaders</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local media</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>-8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N = 88  
P < 0.05  
Chi Square = 0.00

In 1988, many (50.5%) school board members spent no time to two hours per week in conversation with the superintendent about board matters. Many spent up to four hours. In 2004, somewhere between zero and four hours still remains the most common amount of time school board members spent talking with their superintendent about board matters as indicated by the sample, but what changes in percentages there are do register as statistically significant.
Table 17

Hours per Month Spent by Board Member Discussing School Business with the Superintendent
(School Board Survey Question No. 14/Research Question Nos. 1, 2, 3, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Per Month Spent by Board Members Discussing School Business With the Superintendent</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 2</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 to 4</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>-8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 to 6</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 to 8</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:5 to 10</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>-3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5 to 18</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106 N = 86

\( p < .05 \) Chi Square 0.04

In 1988, McCormack found that, in agreement with his sources, the perceived role of the superintendent in small, rural districts coincided with the type of power structure found within a town. These sources reported that “the small rural community is usually characterized by an inert power structure” (McCormack, p. 94).

McCormack’s study looked to the local power structure as a possible variable in superintendent – school board relations. He categorized the inert power structure as:

The inert community is characterized by a lack of an active power structure. This type of power structure is frequently found in small, rural communities. There is usually a strong adherence to the status quo. Due to an inactive board that has no philosophical reinforcement from the community the superintendent in such a community is the decision-maker. The superintendent is free to initiate action without fear of alienating any dominant power group (McCarty and Ramsey, p. 17-22).” (McCormack, 1988, pp. 93-94)
In 2004, this finding shifts a bit as the changes of percentages of roles between the two surveys were found to be significant. The 2004 survey inferred a movement of the superintendent moving away from professional advisor and functionary to decision-maker.

Table 18

Perceived Role of Superintendents as Reported by School Board Members
(School Board Survey Question No. 42/Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, 3, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionary</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>-4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political strategist</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional advisor</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>-4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-maker</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106  N=86  p < .05  Chi Square 0.02

School board members indicated in 1988 that they felt that the superintendent was responsive to their suggestions and/or comments. The perception of the responsiveness of superintendents to the suggestions and/or comments made by school board members has not significantly changed over the past fifteen years.
Table 19
Superintendent’s Responsiveness to Board Suggestions and/or Recommendations
(School Board Survey Question No. 20/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very responsive</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>-3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat responsive</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very responsive</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all responsive</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 105 N = 86
p < .05 Chi Square 0.16

When asked how they would rate the performance of their superintendent on a scale of one to ten, school board members responded positively overall in 1988. The average rating was 7.7 with the vast majority earning a respectable 8 out of 10 points.

In 2004, this rating does indicate a significant change at p < .05. The average score in 2004 was 7.9 with the largest percentage receiving a score of 9 out of 10. In 1988, the largest percentage fell at 8 out of 10 points. An interesting shift also appears in the 5 to 6 range, where in 2004 there is a significant drop in the number of superintendents who received a rating of 6 as compared to 1988, and the opposite for superintendents who received a rating of 5 points.

These data indicate that school boards in 2004 seem more likely to highly approve or disapprove of their superintendent’s performance. The results are more polarized to positive or negative numbers.
In 1988, McCormack asked how many districts had had superintendents leave involuntary (i.e., firing) in the last three years. That figure was quite low; in fact, the rate at which superintendents left *voluntarily* stood at 86.5%. Today, that figure stands at 85.7%. It remains essentially the same, indicating that relations between school boards and superintendents continue to experience approximately the same amount of degree of voluntary resignations as they did fifteen years ago.

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In Table 21, the shift in areas of conflict is significant at the $p < .05$ levels. The categories of issues today that result in conflict between the school board and the superintendent are still the same as they were in 1988 as indicated by school board members, but they occur in differing intensities than they did fifteen years ago. Three significant shifts stand out and are indicated in bold print in Table 21. These are Personnel/teacher evaluation, SAU organizational structure, and Collective bargaining/contract interpretation. In 1988, the greatest issue brought forward by the school board members was monetary (Financial/budget) (24.5%). In 2004, the greatest issues brought forward by the school board members by far had to do with personnel (32.7%). SAU organizational structure fell as an issue from 10% in 1988 to 1.8% in 2004. This no longer appears to be an area of potential conflict in 2004. Issues of superintendent-school board roles remains relatively constant at 6.4% to 5.5%, but the performance of the superintendent as an issue has dropped from 5.4% to 1.8%. Another other issue that has significantly increased in conflict over the past fifteen years is collective bargaining and contract interpretation. This has increased from 2.7% to 9.1%.

So, it appears that issues of personnel and contracts dominate the present areas of conflict followed closely by monetary issues of budget and finance. These remain in the top spots for potential conflict and the old issue, that of SAU organizational structure, has all but disappeared.
Table 21

School Board Breakdown of Issues that Result in Conflict between Superintendent and School Board
(School Board Survey Question No. 41 / Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, 3, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial issues/budget</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/teacher evaluation</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAU organizational structure</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-school board role</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent’s performance</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations and communication</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space needs/construction/closings</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative evaluations/salaries</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective bargaining/contract interpretation</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent’s expectations</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 105

p < .05 Chi Square 0.00

Table 22 addresses the degree to which superintendents dominate the decision-making process.

Internal policy issues were defined as those thought to have consequences which were, by and large, limited to the school system itself. One would expect the technical expertise of the superintendent to weigh heavily in the resolution of matters related to this type of issue. Educational programs and personnel are examples of internal policy issues.
Those classified as external policy issues were defined as having the potential for immediate and tangible effects on the community as well as on the school system. In these types of issues one could expect public opinion to play a more significant role. Budgetary issues, school closings and construction, and superintendent-school board roles are examples of external policy issues. (McCormack, p. 101)

In this table, there is a comparison of the answers to this question between the 1988 surveys and 2004 surveys. There are significant differences between the two sets of figures, but no significant change in three areas. Those similarities and differences indicate different things:

- In educational program in 1988, there was rare disagreement between the board members and the superintendent. In 2004, that remains the same.
- In personnel and personnel policy in 1988, there was rare disagreement between the board members and the superintendent. In 2004, that remains the same except that the gap is closing between rarely disagreeing and occasionally disagreeing.
- In finance and fiscal matters in 1988, the indication was that there was more disagreement in this area than others by far. In 2004, finance matters were still areas that the board and the superintendent would disagree about, although less so in general.
- In school closings and construction in 1988, indications were that this was not an area of a high level of conflict and that most boards and superintendents worked well together in this area. In 2004, this was true as well with a shift toward even less conflict than that of fifteen years before.
- In superintendent-school board roles in 1988, there was some occasional conflict but the majority of respondents felt that conflict was rare. In 2004, respondents indicated essentially the same levels of conflict.
Table 22 - Frequency of Board Disagreement with the Superintendent Over Policy issues as Indicated by the Board
(School Board Survey Question No. 15/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Program</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>59.0% 55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel Policy</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>58.5% 46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Fiscal</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>48.1% 53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Closings/Construction</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>40.0% 38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-School Board Roles</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>48.1% 40.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106  N = 86

p < .05

Chi Square | 0.97 | Chi Square | 0.00 | Chi Square | 0.00 | Chi Square | 0.55 | Chi Square | 0.20
For the next area of consideration, the survey examined disagreement over decisions regarding policy. In 1988, "Disagreement with the superintendent was rare in the majority of policy areas. The area in which board members indicated greatest disagreement with the superintendent relates to school finance and fiscal issues. Given the large commitment that communities must make in support of their school, it is understandable as to why this is an area of potential disagreement.

"It is interesting to note the apparent lack of disagreement between the superintendent and school board relative to superintendent-school board roles." (McCormack, p. 103)

In 2004, Table 23 indicates that finance still remains the highest level of occasional disagreement. Yet, it is less of an area of contention today than it was in 1988 (a drop from 51.3% in 1988 to 19.8% in 2004). The significant trend is the shift from items that were occasionally disagreed upon in 1988 to more of those being rarely disagreed upon in 2004. This indicates that boards and superintendents are finding ways of reaching consensus in these areas without sensing that there is strong disagreement very often.
## TABLE 23 Frequency of Disagreement with the Superintendent Over Policy Issues as Indicated by the Superintendent

(School Board Survey Question No. 14/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Program</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel Policy</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Fiscal</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Closings/Construction</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-School Board Roles</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 106  N = 86

p < .05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table (Table 24) was drawn from question #16, on the survey relative to the degree of control that the superintendent has in the decision-making process. This table continues with the question of levels of disagreement that occur between the superintendent and the school board. This question was concerned with the likelihood that the superintendent could overcome initial disagreement with and/or opposition from the school board to achieve a desired goal in a board decision. The responses would then point to the degree of control that the superintendent has over his/her board. The question was, “If the superintendent wanted major policy changes in any of the following areas and the board initially disagreed with the change, how likely is it that the board would eventually approve the change anyway?”

In 1988, McCormack concluded that, “Overall, the New Hampshire board members did indicate the likelihood of giving in to the changes sought by the superintendent in all policy areas” (McCormack, p. 105). The area of greatest strength (63%) for support for changing to the point of view of the superintendent in 1988 was education program. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents were somewhat likely to go with the superintendent on matters of personnel and personnel policy. Forty-six percent (46%) were likely to support the superintendent eventually in financial matters. Forty percent (40%) would eventually support the superintendent in matters regarding school closings or construction and only 26% would probably move to support the superintendent in matters of school board-superintendent roles.

In 2004, the figures changed a bit. Seventy-two (72%), versus sixty-three (63%), could now be swayed by the superintendent in educational programming.
Sixty-six (66%), versus fifty (50%), could be swayed by the superintendent in the area of personnel and personnel policy. The area of finance also gained ground for the superintendent from 1988, with 54% being willing to be swayed versus 46%. School closings and construction saw a change from 26% in 1988 to 55% in 2004. Lastly, with regard to school board-superintendent roles, the superintendent is likely to sway his board about the same as today as in 1988 (54% of the time today versus 52% of the time in 1988).

The perception of superintendents differed in 1988 from that of school board respondent in the superintendent’s ability to “win over” the board. In Table 25, this difference comes to light in the “Very Likely” column. This column shows a statistically significant shift away from superintendent’s feeling that they are “Very Likely” to sway their boards.

McCormack put it this way:

In all five areas the superintendents estimated that in over 60% of the cases it would be somewhat to very likely that the board would eventually support the changes they recommended. Relative to internal issues (i.e., educational programs and personnel/personnel policies), superintendents’ estimates of their ability to dominate the policy/decision-making process were quite high – 92.1% and 86.9% likely to very likely – respectively. One area that relates to an external-type issue in which superintendents estimated an ability to dominate the board is that of superintendent-school board roles. Slightly more than 84% of the superintendents indicated the superintendent was very likely or at least somewhat likely to be able to get the board to support the desired change or action relative to this issue. (McCormack, p. 108)
### TABLE 24 - Estimates of Superintendents Dominance over Respective Policy/Decision Areas (As reported by New Hampshire Board Members)
(School Board Survey Question No. 16/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Program</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel Policy</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Fiscal</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Closings/Construction</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-School Board Roles</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106 N=86

p < .05

| Chi Square | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.26 |
As shown by the difference in the "Very Likely" column for 2004, the confidence of superintendents to influence the board’s decision-making has waned in three areas: educational program, personnel/personnel policy, and superintendent-school board roles. The change in the “Very Likely” column is significant and the figures reflect that in 1988, superintendents felt that in these three areas, they had more trust from their board that they knew best how to handles these things. In the internal issues, whereas superintendents enjoyed a 92.1% and 86.9% in the “Likely” to “Very likely” columns combined, now that number is 59.8% and 69.8 respectively. This is quite a shift. In the external area of superintendent-school board roles the figure dropped from 84% to 58.2%. Again, this is significant ($X^2 = 0.0$). So superintendents today feel that they are less likely to win boards over to their side than they were fifteen years ago. Whereas as school board members perceive a higher likelihood that the superintendent can sway their vote.

The next area McCormack explored was the question of how board members perceived their role and that of the superintendent versus how the superintendent viewed his/her role and that of the school board.

To determine perceived role, board members were asked to indicate, on a four point scale, the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with certain role behaviors for board members and superintendents. (McCormack, p. 109)

The findings are compared in Tables 26 and 27.
TABLE 25 (McCormack 26)
Estimates of Superintendent Dominance Over Respective Policy/Decision Areas (As Reported by Superintendents)
(Superintendent Survey Question No. 15/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Not Very Likely</th>
<th>Not at All Likely</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Program</td>
<td>36.8% 14.0%</td>
<td>55.3% 55.8%</td>
<td>7.9% 11.6%</td>
<td>0.0% 11.6%</td>
<td>0.0% 7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel Policy</td>
<td>23.7% 16.3%</td>
<td>63.2% 53.5%</td>
<td>10.5% 14.0%</td>
<td>2.6% 11.6%</td>
<td>0.0% 7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Fiscal</td>
<td>10.5% 11.6%</td>
<td>55.3% 46.5%</td>
<td>31.6% 20.9%</td>
<td>2.6% 14.0%</td>
<td>0.0% 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Closings/Construction</td>
<td>18.5% 16.3%</td>
<td>43.2% 34.9%</td>
<td>21.6% 20.9%</td>
<td>8.1% 18.6%</td>
<td>8.1% 9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-School Board Roles</td>
<td>23.7% 14.0%</td>
<td>60.5% 44.2%</td>
<td>15.8% 18.6%</td>
<td>0.0% 16.3%</td>
<td>0.0% 9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106  N=88

p < .05

Chi Square 0.00  Chi Square 0.74  Chi Square 0.50  Chi Square NA  Chi Square NA
In 1988, the survey data showed that school boards had confidence in the judgment of the superintendent. Eighty-three percent (83%) felt that the superintendent should use his/her own judgment in the day-to-day operation of the school district. In 2004, this figure changed to 78%, not a significant change. In 1988, almost 70% of the board member respondents felt that policies should be written in such a manner as to allow the superintendent some freedom of movement within policy parameters to make judgments in individual cases. In 2004, the same question garnered a 68% positive response. There is not much change there either.

Board members disagreed with the statement in the survey that the board was there to legitimate the decisions of the superintendent (86%). In 2004, this figure changed to 89%, not a large change. In 1988, board members also indicated that the board should not deal with teacher complaints and grievances as a body. Also, more than half (54.3%) indicated that they did not believe that it was a major responsibility of the board to supervise the superintendent and his/her staff. In 2004, that figure remained virtually unchanged at 53.5%.

Although Chi² analysis indicated significant changes in numbers between columns under each area (strongly agree, agree, etc.), the combined percentages in those columns did not indicate a total shift from generally agree to generally disagree in any area.
TABLE 26 (McCormack 27)
Reported Agreement With Various Role Behaviors for School Board Members and Superintendents (As Indicated by Board Members)
(School Board Survey Question No. 24/Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Behavior</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Boards should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions</td>
<td>29.8% 2004 39.8% 2004 42.3% 2004 36.4% 1988 23.1% 2004 20.5% 1988 3.8% 1988 1.1% 2004 1.0% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy</td>
<td>41.3% 1988 36.4% 1988 35.6% 1988 50.0% 2004 22.1% 1988 10.2% 2004 1.0% 1988 1.1% 2004 0.0% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Policies should be written in such a way as to allow the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing and interpreting the policies</td>
<td>19.8% 2004 21.6% 2004 49.1% 2004 44.3% 1988 22.6% 2004 26.1% 1988 7.5% 2004 6.8% 1988 0.9% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Board members should deal personally with parental complaints and grievances</td>
<td>1.9% 1988 24.8% 2004 16.2% 1988 9.1% 1988 27.1% 1988 28.4% 1988 42.9% 1988 43.2% 1988 1.9% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies</td>
<td>21.6% 1988 14.8% 1988 55.9% 1988 56.8% 1988 18.6% 1988 23.9% 1988 3.5% 1988 1.1% 1988 0.0% 2004 2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The major responsibility of the board is to supervise the superintendent and his/her staff</td>
<td>12.6% 1988 17.0% 2004 32.0% 1988 28.4% 1988 38.8% 1988 43.2% 1988 15.5% 1988 9.1% 1988 1.0% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Board decisions are only a framework within which the superintendent operates he/she uses personal discretion in day-to-day operations</td>
<td>17.0% 1988 29.5% 1988 66.0% 1988 46.6% 1988 13.2% 1988 18.2% 1988 1.9% 1988 3.4% 1988 1.9% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff</td>
<td>44.8% 1988 51.1% 1988 24.8% 1988 31.8% 1988 19.0% 1988 10.2% 1988 11.4% 1988 10.2% 1988 11.4% 1988 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The superintendent functions as an intermediary between the board and the teachers</td>
<td>26.7% 1988 38.6% 2004 45.5% 1988 46.6% 1988 18.6% 1988 17.0% 1988 6.9% 1988 6.8% 1988 1.0% 2004 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The superintendent should develop the formal board agenda</td>
<td>9.8% 1988 4.5% 1988 52.0% 1988 42.0% 1988 33.3% 1988 39.8% 1988 3.4% 1988 10.2% 1988 1.0% 1988 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Board members should deal personally with teacher complaints and grievances</td>
<td>1.9% 1988 2.3% 1988 9.4% 1988 8.0% 1988 47.2% 1988 34.1% 1988 38.7% 1988 46.6% 1988 2.0% 1988 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The superintendent should stick to the &quot;letter of the law&quot; in enforcing board rules and policies</td>
<td>7.8% 1988 11.4% 1988 48.5% 1988 40.9% 1988 36.9% 1988 35.2% 1988 3.9% 1988 5.7% 1988 2.9% 1988 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The superintendent serves as a representative of the teachers to the board</td>
<td>4.0% 1988 5.7% 1988 37.6% 1988 27.1% 1988 40.6% 1988 45.5% 1988 17.8% 1988 15.9% 1988 0.0% 2004 2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The superintendent's primary responsibility is as an instructional leader</td>
<td>8.8% 1988 9.1% 1988 35.3% 1988 10.7% 1988 44.1% 1988 46.6% 1988 11.8% 1988 5.7% 1988 0.0% 2004 2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The school board's primary function is to legitimate the decisions of the superintendent</td>
<td>1.9% 1988 2.3% 1988 8.6% 1988 6.8% 1988 42.9% 1988 61.4% 1988 42.9% 2004 26.1% 1988 3.8% 2004 2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square NA*

Chart A below lists the results of the same question (School Board Question No. 24) about role expectations, but this time it is being asked of the superintendents. McCormack noted in 1988, that “the majority of the board
members and superintendents indicated a similar perspective as to their overall agreement or disagreement with each role expectation....” A review of the superintendents’ responses shows five role expectations that received 90 to 100% agreement. These include:

(1) the board should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative function (100% agreement among superintendents, 72.1% among board members):
(2) school boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy (94.9% among superintendents, 76.9% among school board members):
(3) policies should be written in such a manner as to allow the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing and interpreting the policies (90% among superintendents, 67.9% among board members):
(4) the superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies (90% among superintendents 77.5% among board members): and
(5) board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff (97.5% among superintendents, 69.6% among board members.) (McCormack, p. 110)

Compared to 2004, superintendents and school boards responded to these same questions in the following manner:
Chart A

(Taken from Question No. 13 of the Superintendent Questionnaire and Question No. 24 of the School Board Questionnaire)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1988 Supt/SB</th>
<th>2004 Supt/SB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) the board should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative function</td>
<td>94.9% - 76.9%</td>
<td>97.9% - 77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) school boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy</td>
<td>94.9% - 76.9%</td>
<td>97.7% - 88.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) policies should be written in such a manner as to allow the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing and interpreting the policies</td>
<td>90% - 67.9%</td>
<td>90.7% - 67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) the superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies</td>
<td>90% - 77.5%</td>
<td>93.1% - 73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff</td>
<td>97.5% - 69.6%</td>
<td>93% - 77.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is notable that there seems to be no large change in these figures in fifteen years. (The original raw data were not available to calculate the Chi-square for these figures.) In (1), there is no remarkable change in position. In (2), there is some growth in the strength of the agreement that school boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy, particularly on the part of the school board. Here the board member respondents indicate an increase in the intensity of their agreement with that...
statement. For (3), there is almost no change at all. School boards and superintendents agree that superintendents need latitude within the written policies of the district to make good decisions relative to the individual situations that arise. For (4), again there is virtually no change from fifteen years ago and for (5) superintendents and school board members moved toward each other a small amount in agreeing that board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff.

Lastly, on the state of points of agreement in 1988, there was a strong sentiment of agreement with the idea that the superintendent should develop the formal board agenda. In 1988, the school board members and superintendents were relatively close in their agreement that the superintendent should develop the formal board agenda. In 2004, the response of the present superintendents remains consistent with the 1988 figures, but the 2004 school board members replied with a drop of 14.1% in agreement that this should be so.

Chart B

(Taken from Question No. 13 of the Superintendent Questionnaire and Question No. 24 of the School Board Questionnaire)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1988 Supt/SB</th>
<th>2004 Supt/SB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10) the superintendent should develop the formal board agenda</td>
<td>75% - 61.8%</td>
<td>74.4% - 47.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two instances of disagreement between the school board members and the superintendents in the 1988 survey. In 1988, 41.6% of the school board members agreed with the statement the superintendent serves as a representative of the teachers to the board. A little more than 86% of the superintendents agreed with this role. The other role disagreement was in the
area of instructional leader. In 1988, 44.1% of the school board members agreed that the superintendent’s primary job was as instructional leader and yet 77.5% of the superintendents indicated that they felt that this was their primary job.

In 2004, these two areas of disagreement remain unchanged although the intensity of the disagreement varied. The superintendent as a representative of teachers to the board seems to have lost ground with the school board respondents but not superintendents. The strength of the assertion that the primary responsibility of the superintendent is to be an instructional leader has diminished among superintendents. School board members still give this assertion essentially the same level as they did in 1988.

Chart C

(Taken from Question No. 13 of the Superintendent Questionnaire and Question No. 24 of the School Board Questionnaire)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1988 Supt/SB</th>
<th>2004 Supt/SB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(13) the superintendent serves as a representative of teachers to the board</td>
<td>75% - 61.8%</td>
<td>74.4% - 47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) the superintendent’s primary responsibility is as an instructional leader</td>
<td>77.5% - 44.1%</td>
<td>74.4% - 39.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 27
Reported Agreement With Various Role Behaviors for School Board Members and Superintendents (As Indicated by Superintendents) (Superintendent Survey Question No. 13/Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, 3, & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Behavior</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Boards should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Policies should be written in such a way as to allow the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing and interpreting the policies</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Board members should deal personally with parental complaints and grievances</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The major responsibility of the board is to supervise the superintendent and his/her staff</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Board decisions are only a framework within which the superintendent operates he/she uses personal discretion in day-to-day operations</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The superintendent functions as an intermediary between the board and the teachers</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The superintendent should develop the formal board agenda</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Board members should deal personally with teacher complaints and grievances</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The superintendent should stick to the &quot;letter of the law&quot; in enforcing board rules and policies</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The superintendent serves as a representative of the teachers to the board</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The superintendent's primary responsibility is as an instructional leader</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The school board's primary function is to legitmate the decisions of the superintendent</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=106 N=86

p < .05
Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square NA Chi Square NA

### Summary

In 1988,

The typical board member who comprised the sample for this study can be characterized as a well-educated, professional who has resided in his or her community for more than twenty years. He/she is an experienced board member who has served more than one term on the school board. (McCormack, p. 116)
In 2004, the typical board member who returned a survey can be characterized as someone with a college degree. He or she has lived in the community for an average of 20.4 years and is mostly likely in the second term on the board. The make-up of the board today is similar to the board of 1988.

The conditions of the election during which the member gained his/her seat are perhaps a bit more subdued than they were in 1988. Yet, although there is less spirited competition for seats, at the same time there are fewer unchallenged seats. The typical board member respondent ran for the board in 1988 as an advocate for minor change. In 2004, that remains the same.

There is also no significant change in the amount of contact that today's school board member respondent has with outside groups. They continue to believe that they are representing the values and interests of the community, although today they are even more likely to prefer basing their decisions on a combination of the community's desires and their own judgment than they were fifteen years ago. Today's board is also more likely to view the input of the community as important.

Board member respondents continue to believe that their superintendents are doing a good job. The rating scale for performance of superintendent average remained the same as it was in 1988. The average amount of weekly contact time between the chair and the superintendent has not changed significantly. Overall, board member respondents seem to be satisfied with the performance of their superintendents on par with 1988. There has been no significant change in involuntary turnover among superintendents indicating continued satisfaction with the performance of the majority of superintendents in place today. Table 24

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shows some positive changes with regard to the superintendent being able to present a convincing case for an idea and the board being willing to listen and eventually accept. This indicates a level of trust between the two parties that has improved over the last fifteen years.

Overall, superintendent-school board relations appear to remain positive. However, there are several issues that board member respondents believe to cause conflict between school boards and superintendents. In 1988, these areas were primarily personnel, organization of school districts, and construction and closing of schools. Today, those areas of conflict are personnel, collective bargaining and contract interpretation, and finance/budgetary concerns.

The perception by the board of the role of the superintendent remains unchanged as well. In 1988, the majority of board member respondents felt that the superintendent should act primarily as the professional advisor to the board. Data indicate that in general boards continue to feel that the superintendent should use his judgment in the everyday operation of the district; that the superintendent should lead the way in crafting policies in a manner that will allow her/him to interpret and apply policy for individual cases that come before him, and that it remains the superintendent’s role to deal with teachers complaints and grievances.

School boards also continue to feel that their role is to be critical of the superintendent’s decisions and at the same time support the superintendent’s decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy.
In 1988,

In an effort to describe the influence or control the superintendent has in the decision-making process, board members were asked to indicate the probability of giving in to the wishes of the superintendent relative to these issues. Board members indicated a willingness to give in on the internal issues related to educational programs and personnel. With the exception of superintendent-school board roles, board members indicated greater resistance to giving in to the superintendent on external issues (i.e., financial matters and school closings/construction). (McCormack, p. 119)

Today, by comparison, school board members indicated that they are more likely to be swayed by the superintendent on all issues. Superintendents today hold a somewhat differing viewpoint from their school board counterparts in this area. Superintendents feel that their sway has waned in some areas.

Profile of New Hampshire Superintendents in Small Rural Districts

Dr. McCormack continued on to profile the superintendents of small, rural school districts (i.e., those of 2500 students or fewer) in New Hampshire. Data on personal characteristics, school board-superintendent relations and community interactions were collected in 1988 and again by this study in 2004. The data generated in 1988 were used to develop a profile of those superintendents. Here, the new data will be used to once again compare the superintendent of 1998 with that of 2004.

Personal Characteristics

In 1988, the superintendents in small, rural districts were predominantly male. In 1988, there was only one female superintendent. These superintendents were relatively well educated with one-third holding doctorates. Seventy percent of them held an advanced degree of some kind or work beyond the Masters level.
Today, by comparison, more of these superintendents hold earned doctorates, more have Certificates of Advanced Graduate Study and fewer have only a Masters degree.

Table 29
Educational Attainment Level of Superintendents in Small Rural Districts in New Hampshire
(Superintendent Survey Question No. 29/Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

| Educational Attainment Level of Superintendents in Small rural districts in New Hampshire |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| **Degree**                                 | **1988**         | **2004**       | **Change**     |
| Masters                                    | 30.0%            | 14.0%          | -16.0%         |
| Certificate of advanced graduate study     | 25.0%            | 27.9%          | 2.9%           |
| Doctorate (all but dissertation)           | 12.5%            | 7.0%           | -5.5%          |
| Doctoral Degree                            | 32.5%            | 51.2%          | 18.7%          |

N=40 N=43

Chi Square 0.02

Superintendents identified in 1988 were relatively new to their position. Over one-third indicated that they had been in their current position less than three years. The average number of years in their present position for all superintendent respondents was 6.7 years. (Three of the superintendent respondents in Dr. McCormack's study were in their positions for 22, 23, and 32 years. For the purpose of comparison in this study, these outliers were mathematically eliminated and the mean of Dr. McCormack's study was recalculated to better reflect the status of years in the position for the vast majority of superintendents in 1988.) For 60% of the respondents in 1988, this was their first position. Their average age was 49.7 years.
The results of today's survey show that women superintendents have gained ground and now stand at nearly one-quarter of the respondents. This is an increase of women in the position of 23.1% in fifteen years for this study. (Please note that the total number of women superintendents in the State of New Hampshire stands at about 10% at this time.) The average number of years in the position for both men and women stands now at 4.5 years. Extrapolating back to McCormack's raw data on the tenure in position of his sample, I removed three outliers who were three superintendents with remarkable longevity. The new figure indicates that the mean number of years a superintendent had been on the job prior to completing the survey in 1988, is 2.2 years longer than those in the 2004 sample. The average age of the superintendent respondents has risen from 49.7 to 54.2 years old, an increase of 4.5 years.
Table 29
Comparison of Personal Characteristics of New Hampshire Superintendents of School in Small Rural Districts (Superintendent Survey Questions Nos. 5, 6, & 2 / Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>-23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt; .05 Chi²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context of the Position – School Board-Superintendent Interaction and Community Interaction**

In 1988, superintendents indicated that they were sensitive to the role that community interaction played in their districts.

Overall, superintendents, as did school board members, have positive views about the role of community members in the decision-making process. When asked how they viewed citizen participation in school decision-making, 82% of the superintendents responding indicated that they felt favorable about their participation. Fifty-nine percent state that they felt community participation in school district decision-making was more important” at the time (1988) than in years prior. (McCormack, p.123)
In 2004, superintendents indicated their feelings that parents and community members did not seem more willing to participate today than in 1988. In 1988 though, there was a feeling among superintendents that there was an increase (27.9%) over previous years. School board respondents were not so enthusiastic, but 20.5% did agree that there had been an increase in desire to participate.

Although at the same time, 20.9% of the superintendents felt that the status had not changed; 20.5% of the board member respondents agreed. The greater figure in 2004 was the idea that parent/community willingness to participate remained about the same. So, in 1988 the respondents indicated that they felt that parent/community desire to participate was increasing. Today, the category with the highest response is the school boards members' feeling that the parent/community desire to participate has leveled off and remains about the same.
Table 30

Comparison of Superintendent and Board Member Views on Parent/Community Desire to Participate in School District Decision Making
(School Board Survey Question No. 35/Superintendent Survey Question No. 31 – Research Questions Nos. 1 & 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/community are more willing to participate</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/community are less willing to participate</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/community willingness to participate remains about the same</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40 N=43 N=106 N=88

p < .05

Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.01

One factor that would influence the superintendents' perception of parent/community involvement would be how often parents or members of the community directly contacted the superintendent about concerns. Today, superintendent respondents indicated an increase in the number of contacts from parents and community members regarding educational program and financial concerns. The area of school closings and construction saw a drop in the school boards' level of concern. This result corresponds to the list of present areas of potential conflict, which have moved to the forefront in 2004. See Table 31.
TABLE 31 (McCormack 32)

Community Contact with the Superintendent Relative to Policy Changes In Respective Areas Over the Three Years Prior to the Survey
(Superintendent Survey Question No. 22/Research Question No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational program (curriculum, students)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44.20%</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
<td>46.50%</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel policies</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23.30%</td>
<td>68.40%</td>
<td>67.40%</td>
<td>7.90%</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School finance/fiscal issues</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>53.50%</td>
<td>44.70%</td>
<td>41.90%</td>
<td>7.90%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School closings/facility construction</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>65.10%</td>
<td>10.50%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>N=43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05  

Chi Square | 0.00  | Chi Square | 0.30  | Chi Square | 0.23  |
In 1988, superintendents and school boards were in overall agreement that superintendents usually acted in harmony with what they perceived to be the community's predominant values and expectations concerning schools. Superintendents reported that they seldom attempted to make policy changes against the wants of the community (59%). School boards agreed as 43.4% chose seldom as their strongest response.

In 2004 however, superintendents perceived that they introduced policy that contradicted the community's wants “frequently” (48.8%), whereas the school board respondents noted that they still felt about the same as in 1988 and responded that this occurred “seldom” by 43.3%.

Table 32

Frequency of Attempts by Superintendents to Make Policy Changes That Contradict the Perceived Predominant Wants of the Community (Superintendent Survey Question No. 25/Research Question No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40 N=43 N=106 N=88

p < .05

Chi Square 0.00 Chi Square 0.37
McCormack felt that:

the frequency of community member contact with the superintendent and
the superintendent’s perception of the community members’ desire to
participate in school district policy making have had a considerable impact
on the superintendent’s perception of the community power structure
within their school administrative unit. (McCormack, p.126)

In 1988, the perception of the school board respondents and the
superintendent respondents differed considerably. Today, that remains mostly
unchanged. Superintendents continue to believe that they understand that there is
a dispersed power structure in their town and school boards continue to believe
that there isn’t a power structure at all or if there is one that it is widely dispersed.

Table 33

Comparison of Superintendents’ and School Board Members’ Description of the
Community Power Structure within Their Districts
(Superintendent Survey Question No. 33/Research Question No. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The power structure consists of one or only a few people</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several groups of relatively equal power compete for control</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No single power structure exists; power is dispersed across many individuals/groups who form alliances</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no power structure relative to school issues</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40        N=43        N=106       N=88

P < .05

Chi Square 0.82   Chi Square 0.17

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In 1988,

the predominant view expressed by board members (46.7%) was that there was no community pressure to impose decisions on the board and that they community usually found the status quo to be acceptable, that there was no power structure relative to school issues. Slightly more than 23% of the superintendents responding described their district in this manner. The prevailing description presented by superintendents was one that identified power as being dispersed across many individual or groups who form alliances/coalitions, which change from issue to issue. (McCormack, p. 127)

Today the superintendent respondents still view the power structure primarily as dispersed among many groups and/or individuals in the community (51.2%) whereas the school board almost sees no power structure or a dispersed power structure equally, 40.9% and 39.8% respectively.

Superintendents remain relatively confident in their positions. In 1988, they were asked on a scale of 1 to 10, how they felt that the school board would rate them. The mean ranking of the response was 7.3. The school board respondents of 2004 gave the superintendent a mean ranking of 7.7. Although superintendents seemed to be slightly more critical of themselves, those means are very close indicating general agreement about their job performance.

Overall, then (1988) and now (2004), superintendents and school board members seem to be working together in harmony in New Hampshire. There are however, areas that are more prone to conflict between superintendent and school board. In 1988, the two top areas for conflict as reported by the superintendent were personnel (hiring, evaluation) at 30.3%, followed by fiscal/budget matters at 24.2%. Today, that order is reversed with fiscal/budget matters at 27.3% and personnel (hiring, evaluation) at 18.2%.
Although the top two issues of budget and personnel were the same for the school board (See Table 21), in 1988 they were equal (24.5% each), in 2004, personnel (32.7%) overtook budget (23.6). So, in 2004, school boards and superintendents rankings are juxtaposed from 1988.

Table 34
Rank Ordering of Issues that Result in Conflict between the Superintendent and School Board (As Reported by Superintendents)
(Superintendent Survey Question No. 32/Research Questions Nos. 1, 2, &3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel (hiring, evaluation)</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>-12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal/budget</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent-board relations</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative organization of the school</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space needs/ construction</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiations</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Evaluation</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40 N=44

p < .05 Chi Square 0.69

So, the issue of hiring, evaluating, and firing of staff and money and how it is spent, or perhaps lack thereof has traded places.
Another area, which remains constant and just below money and staff, is superintendent-school board relations. This has remained a constant third place in the opinion of superintendents, whereas in 1988, school board member respondents listed SAU organization as their third area of conflict. Today, school board members are more aligned with superintendents in making superintendent-school board relations third on their list as well.

When asked about role orientation for school board members, none of the responding superintendents indicated in 1988 that school board members should do what the public wants him/her to do even if it isn't his/her own personal choice. That position has not changed. In 2004, the overwhelming majority of superintendent respondents indicated again that school board members should use a combination of making their own judgment and doing what the public wants.

Table 35
Superintendent's Perception of the Appropriate Role Behavior of Board Members (Superintendent Survey Question No. 24 / Research Questions Nos. 1 & 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Behavior</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do what the public wants him/her to do even if it isn't his/her own personal choice</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use his/her personal judgment regardless of what others want him/her to do</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of the two positions</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>-12.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40 N=44

p < .05 Chi Square 0.19

116

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In Table 36, one can see that between 1988 and 2004, the thoughts of superintendents regarding their primary role with regard to the school board have not changed much. Superintendents still see themselves as professional advisors to the board. Following that, the category of decision-maker remains a customary role as well. This agrees with the school board respondents who indicated that they believed that the primary role of the superintendent was as professional advisor as well, more so than decision-maker. In the last fifteen years, the role of decision-maker has become a more prominent primary role choice among school board respondents, more so than the superintendents believe it to be.

Table 36

Comparison of Superintendent and School Board Member Perceptions of Role Behavior of the Superintendent
(School Board Survey Question No. 42/Superintendent Survey Question No. 33 – Research Questions Nos. 1 & 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionary</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political strategist</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional advisor</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-maker</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40 N=43 N=106 N=88

Chi Square 0.02 Chi Square 0.00

p < .05

In a pluralistic power structure, a professional advisor tends to be a successful role. As indicated in Table 33, for the year 2004, 47.4% of the school board
members and the 51.2% of superintendents believe that the power structure of their respective community is indeed dispersed, and here in Table 36, this role is the most assumed. Political strategist still remains low as the primary role as defined by both the superintendent respondents and the school board respondents.

Summary

The typical superintendent in a small, rural community in New Hampshire is still male. Although females have made inroads, they still only represent fewer than one in four superintendents. This superintendent is better educated than he was fifteen years ago and has been in his position for 4.5 years as opposed to 6.7 years fifteen years ago. He is 4.5 years older on average than he was in 1988. Therefore, he is older and better educated, but has been in his position a shorter period of time.

Superintendents are aware of the importance of community members as stakeholders relative to school issues. Superintendents believe that community interest remains steady with their involvement at this time versus 1988, when superintendent respondents perceived a growth in community interest in the years prior to the survey. Superintendents are more likely in 2004 to take action that does not reflect the values of the community in which they work.

Generally, superintendents in 2004 feel that they are working smoothly with their respective school boards and committees, as smoothly as superintendents worked with their boards in the 1988 results. Issues that continue to cause conflict remain unchanged but intensity has shifted over the years primarily between the two areas of budget/fiscal and personnel.
School board-superintendent roles do remain an area of continued, low-level conflict today as they were in 1988. "They (still) look to the board to do other things than legitimize the superintendent's decisions, supervising the superintendent and central office staff, and dealing with parental and teacher complaints" (McCormack, p. 133).

Superintendents still feel that their primary role is as professional advisor to the board, although a high percentage of them feel that their role is primarily as decision-maker. This definition of role has also not changed in fifteen years. A large percentage of them continue to consider the power structure of their district to be dispersed, although many also saw themselves primarily as decision-makers.

**Summary of Findings in Surveys**

New Hampshire school board members and their superintendents in small, rural school districts of less than 2500 students have changed in some respects and in others they have not over the past fifteen years. This set of surveys brought to light some shifts and some nuances as well as some significant changes in direction.

The areas that are still the same today as they were fifteen years ago are many:

- School board members in this sample were still well educated with most having a college education and many with advanced degrees.
- School Board members still primarily come from profession/technical occupations but more so now than fifteen years ago.
- School board chairs are still mostly serving their second three-year term.
• The school board members still run to advocate for minor change in their school districts.

• The power structures in their communities are still seen as nonexistent or dispersed.

• The school board still has only rare contact with community groups or organizations.

• There is still little conflict/tension within their school districts.

• Boards still see their communities as somewhat or not very critical of board actions.

• Board members still occasionally feel conflict between the responsibility to the public and to the school administration.

• School board members view citizen participation as still an important part of the decision-making process.

• School board members still spend between 0 and 4 hours per week on the phone with their superintendent.

• They see the superintendent primarily in the role of professional advisor to their board and that their superintendent is very responsive to their suggestions and recommendations.

• Board members rate superintendents as performing as well as they did fifteen years ago.

• Board members indicate that they are generally more likely to be swayed by the superintendent in most areas than fifteen years ago.
Superintendents and school board members report that they still believe in the same role behaviors that they did fifteen years ago, but that there are subtle changes in intensity in some areas.

Some things have changed for school board member respondents:

- There is less spirited competition for school board seats than there was fifteen years ago.
- Board members have shifted to preferring a combination of public and personal input into making their decisions rather than doing what they, personally, believe is correct without input from the community.
- Board members will take a stand that is unpopular in the community more often now than in 1988.
- School board members believe that community participation in the decision-making process is as important or more important than it was in 1988.
- The board no longer believes that the parents' or the community's desire to participate in decision-making is increasing but that it has leveled off.
- The board now considers the input from the superintendent and central office personnel for decision-making more highly than that of the parents as in 1988.
- The board indicates that personnel is now more an area of conflict between them and the superintendent than budget as it used to be.
- The school board participants now indicate that there is primarily only rare and occasional disagreement with the superintendent over issues of policy, whereas the superintendents indicate that there is definitely occasional disagreement over policy issues, more than before.
• Superintendents also indicate that they are less likely to convince their board to change their mind on a particular decision than they were fifteen years ago.

   From the superintendent survey, it can be shown that some things don't change:

   • Superintendents are still highly educated.
   • They still indicate that the power in their communities is primarily dispersed among many individuals and groups.
   • Personnel and budget are still their top choice for areas that result in conflict with the board.
   • Superintendents today, as they did in 1988, still believe that it is best for the board to make decisions by using a combination of their own personal judgment and the input of the community.

   On the other hand, some things have changed:

   • Superintendents have a higher likelihood of being female (although 3 out of 4 are still male).
   • Their mean age is 4.5 years older and they have been in their position for fewer years.
   • Superintendents believe that parents and community members are not more willing to participate now than they were a few years ago but that their willingness seems to be about the same.
   • They indicate that the community has increased contact with them in some different areas now; those of educational program and budget.
Superintendents also indicate that they are more willing now to introduce policy changes that contradict the perceived predominant values of the community.

The school board members indicate that the superintendent is more of a decision-maker than s/he was fifteen years ago but is still primarily the professional advisor to the board.

These are the things that have changed and the things that have remained the same about superintendent-school board relations in the last fifteen years as indicated by the superintendent and the school board surveys.
CHAPTER 5

INTERVIEWS WITH SUPERINTENDENTS AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Introduction

For his study in 1988, Dr. McCormack was charged by his dissertation committee to move beyond survey data and to interview seven superintendents and seven school board chairs that responded to the survey from one of that superintendent's school districts. This researcher was charged by her dissertation committee with interviewing one superintendent and a corresponding school board chair representing each of the five geographic supervisory unions in the state of New Hampshire. (See Chapter 3, Design of the Study, for a detailed description of the process used to choose and interview each subject.)

Using similar criteria for choosing the particular superintendents and their corresponding board chairs, this researcher was only able to complete the interview process with four out of five of the requested geographically distributed subjects. Although short one supervisory union, the data gathered from these interviews were highly enlightening and informative.

McCormack defends the interview process as useful to this type of research by claiming that it is advantageous over surveys in several ways. Interview data provide:

(1) meaningful responses. The presence of an interviewer generally decreases the number of "don't know" and "no answers". Questions that might have been somewhat unclear in written form can be clarified
and/or expanded upon by the interviewer. This enhances the relevancy of answers given (Babbie, pp. 171 – 172).

(2) credibility. The rapport established with participants can produce an atmosphere in which comprehensive, truthful information can be obtained.

(3) first hand verification. The interviewer can observe both the participant and the situation in which the participant works/lives. (McCormack, p. 136-7)

In an effort to enhance and further verify the data gathered in 2004 on the surveys, and to compare responses from 1988 to 2004, this chapter will describe the present interviewees and report their responses, and then compare those responses to those reported in McCormack’s dissertation of 1988. This chapter will report these perceptions and reflections offered in the areas of school board-superintendent relations, school board-superintendent role behavior, community involvement, and the decision-making process.

Since the superintendents and school board chairpersons interviewed for this study were assured that they would remain anonymous in the process and in the writing, the districts will not be identified by name or character (as New Hampshire is a small state and therefore some district characteristics are easily identifiable). Instead, the districts will be referred to by the colors red, white, blue, and yellow. Also, all persons will be referred to in the masculine, as the majority of superintendent and school board chairpersons are male.

Again, the answers to the research questions are co-mingled within most of the prescribed survey questions and cannot be easily separated. Therefore, references to the research questions will be made throughout this chapter as they apply to the presentation of survey questions. The research questions remain as follows:
(1) What is the nature of school board-superintendent relations in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire and what changes, if any, have occurred in these relationships during the last fifteen years?

(2) How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

(3) What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

(4) What factors impact upon the school board’s and the superintendent’s respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

Superintendent Interview Participants

Superintendent Red has a doctorate in an education related field and has been in his present position for nine years. He is 62 years old. He has three districts served by three school boards. This superintendent serves a property rich district, which has been growing steadily during his tenure. The focus of the discussion will be this one district from which the school board chair was interviewed. This is a K–6 school district, although the superintendent is responsible for the middle and high school to which these students will move.

Superintendent White has also served nine years in his position. He has a doctoral degree in a field related to education and is 59 years old. There are two school districts under his watch and although he is responsible for both, an assistant superintendent tends to the smaller one. His district is larger than
many in this study, affluent, and has grown steadily over his tenure. He sees his
customers for their entire public school experience.

Superintendent Blue holds a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study. He
serves one school district and is 54 years old. He has been working for this
district for six years. The Blue district is a single town and has seen many
changes as it has moved from a small, isolated community to an up and coming
bedroom community for a growing city nearby. Its citizens are a mix of the old
and new and with the growth, there has been a movement toward a high level of
support for education. The district has several school buildings, covering grades
K-8, and sends its students elsewhere to high school.

Superintendent Yellow has Masters level degrees and is fifty years old.
He has six school districts under his watch and has been on the job there for one
year after many years as a superintendent elsewhere. The needs of his various
districts are diverse and many. For the purposes of this study, the focus remains
on the one for which I interviewed the school board chairperson. This district is
extremely small with only a handful of students in it. The town population is
relatively stable but the school population can vary greatly over only a few years
depending upon how many students happen to be of a given age at any one
time.

Findings

The interview process added a human side to the surveys and allowed the
interviewer to enhance the subjects’ responses with probing questions that
would draw out answers that were more direct and relevant to the individual
district. Each superintendent was asked the same questions in the same order
and allowed to expand upon them. These questions explored:
(1) existing relationships between the superintendent and school board;
(2) changes that have occurred within the last ten years relative to the types of relationships between the superintendent and school board,
(3) factors influencing the superintendent-school board relationships;
(4) the amount and significance of pressure applied by dominant interest groups;
(5) the superintendent’s willingness to act contrary to the views of the school board and/or community;
(6) the amount and types of discussion at school board meetings:
(7) the future of school board-superintendent relations:
(8) the superintendent’s ability to influence school board decisions and policy making; and
(9) the role orientation of school board members and superintendents. (McCormack, pp. 144-145)

Further questions were added regarding the influence of legislation, funding, and other new requirements placed upon districts to probe the possible changes in relations, which have occurred during the intervening years between 1988 and 2004. (See Appendix I) The information that follows is a synopsis of these four superintendent’s perceptions of school board-superintendent relations in their respective districts along with a comparison of these views to those held by their peer superintendents on 1988. Each of these questions pertained to one or more of the study’s research questions.

School Board-Superintendent Relations

McCormack takes this opportunity to review the two predominant points of view regarding types of relationships between school boards and their superintendents. The first point of view is that the superintendent serves the board as an educational expert who typically dominates educational policymaking by virtue of his/her technical expertise, control of the information flow, a full-time supporting administrative staff and the general acceptance of the belief that educational policy making should be non-partisan and nonpolitical. The other point of view presents the superintendent as a beleaguered public
official, typically beset from all sides, constantly facing conflicting situations and being forced to build coalitions to gain support and acceptance of his/her preferred educational programs (Boyd, pp. 539-541). (McCormack, p. 145)

These four superintendents were asked early in the interview to describe the types of relations that exist between the board and themselves.

(1) Please describe your school district. Consider things such as demographics of the area, philosophy of the community, the local power structure, local economy, and the number and size of schools in the district. (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)

(2) How would you describe the types of relations that exist between the school board and yourself? Have you observed a change in the superintendent-board relations over the last ten years? (This question assists in answering research question no. 2.)

(3) What factors do you see as impacting on the superintendent-board relations in your district? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

Each of the superintendents felt that they had an exceptional relationship with their respective board. They found that relationship to be open, trusting, and Superintendent Red even described his relationship with the board as "exciting." Superintendents Blue and Yellow made comments to the effect that previous superintendents had not enjoyed the relationship that they presently enjoyed with their boards, but that those superintendents were obviously no longer with the district.

In 1988, McCormack found all but one of the superintendents that he interviewed to be enjoying a comfortable relationship with his school board. These superintendents used descriptors such as "cooperative, open, supportive, positive, friendly, trusting, and honest." The one superintendent with strained relations used descriptors such as "deteriorating, lack of trust, vying for control, and an unstable board membership contributing to the difficult relations."
In 2004, this researcher did not receive any questionnaire responses that qualified for interviewing a superintendent where there were difficult or deteriorating relations, or at least where the superintendent described them as such.

Ability to Influence the Decision-Making Process

The next area of interest in the interview process is that of the ability of the superintendent to influence the school board in the decision-making process. Does the superintendent perceive that he has the ability to sway his board to what he feels is correct for the district?

(5) Will you initiate action that you think will go contrary to the views of the board? Contrary to the community? (These questions assist in answering research questions nos. 3 & 4.)

(6) Do you feel any conflict relative to your philosophy of quality education and that actions needed to attain it and the philosophy of the community/board? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(7) Describe the amount and types of discussion that occur at board meetings among board members and with the superintendent prior to the board making a decision. (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 2.)

McCormack discovered through his interviews that he was able to “identify some of the characteristics and/or qualities superintendents demonstrated that enhanced (or detracted from) their ability to influence the decision-making process. (McCormack, p. 152). He found that those superintendents who felt that they were able to influence their boards in the decision-making process remarked upon their capacity to work “cooperatively, rather than competitively, with the board” (McCormack, p. 153). These superintendents expressed that “they were most effective when they were able to work with the board in an open, positive and cooperative manner” (McCormack, p. 153). Another factor that McCormack remarked upon was that the most effective superintendents felt that they had
established trust or integrity with the board and that good job performance was one way to establish this trust, that this built mutual respect and that boards would then allow superintendents more freedom in decision-making.

In 2004, the four superintendents interviewed described the characteristics that assist them to influence the board to be similar to those described by the superintendents of 1988. Those characteristics led to working with and not against their board. Most called it a matter of personal style. Superintendent Red describes himself as working “smart.” He doesn’t attempt to control the district. He works “carefully, cooperatively, collegially” and he values what the school board brings to the table. He listens carefully, yet makes sure that he is heard.

Superintendent White describes himself as a “risk-taker” who, at first, needed to get the board and himself on track and moving in the same direction as soon as he was installed as superintendent (which he also equated to ‘CEO’ of the district). They worked hard together to establish their respective roles and establish trust.

On the other hand, Superintendent Blue claims that constant communication assists him in keeping the decision-making process moving smoothly. He believes that mutual respect allows the board and him to work together to make decisions in a manner that is not so much influencing as it is convincing.

Superintendent Yellow feels that it is too soon to tell, but that in general his style is very relaxed and “laid back” which is very different from his predecessor.
These superintendents of 2004 did not care for the idea of “controlling” or “influencing” the board as much as they did “working with” or “communicating with” their board. There was a strong sentiment of trust and openness in their workings with their boards. They felt that this was the underlying factor in their ability to be heard by their board. Finally, that by having the trust of the board so that the board would listen to them, they would perhaps be able to influence decisions that are made by their board.

The Superintendent and Special Interest Groups

(4) Can you identify a dominant interest group with which you work to generate public support? How much time do you spend generating public support for your schools? (These questions assist in answering research questions nos. 2 & 4.)

In McCormack’s interviews of 1988, a few superintendents indicated that there were minor power groups in the community within newcomers, young parents with agendas, and PTOs, but there was not much to report from the interviews. In 2004, not one of the four superintendents felt that there was a clearly defined special interest group that exerted influence on the board.

Role Expectations for Board Members and the Superintendent

McCormack asked the superintendents to describe their role expectations because in his national study, Hentges had indicated that this area was a “valuable indicator of potential conflict and power issues in the school board-superintendent relationship.” (McCormack, p. 157) Therefore, each superintendent was asked to describe his idea of appropriate role behaviors for both the school board and the superintendent.
(10) What do you think is the appropriate role of school board members? Of superintendents? (These questions assist in answering research question no. 2.)

(11) Do you frequently have to give the board several alternatives to respective actions or is it willing to support your best recommendations? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(12) What types of issues result in conflict between you and the board in your district? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(13) Do you think that school board “rubber stamps” the actions of the superintendent? (This question assists in answering each research question.)

In 1988, these descriptions varied somewhat from superintendent to superintendent, but overall there was agreement that the superintendent’s role was to act as a professional advisor, CEO, leader, and to be financial manager. These same superintendents then described the school board role as that of policy makers (referring to it as the “textbook definition”) as well as liaison for the school system to the community. There was also a consensus among the superintendents that it was not the job of the school board to become involved in the everyday running of the schools and that personnel was an area of particular difficulty.

In 2004, interviewed superintendents felt that their role was that of “CEO, facilitator, enabler,” as described by Superintendent Red. Others used descriptors such as “manager” and “leader.” They all were clear that they felt that it was the superintendent’s role to run the schools. This doesn’t appear to have a different slant from the superintendents of fifteen years ago.

Each superintendent, when asked about school board roles, stated first that policy making was the essential role of the school board, but then each moved on to state other ideas. Superintendent Red felt strongly that it was more than just policy making but that school board members need to invest
themselves in their schools by considering, reflecting, and thinking analytically
about what they are trying to do for their schools. Superintendent White talked
about the board setting the vision and reflecting the values of their community.
He also mentioned that the board must be “future thinking.” Superintendent
Blue reiterated all of the above but then went on to add that in smaller districts,
the role of the school board was more than vision and policy. These boards are
much more likely to be approached by townspeople and held accountable for the
choices of the superintendent in everyday matters. So the superintendent needs
to keep them fully aware and sometimes involve them in giving their input into
the decisions made regarding the running of the schools. Superintendent Yellow
simply replied, “policy development.”

The superintendents of 1988 and 2004 both describe the school board as
primarily in the role of policy maker. This has not changed over the fifteen-year
period.

The Future of School Board-Superintendent Relations

This is an area of interest as several of the superintendents interviewed
fifteen years ago had strong feelings about SAU reorganization. (This was also
reflected in the survey response noted in Chapter 4.)

(14) What do you see as the future of superintendent-school board relations? (This
question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

McCormack discussed three of his interviewees as being “adamant” in
their position. These three felt that many superintendents had too much job
responsibility and it was impossible to do their job effectively in some SAUs
because of being stretched too thin. One of the three mentioned the need to
strengthen the building principal’s position to that of being more autonomous
and working more closely with boards. Several of the other superintendents "were rather pessimistic in their views of the future of superintendent-school board relations" (McCormack, p. 166). He went on to state that these superintendents were noting that unspecified national organizations were sending literature to school boards instructing them on how to run the schools and that school boards were moving into micromanagement because this new information seemed to entitle the board members to become involved directly in the running of the schools. Their conclusion from this was that relations would deteriorate as boards moved into the superintendent’s realm.

In 2004, the picture is not so gloomy. All four superintendents felt that the future of superintendent-school board relations held promise. Superintendent Red felt that if the superintendent were "smart," relations would always be good. He went on to explain that it was more of an approach and an attitude than a procedure; that if the style of leadership were collaborative and careful, superintendents would be successful in any situation. Superintendent White remarked on how email was improving communication and that there will always be school board members with their own agendas but that it is a matter of working past those. As a side comment, Superintendent White called for more professional development for superintendents. He felt that superintendents needed wide opportunity to sharpen their skills and increase their knowledge to better serve their boards. Superintendent Blue indicated that in his community, the future was bright. The town was supportive and that there was a good feeling about the school system. Superintendent Yellow found his board willing to accept training from the New Hampshire School Boards Association and that that had encouraged the board to remain in its proper role. He also remarked on
recent legislation in Massachusetts that had passed to the superintendent some of the power of the board and had put a real limit on what the board can do. He wanted to see that clarity in New Hampshire as well.

So, today’s superintendents paint a better future for superintendent-school board relations than their predecessors of fifteen years ago. SAU reorganization was heavily on the minds of superintendents in 1988, but not in 2004.

The Influence of Changes in Education in the Last 15 Years

This section was added to gain responses from the superintendents regarding the influences on school governance today. These additional questions to the original study requested responses in the areas of the superintendent’s role as professional advisor to the board, influences on school finance, governmental intervention in the schools as in The No Child Left Behind Act, pressures on present budget constraints placed by the government directing funds to certain areas, and lastly how each superintendent would describe the working model for decision-making of their board.

(14) Do you find that the recent legislative mandates such as NCLB have created a change in the tenor of discussions between all parties at board meetings? (This question assists in answering each research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(15) In light of the recent growth in government legislation in education, do you find that the School Board needs to rely more heavily on your knowledge of new legislation to make its decisions on budget? On policy? (These questions assist in answering each research question.)

(16) Do the budget requirements of meeting the standards of new legislation create greater discussion over the allocation of funds than before the legislation? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 3 & 4.)

(17) Has the continual shift in the funding system for public schools brought greater challenges to you regarding your ability to finance appropriately your educational goals for the district? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)
When queried regarding whether or not school boards relied more heavily on their professional expertise because of the new legislation, three out of four of the superintendents replied that this was definitely so. One superintendent felt that it was no more or less than before. Several interviewees stated that the barrage of new requirements pressured them to quickly provide the board with as much information as possible. As new decisions are handed down from the government, new policies must be written, sometimes without a great deal of time for discussion. So they pass information on to the boards as it comes in to them. Superintendent Yellow felt that the board was looking for information from him but that he didn't feel that they always relied on that information to make their decisions.

Superintendents were asked if they felt that the new and often earmarked budget requirements of legislation created tension and greater discussion on their board. Some superintendents felt that the board just accepted the requirements and did the best they could to reallocate other resources without much debate. Other superintendents stated that there was more discussion in the process of trying to cut back in other areas, setting priorities, and trying to remain fiscally responsible.

The government of State of New Hampshire is now discussing the repeal of the statewide property tax, which is used to fund an “adequate education” as required by the state constitution, and replacing it with a distribution formula to assist needy towns. This property tax has been highly controversial, as some towns became “donor towns” and others became “receiving towns” of the tax revenues. Each year the state legislature recreates the funding formula for the distribution of these property tax funds and the towns are often not completely
sure of their grants until very late in the budget year. Each superintendent replied in the affirmative that this instability created tension in his districts, but that he "deals with it." There are no expectations of grant awards year to year and there is some concern that if the state property tax system collapses, the receiving towns will then be forced to pick up the slack in funding and see a large tax increase in a single year. Then, there is the looming question of what will be cut. In this way, the interviewees expressed concern for the future of this system and what the future holds for their school district.

Lastly, superintendents were asked if their board uses a consensus or majority vote model to make its decisions.

Even though a vote on a motion is always taken, does the school board work with a consensus model or a majority vote model to make decisions? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

Superintendents Red and Blue state that their boards use consensus whereas Superintendents White and Yellow, although there is an attempt to reach consensus, their districts follow a voting model. In the districts that mostly reach a consensus before voting, there is much communication outside the meeting between the superintendent and the school board members. In those districts that more often discuss and vote along the lines of the traditional model, there are fewer contact hours between the superintendent and school board prior to the meeting.

Summary

McCormack described superintendent-school board relationships in 1988 as being "predominately positive and cooperative in nature." (McCormack, p. 167) Although he went on to state that there were some factors identified as having a negative impact on those relations. At that time, those factors were
teacher negotiations, increased unionism, and board turnover. In 2004, the superintendents interviewed also described superintendent-school board relations as positive and cooperative. No specific or outstanding areas of significance were brought forward as representing areas of tension today. The emphasis was on open, honest communication and creating a high level of trust between boards and superintendents to maintain good relationships. In some respects, it might appear as if the superintendents were more invested in their relationship with the board than in creating momentum to achieve something that they would desire to be done. Most attempts to carefully educate the board before decisions are made appear to be an effort to create consensus among the board members before meetings take place so that relationships will remain comfortable before the public.

This relationship translates into a superintendent’s ability to influence the board. Although today’s superintendents state that they don’t have an interest in controlling the board, they state that they prefer to give the board what information it needs to make its own decision.

Superintendents of 1988 and 2004 did not recognize any strong interest or power groups in their districts. There was mention of a few parent groups or PTOs, but it was not claimed that they had power in decision-making.

In the area of role behavior, both the superintendents of 1988 and the superintendents of 2004 affirmed that the school board creates policy and the superintendent manages the school as the basis of their relationships. There exist minor qualifications to that that are individual to each superintendent’s district but these remain the overriding perceived roles of each party.
In 1988, many of the interviewed superintendents looked to the future for a reorganization of the SAU in smaller units. Today, the superintendents predict an even more positive relationship based upon the effort to work collaboratively to do their respective jobs. This emphasis on relationships is characterized as personal style by several of the superintendents, but they all agreed that this element of their leadership style would continue to lead to improved relations.

School Board Interviews

To give balance to the comments of the superintendents, four of their school board chairs were interviewed. In 1988, McCormack did this in an effort to further clarify the nature of the relationships that exist between superintendent and school board members, factors that impact upon these relationships, and the status of school governance in small New Hampshire school districts... This process provided this researcher with the opportunity to ask questions relative to the superintendent-school board relations and school governance in small, rural New Hampshire school districts of those individuals (i.e., board members) who are in a position to verify or contradict the views presented by the superintendent of the respective district.

Information obtained through interviews with school board members provided this researcher with perspectives that further defined the nature of superintendent-school board relationships and the state of school governance in small, rural New Hampshire school districts (McCormack, p. 170).

Here, this researcher will introduce and discuss the responses of today’s school board members and draw comparisons to the responses of the school board members of 1988.

School Board Participants

(1) Please describe your school district. Consider things such as community attitudes towards education, the local power structure, local economy, shifts in population and changes within your community. (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)
Board members participating in interviews were both male and female, but for the purposes of this study they will be referred to in the male gender. Together they have lived in their communities for an average of eighteen years and have served an average of 4.8 years on their school board. This is down from an average of 11 years for the school board chairs interviewed in 1988. Two graduated from college and two had some college. The 1988 sample included two school board members with some college, two school board members who were college graduates and three with advanced degrees.

Chairman Red has lived for eighteen years in his town. He is a college graduate and a professional. He has served on the board for four years and has not experienced a bond issue during that time. He did not have to face competition for his seat and supports the schools as they are. He feels that the town does a very good job with its school system. He was motivated by civic duty to run for his seat. He felt it was time to give back to the town where he raised his children.

In Chairman White, we find a man who has lived for fifteen years in his community. He ran for the board because he wanted to see changes made and he has served for nine years. His district has seen a bond defeated in the last three years. He faced competition for his seat. He works directly with the assistant superintendent in this district who is under Superintendent White. He has served on the board for nine years.

Chairman Blue has lived twenty-years in his community. He raised his children there and ran for the school board to serve the community. He is supportive of the status quo, although he supported the successful bond that
came before his board during his six-year tenure. He did not face competition for his seat.

Chairman Yellow has lived for eighteen years in his community. He is a college graduate and a professional. He has served on his board for nine years and gained his seat without competition. He is supportive of the present status overall but would like some minor changes and became involved because he is a teacher in another district. His district has not dealt with a bond issue during his tenure on the school board.

Findings

As with the superintendents, the continued investigation of the factors that impact upon superintendent-school board relations in small, rural New Hampshire school districts moves on to school board chairpersons. These interviews were conducted with the same questions in the same order as were conducted in 1988 by Dr. McCormack. In addition to the questions posed in the 1988 study, additional probing questions were included in these interviews to further explore the factors that have emerged in the intervening fifteen years as possibly having an effect on superintendent-school board relations.

As in McCormack’s study, specific questions were asked during the interviews with board members “related to

(1) existing relationships between the superintendent and school board;
(2) changes that have occurred within the last ten years relative to the types of relationships between the superintendent and school board;
(3) factors that impact on the superintendent-school board relationship;
(4) the factors and/or characteristics demonstrated by the superintendent that influence his/her effectiveness as a leader;
(5) types of issues that the board, having initially disagreed with the desires of the superintendent, would/would not be likely to submit to the wishes of the superintendent;
(6) type of issues that are likely to result in conflict between the superintendent and school board;
amounts and types of discussion that occur at school board meetings; the role the community plays in the decision-making process and the level of significance that interest/pressure groups have relative to influencing the board’s decision/actions; the level of competition for board positions; the appropriate role-orientation and behavior for school board members and superintendents; and the future of school board members in New Hampshire. (McCormack, p. 174-5)

In addition to these questions, others were included regarding the influence of new legislation and funding changes that have occurred in the intervening years between 1988 and 2004. Another question addressed whether the decision-making style used was that of majority vote or consensus reaching.

The interviews with school board chairs, for the most part, reinforced the findings of the superintendents’ interviews. Superintendents and school board members tended to be in agreement regarding those items in their districts, which could create tension or greater discussion. What follows for the rest of this chapter is a summary presentation of the results of the interviews with school board members regarding their perceptions of superintendent-school board relations in small, rural New Hampshire school districts today and a comparison to the responses to the questions asked in the 1988 study.

Superintendent-School Board Relationships

(3) How would you describe the superintendent-school board relations that exist in your district? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(4) Have you observed a change in these relations or in the way in which the superintendent functions over the last ten years? (This question assists in answering research question no. 1.)

(5) What factors impact on your relationship with the superintendent? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)
School board members presented a perception of their relations with their present superintendents with clarity and also mentioned previous relations with serving superintendents as well. Each of these districts was chosen because they represented not only a geographic distribution, but also a distribution of community type, SAU structure, and relations. The following is what these board members had to say.

Of the four school board members interviewed, only one described relations being less than fully cooperative and collegial. (This was in the White district where this board fell under the assistant superintendent.) The majority of board members felt that relations were very good between the superintendent and the school board. One school board member even suggested that relations were perhaps "too good" and that there was a "laissez-faire" attitude, which might even be dangerous. One board member stated that it was hard to find anything wrong with their relations. He described the superintendent as "strong, knowing what he wanted to do, and working very well with everyone." The board member with a less than satisfying relationship with the assistant superintendent stated that today's relationship is "fifty-fifty." He says that things have changed over the past few years in town and there is a lack of trust between the community and the board and superintendent. Budgets have failed because of it and there is definitely some tension. The superintendent of this district remarked that he was aware of tensions, but remained less than specific about details as he considered this district the realm of his assistant.

This response is similar overall to the responses in 1988, where all but one board member felt that things were going well and they were satisfied with school board-superintendent relations in their district.
School board members were asked to reflect on any changes in the relations between the school board and the superintendent over the last ten years. The question posed a challenge for some board members as their tenure was not that long, and/or they had had several superintendents during that time span. Where there had been only one superintendent, the board member stated simply "not really."

Where there had been some change in relations over the last ten years in another district, the school board member related it to changes in the board not in the superintendent per se. One district had experienced four different superintendents over the past ten years. He felt that relations changed with the personalities of the superintendents not the boards. Another district described the change as dramatic, but it was because the relationship with the previous superintendent had not been as good as with the present one. The board member felt that this new superintendent was more responsive and things "actually happened under his leadership."

These findings seem to fall into line with the varying experiences of the 1988 sample of school board members. Their experiences were as varied as there were districts. There was much discussion about the "style" of the superintendent such as one district, which had wanted to hire a superintendent with a "less autocratic leadership style" (McCormack, p. 181). Another district had wanted to move toward a superintendent where "the primary change had been toward the adoption of a style that is less directive and more consultative. Previous superintendents were more active and autocratic" (McCormack, p. 181). In 1988, for several districts, the movement was toward a superintendent who was more of a professional advisor than active executive.
In 2004, school board members were asked to identify factors that impact the board relations with the superintendent. A factor cited was change in SAU structure in the Red district and that was a positive change. Another board member indicated that his greatest desire was not to be surprised by anything. Another stated quite bluntly that budget was a factor. He wanted the budget well managed and presented. Then he went on to add curriculum, statewide testing, and management of personnel. How well the superintendent performed with these items impacted on how well the school board worked with him. The last comment came from a board member who just felt that this superintendent was a relief from prior administration and that how the new superintendent dealt with people was the defining factor in how well the relations went with the board.

In 1988, McCormack reported that

All of the board members interviewed saw the variety and nature of the types of issues that they were forced to deal with as having a significant impact on their relationship with the superintendent. (McCormack, p. 182)

Many of those board members cited teacher negotiations as having an impact on relations, as well as special education issues, civil rights issues, and complex financial record keeping procedures. There seems to be less of an emphasis on style and interpersonal relationships in 1988. In 2004, the remarks dealt primary with how the superintendent worked with the board, not how he presented himself to the board.

**Ability to Influence the Decision-Making Process**

One of the basic questions of McCormack’s original study was to determine the extent to which a superintendent could influence the decision-
making process of the school board. As a part of the interview process, several questions were asked leading to insight into this area. These include:

(7) What types of issues, if any, is the board willing to give in to the superintendent’s wishes if you initially disagreed with the particular thing the superintendent wanted? What types of issues, if any, are you unwilling to give in to the superintendent? (These questions assist in answering research question no. 3.)

(8) What types of issues result in conflict between the board and the superintendent in your district? (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)

(12) What characteristics does the superintendent in your district need to possess to be an effective leader – one who the board and community will support and follow? (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)

Two of the school board members expressed that they were more likely to follow the recommendation of the superintendent with matters regarding personnel. Personnel was an area that the superintendent was close to and they expect his/her recommendations to reflect that. The other school board members felt that there wasn’t a particular area that they would necessarily “bend” to the recommendation of the superintendent. One expressed a dislike of the phrase “give in to.” He felt that that if the advice was well thought out, it wouldn’t be a problem to convince the board any more in one area than another.

Interestingly enough, when asked about what type of issues resulted in the most conflict between the board and the superintendent in their district, personnel came in as the area of issue for three out of four of the school board members. The other was if the superintendent took action in a sensitive area without informing the board.

In 1988,

A true measure of the superintendent’s ability to influence the decision-making process is to determine the influence the superintendent has when there is disagreement between the superintendent and the board over a particular issue . . . information generated from a survey of school board
members indicated that New Hampshire school board members were more likely resist changes sought by the superintendent in the areas of school finance and school closings and construction than in those areas related to education programs, personnel and superintendent-school board roles. (McCormack, p. 189)

The results of the 2004 surveys indicated a shift toward more issues over personnel and less over budget. This is true in the interview data as well.

There was no indication that school boards in New Hampshire were willing to give their superintendent complete control, and alongside that there was also no desire expressed among superintendents to have complete control.

School board members were asked about what types of issues created greater discussion at board meetings among board members and with the superintendent. The responses were interesting in that none of the school board members actually identified an issue but instead each one went on to describe the superintendent’s style of setting up the discussion before the meeting or not setting it up before the meeting. The answer to discussion at board meetings was more about how well informed the board members were of the issues before the meeting and whether or not they have time to think about them before the meeting. Those whose superintendents had kept the board well informed and prepared them with time to reflect before the meeting in which the issue would be discussed, felt that the discussions were balanced and useful, and resulted in appropriate action. One board member remarked on how, under a previous superintendent, no one knew anything before they came to the board meeting and the discussions were disorganized and poor decisions were made. Another mentioned that he felt that he never left a meeting feeling that he didn’t have the opportunity to speak his mind and did not feel rushed into making a decision. He was satisfied with that.
Generally, in 2004 and in 1988, board members expressed that there was an effort on both parts to work through things in an appropriate, logical, and reasonable manner and that they felt this was happening in their district.

Community Involvement

In 1988, McCormack was interested in how the community and its interaction with the school board entered into the relationship between the school board and the superintendent. Again, in this interview, school board members were asked several questions relating to community involvement and how it affects the function and relations of the school board. School board members were asked to share their perceptions on "(1) the level of competition for school board positions in their district, (2) the impact of interest/pressure groups on board action, and (3) community reaction to and support of board decisions/ actions" (McCormack, p. 196).

(6) Is there competition for board positions in your district? Why? Why not? (These questions assist in answering research question no. 4.)

(9) Is there a dominant interest/pressure group with which you work to generate public support for your schools? (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)

(10) How would you describe the community's reaction to and support of the school board's actions/decisions? (This question assists in answering research question no. 4.)

(13) How great an influence does the community have on your decisions/ actions as a board member? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

In 1988, school board members stated that there was little competition for board seats in their communities. Usually, candidates had to be recruited and encouraged to run. In 2004, three of the school board members remarked that there was and there wasn't competition in their district. Competition varied year
to year and that this year there had been competition as opposed to the year earlier where there was none and citizens had to be encouraged to run. The Yellow district, which is the smallest by far, initially had no competition, but then a small group did not want the person who had put his name on the ballot to win and urged the person leaving the board to reconsider and he did and won in a write-in campaign. They felt that the other candidate was too new to town to make good decisions. In the Red district, there had been one opening and this year there were three candidates for the spot. There wasn’t any particular reason, but it was unusual for that to happen. Generally, there was little competition in that particular district.

As for the question of groups with power in the town with which it is necessary for the school board and superintendent to work, three of the four school board members identified parent groups such as the PTA. One town had a group of parents lobby for a new school on behalf of the board. The bond did not pass and since then the parent group has disbanded. Another cited the budget committee, although it is advisory, as a group with which the board and superintendent work together. In 1988, there was only one of the seven board members interviewed who identified an established group, which was the League of Women Voters, which was active in school politics. Other school board members identified only ad hoc groups that came and went. These ad hoc groups came into being to react to one or two issues and then would disband.

As for the community’s reaction to the actions/decisions of the board, The Red school board member felt that the community was 100% behind the board. The board felt that the community was highly supportive of everything that they did. On the other hand, the White school board member stated that there was
mistrust in the community regarding money and that this creates a tense climate for the board. At least this is the part of the community that seemed to have contact with the school board. The Blue school board member felt that the support level was very high for what the board has been doing. The community was focused on the larger question of population growth, not so much how the school system was being forced to react to it but the entire town in general. The Yellow school board member wasn't sure if anyone in the town noticed what he does. The town hall was always full for school district meetings and school concerts were well attended. So he felt that support was there. There wasn't much that people in the community had to say to the board.

These perceptions in 2004 do not seem to differ much from those of 1988. The community gets involved when there is something that interests them in particular. Otherwise, the perception of support is there and the school board and superintendent function together on their own.

Role Expectations for School Board Members and the Superintendent

The questions to answer this area were,

(2) How would you describe the appropriate role of a school board member? Of a superintendent? (These questions assist in answering research question no. 2.)

(14) Describe the amount and types of discussion that occurs at board meetings among board members and with the superintendent prior to the board meeting. (This question assists in answering research question no. 1.)

(15) Does the board "rubber stamp" the action of the superintendent? (This question assists in answering each research question.)

These questions brought a number of different responses from the school board members interviewed in 2004. The difference in the responses between the school board members and the superintendents were more a matter of length than of substance. The answers of superintendents were most often one or two word
phrases, whereas the corresponding answer from school board members were long and sometimes less precise.

Two of the school board members used the word "oversight" in their explanation of the role of the school board. A third alluded to that role. The fourth characterized the role of the school board as that of educational advocate to the community with an "obligation to drive change." Although "policy" and "direction" were mentioned, school board members added comments about budget, transportation and contracts as the "role" of the school board.

For the role of superintendent, the school board members used many different descriptors. Among those descriptors were CEO, leader, advocate for education, educational and legal advisor, and liaison to the SAU. Each school board member agreed that it was the superintendent's job to make everything work.

These role definitions are in agreement with those of 1988. The school board members were more descriptive of their role when asked than the superintendents were when asked the same question, yet the answers remain essentially the same.

The Future of New Hampshire School Boards

When asked the question,

(11) What does the future hold for board members in New Hampshire? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

the school board members all responded negatively. The school board members of 2004 are fearful for those who follow them. The concerns were:

• "the time consuming nature of the job and the way people live today;"
• "it's a thankless job;"
• “there are so many money constraints that are imposed on them;”
• “people need to think beyond their own town and reach out to improve education from a global perspective or public education will fail;”
• “it’s difficult with the lack of funding."

In the Yellow school board member’s town, everyone checks out whether someone moving in to town has a child with disabilities. A small district is highly impacted year to year by the costs for an individual student’s needs.

Despite the recent higher level of competition for board seats in these towns, these school board members recognize the demands of the job as being high and stressful and worry about the future and ability of citizens to keep up with the pace and complexity of what lies ahead.

In 1988, the outlook was rosier. “All of the board members interviewed expressed the viewpoint that school boards will continue to impact upon the education system in New Hampshire. Several board members believe that the existing school administrative unit organization scheme enhances the position and value of the school board.” (McCormack, p. 207) One interviewee reported his belief that school board members today (1988) were much more knowledgeable than their predecessors. They saw a future of relying more heavily on outside consultants, but they all felt that in the future school boards would be able to continue to be significant partners in the education of New Hampshire’s youth.

The Influence of Changes in Education in the Last 15 Years

In addition to the questions that McCormack posed to school board members in 1988, four questions were added to probe into the perceptions of
school board members regarding the newly emerging influences on superintendent-school board relations over the intervening fifteen years.

(16) In light of the recent growth in government legislation in education, does the School Board find itself relying more heavily on the Superintendent's knowledge of new legislation to make its decisions on budget? On policy? (These questions assist in answering each research question.)

(17) Do the budget requirements of meeting the standards of new legislation create greater discussion over the allocation of funds? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 3 & 4.)

(18) Has the continual shift in the funding system for public schools brought greater challenges to the board regarding its ability to appropriately finance its goals for its schools? (This question assists in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

(19) Does this school board work toward consensus before taking a vote? How successful is that? (These questions assist in answering research questions nos. 1 & 4.)

These questions brought to the interview further inquiry into superintendent-school board relations with the influence of such items as new government legislation, new requirements for the allocation of funds, the unstable nature of school funding in the State of New Hampshire at the present time, and a glance at the manner in which school boards presently attempt to reach their decisions, as a view of how they work together.

The school board members were split on whether or not the new legislation caused them to rely more heavily on the expertise of their superintendent to make decisions. Both the Red and the White school board members replied that the new laws didn't really change the status quo. They claimed that the superintendent took the time to educate them, give them articles to read, and that they spent time on the internet reading about the new laws but that they did not rely more heavily on the superintendent's knowledge to make decisions in light of these new laws. On the other hand, the Blue and Yellow
school board members indicated that indeed they did rely a great deal more on
the superintendent to guide them in making decisions regarding new legislation.
They expected it as a part of his job. The superintendent would not only provide
them with material but also speak up and guide them to do the right thing.

When asked about the level of discussion that new mandates required of
the board regarding funding and expenditures, three of the four school board
member were of the perception that these mandates did not really create more
discussion or tension because they were required. They simply had to comply
with them, so there was nothing to be said. They accepted them as a given and
moved on from there. One school board member stated that these requirements
caused a great deal of discussion and anger in his district and from his board. Yet
the anger was directed away from the board, not toward it. So it did not directly
affect the relationship of the board to the superintendent.

Since the Claremont II decision, the State of New Hampshire has
struggled with legislating a fair and equitable method of paying for an adequate
education. Each year the formula for fund distribution is revisited and adjusted.
This creates great instability in the awards that are granted each town. When
asked if this instability has brought greater challenges to governing the schools,
the school board members were again split in their responses. The more affluent
districts were split and the less affluent districts were split in their response to
this question; one of each to each side of the issue. The Yellow school board
member indicated that the continuing fluctuation made the townspeople
noticeably reticent to commit to anything because it was never clear how it
would affect their tax burden. The Blue school board member remarked that
since they had so little control over any of their budget, the instability didn't seem to matter much. The others did not elaborate.

Lastly, each school board member was asked if their board moved to take votes when they felt that they had reached a consensus or whether they simply voted when everyone felt that they had had their say in the matter. The school board members all indicated that they preferred consensus but that it was not always reachable and that ultimately the vote made the decision. Although the White school board member made a comment that under the previous superintendent consensus had pretty much been the case, under the new superintendent, this was not so. He indicated that it seemed to be more a matter of style of the superintendent.

Summary

In 1988, all but one of the school board members indicated that relations with superintendents were fully cooperative. In 2004, this was also the case. Those superintendents who were perceived by school board members as working openly, honestly, communicated well, and worked well with people, were the ones that seemed to have the better relations with their respective school boards.

Two school board members in 2004 felt that they were more likely to bend to the recommendation of the superintendent in areas of personnel than other areas. The others felt that if the superintendent was convincing, they could vote for his recommendation. In 1988, the findings were similar. Boards were more likely to be swayed by the superintendent in areas of personnel, educational programs, and roles than they were in fiscal or physical plant matters.
It was the perception of school board members in 2004 and fifteen years prior in 1988, that the superintendent's style impacted the amount and intensity of discussion during meetings. If the board was well-informed prior to the meeting, discussions went smoothly.

School board members in 1988 indicated that there was little competition for seats. School board members of 2004 indicated that they also felt that there was historically little competition for seats although there had been more recently.

The presence of power holding groups in the community as indicated by school board members in both 1988 and 2004, seems to wax and wane depending upon the issues (i.e. bond issues, budget concerns). Community reaction to the decisions of the school board seems to follow the intensity of issues as well. When there are no driving issues, the community is quiet and supportive, when there are issues, the board falls under some scrutiny from the town.

Role expectations of school board members seem to continue to align, as those perceptions reported in 1988 were unchanged from those reported in 2004.

An interesting change in perception does occur between 1988 and 2004. It lies in the question of what is coming in the future for New Hampshire school boards? In 1988, school board members felt that the future looked promising. In 2004, school board members were negative, citing the pressures of time and lack of funding as a continuing problem for those participating in the process.

Regarding changes during the last fifteen years, school board members were often of differing opinions. They held differing views on the effect of new legislation on relations and funding. On the present day decision-making process though, they agreed that they preferred consensus when it could be reached.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the changes that may have occurred in the nature of superintendent and school board relations in school districts in New Hampshire with fewer than 2,500 students between 1988 and 2004. The basis premise was that the characteristics of governance in these schools districts has changed since 1988 because of the influence of new legislation, changes in local demographics, and other factors relating to who is on the board and who are the superintendents of today.

The specific objective was to review Dr. McCormack’s data and compare it to the data gathered from fifteen years later, in 2004. These data include the answers to the research questions:

(1) What is the nature of school board-superintendent relations in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire and what changes, if any, have occurred in these relationships during the last fifteen years?

(2) How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

(3) What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?
(4) What factors impact upon the school board’s and the superintendent’s respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

These four research questions, originally generated by Dr. McCormack for his 1988 study, were revisited and revised by this researcher to include the question of change over the last fifteen years. These four questions provide the framework for the following summary and concluding statements.

**Summary of Findings**

The written survey questions for this research were originally taken from Hentges’ national study of superintendent-school board relations and modified by Dr. McCormack for use in his 1988 study of small New Hampshire school districts. Therefore, these questions do not fall neatly under the four research questions used by Dr. McCormack or the four research questions used by this researcher. Since Chapter 4 was written without breaking out results per research question to follow the design of Dr. McCormack’s study, for the concluding summary, an attempt was made to place the findings under one of each of the four research questions. Yet, most of these questions (as indicated with each chart in Chapter 4) are felt to contain partial answers to more than one research questions. This researcher has assigned each of the findings to one research question only for the purposes of summarizing the study, but the reader is free to draw whatever inferences s/he might as partial answers to all four questions.

(1) *What is the nature of school board-superintendent relations in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire and what changes, if any, have occurred in these relationships during the last fifteen years?*
Today, things have changed regarding who is a superintendent in New Hampshire. Superintendents are generally more highly educated. Women superintendents have increased in number and percentage of superintendents in the state. Superintendents are older on average now. The length of tenure in a job by superintendents has generally decreased.

School Boards have changed in some ways and not in others. The educational levels of present school board members have not changed significantly since 1988. School board members are coming more often from professional or technical occupations, and less often from homemakers or retirees. Most school board chairs are serving their second three-year term.

Most school board members are elected to the board through subdued competition today rather than through spirited competition or no competition of 1988. School board members mostly still run for the board to advocate for minor change in their school districts.

School boards rate their superintendent’s performance in a more polarized fashion in 2004 than in 1988. Superintendents tend to be rated at the top of the scale or the middle of the scale now versus a spread in 1988. Superintendent in 1988 enjoyed a greater spread along the 1 to 10 scale than they do today. In 2004, they were rated at or near the top of the scale if they were well received by their school board. Also, if their rating fell in the middle of the scale, their scores fell to the lower side of the middle scores (mostly 5s) as opposed to 1988 where they were more evenly distributed across the middle scores (5s and 6s).

Issues that affect the nature of superintendent – school board relations (according to superintendents) have changed in rank order but the top three
issues remain the same. In 1988, it was Personnel, Fiscal/budget, and Superintendent/School Board relations. In 2004, it was Fiscal/budget, and Personnel and Superintendent/School Board relations were tied for second place.

School Boards have changed their perception of which issues cause the most contention between them and the superintendent. Personnel/teacher evaluation has become more contentious whereas tension over the structure of the SAU has diminished. Financial/budget issues remain at the top of the list with these other two and now collective bargaining has also become more of an issue between school boards and superintendents.

(2) How do school board members and superintendents define their roles relative to one another and to the public they serve or represent and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

School boards and superintendents have similar opinions, and at times, differing opinions on what has changed and what has not changed.

There has been a change in the sources of information identified by the school board members as important for decision-making purposes. In 1988, parents were considered most important followed by the superintendent and central office staff. In 2004, the superintendent and the central office staff are more important sources of information than the parents, and now parents tied with students as the third most important source of information.

More board members today agree that the superintendent should be responsible for day to day operations of the schools, that they were not there to legitimate the decisions of the superintendent, and that they should not deal directly with parent complaints. Also, more school board members feel that the
primary responsibility of the school board was not supervising the superintendent and central office staff.

Superintendents still see themselves still as instructional leaders. This is not surprising particularly considering the accountability for curriculum and instruction under The No Child Left Behind Act. The majority of School Board members still do not see their superintendent as an instructional leader and this has not changed between 1988 and 2004.

(3) What roles do school board members and superintendents play in the decision-making and policy development process and what changes, if any, have occurred in these roles during the last fifteen years?

The state of role definition can allow superintendents and school boards to work smoothly together or run the risk of raising tension in their relationship. There have been some shifts in this area as the issues of education have become more complex over the past fifteen years. The role of the community in decision-making has grown in importance to these parties as well. This change might affect these roles in new ways yet to be explored.

School Board members see the superintendent more often as a decision-maker than they did in 1988 and less of a professional advisor or functionary. On the other hand, superintendents see themselves more of political strategists and less as decision-makers now than in 1988.

School board members have now shifted to preferring a combination of public and personal input into their board vote rather than just making up their own minds. The superintendents felt that way in 1988 and in 2004.

School boards generally still feel the same level of conflict between their responsibility to the public and to the school administration now as they did in 1988.
Both the school board members and superintendents feel that they are more willing to take a stand that is unpopular with the community now than they did in the 1988 study.

Neither the response of school board members nor superintendents indicated a perceived change in the power structures in their communities. Power is still seen as dispersed across various organizations and groups of people.

(4) What factors impact upon the school board's and the superintendent's respective control of the decision-making and policy development processes, and what changes, if any, have occurred in these factors during the last fifteen years?

Although the involvement of the community in how the school board and superintendent make decisions was mentioned above, it is important to this research question as well. The community may be perceived of as impacting much of what the school board and superintendent consider their roles as well as a factor for them to deal with as decisions are made.

School board candidates still run for the board today with the desire to primarily make small changes. Most do not run with a large change agenda or simply for reasons of doing a civic duty.

The school board still feels about the same with regard to the level of the superintendent's responsiveness to board suggestions and/or recommendations.

The school board today believes that the superintendent is generally more likely to dominate the decisions made regarding educational program, personnel/personnel policy, finance/fiscal, school closings/construction, and superintendent/school board roles, whereas the superintendents feel that they are less likely to dominate decision-making in those areas.
The school board is more likely to disagree with the superintendent today about personnel but is less likely to disagree now about school closings and construction. On the other hand, superintendents agree that personnel is more of an issue but superintendent/school board roles are less of an issue for them now than in 1988.

School board members still feel as conflicted about their responsibility toward the public and toward the school administration as they did in 1988.

Both the school board and superintendents today feel that the public is less willing to participate in the decision-making process. Yet, at the same time, they report that the public is more willing to contact the superintendent about policy changes. The school board also reports that they consider the input of the community as more important now.

The school board still sees their communities as not very critical of board decisions and that the level of tension in their community is perceived to be about the same as it was in 1988.

**Implications for the Profession**

In 1988, Dr. McCormack recommended that superintendents develop political skills to work with board and community and facilitate working with the board. He expressed the concern that no one can afford to make unilateral decisions because the issues were too complex. He also suggested that superintendents and school boards should seek out community input.

In 2004, it would appear that the recommendations were apropos and that they continue to be appropriate. Superintendents indicated that the profession is moving toward a need to be more of a political strategist.
Therefore, those political skills recommended by Dr. McCormack still need development.

Dr. McCormack's expression of concern about issues becoming too complex for one person to decide is also continuing to unfurl as the federal and state government writes more and more legislation affecting schools. Superintendents and school boards must canvass the community before making decisions if they want to represent the community as they indicate they do. Tensions may be kept to a minimum if the community feels that they are well represented by both the school board and the school administration.

This requires that superintendents and school boards do a thorough job of educating the community about the issues confronting them in their job of governing the schools. Perhaps that means that central offices will, at some point in the future, need the services of a public relations/information person on the payroll. In the meantime, school boards and superintendents need to continue to find ways to reach out using what media they have at their disposal.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In 1988, Dr. McCormack made the recommendation that school boards and superintendents consider researching and making changes in the SAU structure. This is no longer a contentious issue between school boards and superintendents.

For the year 2004, recommendations for future research would include studies to:

- discover the impact that the community has on the decision-making process.
- discover the situations of women superintendents as their numbers grow in the State of New Hampshire.
• discover what effect micromanagement has on relationships between school boards and superintendents and how this affects superintendent turnover and related issues.

• discover the issues for which a superintendent is willing to risk his/her employment.

• discover the reasons why people do or do not move into the position of superintendent.

• do another fifteen year repeat to continue the data from this study.

Final Comments

This study was undertaken in an effort to compare the state of superintendent/school board relations in 1988 to that of 2004. It has shown that as much as things change, there is much that remains the same. There is no doubt that there has been change in the state of education in the New Hampshire in the past fifteen years, but the basic system of school boards and superintendents working together in small school districts to govern the schools has remained unchanged. Within that system, school boards and superintendents have been forced to deal with these changes by making adjustments in how they work together for the good of children.

As changes continue to be made by external influences, I suspect that school boards and superintendents will continue to strive to adjust how they work together. The question for the future will be just how much these two players can adjust to these imposed changes and remain as they are, become something either entirely different in nature from what they are now, or become extinct.
REFERENCES


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Key, J. P. (Copyright 1997) Research design in occupational education. Oklahoma State Universityhttp://www.okstate.edu/ag/agedcm4h/academic/aged5980a/5980/newpage110.htm


**WEBSITES**

No Child Left Behind Law. www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov
http://www.ed.state.nh.us/EdLaw/rsa193-D:2.htm

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO DR. PHILLIP MCCORMACK FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A REPEAT STUDY OF HIS 1988 DISSERTATION TOPIC
August 20, 2003

Dear Dr. McCormack,

Please allow me to introduce myself to you. I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of New Hampshire in Durham beginning work on a dissertation whose subject area is school board/superintendent roles and relationships. In my research, I came upon your dissertation and found that you had covered this area in New Hampshire in 1988. What I would like to do is to do a fifteen-year follow-up study based upon your research and instruments to determine whether or not things have changed, particularly in light of state testing, NCLB, the Claremont decision, SB2, and other factors.

What I am asking of you is your permission to continue your work in this area by duplicating your study, but also, if you would be willing, to serve on my dissertation committee. That would require two meetings at UNH; the proposal meeting and the final presentation. Your input would be a real asset to this process considering your knowledge of your study and the state of roles and relationships in 1988. I know that your time is valuable and heavily scheduled, but you might find both the results and the process of interest.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION AND NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION
January 20, 2004

Dear School Board Member:

Betsey Cox Stebbins is a practicing administrator (Principal, Armand R. Dupont School, Allenstown) in New Hampshire who is also a doctoral candidate in education at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. She is requesting your assistance with a research project that is quite timely and of interest to all of us. The data from this work will be used for her doctoral dissertation, but of more importance than that, will be of value to our study of school board-superintendent relations in particular and the study of school governance in general. I have corresponded with Betsey on her proposal and highly recommend the study to you as worthy of your time and effort.

No one is more aware than I of the many, many similar requests that you may receive. I would not trouble you for a moment if I did not think that this data will yield fresh, useful insights into the issues of superintendent-school board relationships in New Hampshire.

I hope that you will help Betsey in this endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Ted Comstock
Executive Director and Legal Counsel
January 21, 2004

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to encourage your participation in a survey dealing with educational leadership in New Hampshire.

Betsey Cox Stebbins is a practicing administrator (Principal, Armand R. Dupont School, Allenstown) in New Hampshire who is also a doctoral candidate in education at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. She is requesting your assistance with a research project that is quite timely and of interest to all of us. The data from this work will be used for her doctoral dissertation, but more important than that will be of value to our study of school board-superintendent relations in particular and the study of school governance in general. I have corresponded with Betsey on her proposal and highly recommend the study to you as worthy of your time and effort.

No one is more aware than I of the many, many similar requests that you may receive. I would not trouble you for a moment if I did not think that this data would yield fresh, useful insights into the issues of superintendent-school board relationships in New Hampshire.

I hope that you will help Betsey in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Mark

Dr. Mark V. Joyce
Executive Director, NTISAA
January 30, 2004

Dear Superintendent,

The last fifteen years have brought about much change in the governance of our schools. These changes have impacted the historic processes that have been in place for decision-making and the collaborative efforts between superintendents and school boards. During this time, we have seen the implementation of the Official Ballot Law (SB2), the Curriculum Frameworks, the NHIEAP testing and school rating, Claremont II, the Safe School Laws, changing demographics as the state grows in population and diversity, and finally, No Child Left Behind. I, personally, have seen a significant shift in the role of the superintendent and school board and therefore a change in their working relations.

In 1988, Dr. Phillip McCormack undertook to study the relations between superintendents and school boards in small, rural school districts in New Hampshire of 2500 students or less. I am asking you to assist me in repeating that study, and thereby providing new data against his baseline data that will give us a picture of what change has come about in those relations during this period.

The purpose of this letter is to enlist your help with what is intended to be a comprehensive study of the nature of superintendent and school board relationships in these rural districts. Personal and contextual variables will be examined as they relate to the educational policy and decision making process and as they relate to relationships between the superintendent and school board. Superintendents and school board chairpeople will be surveyed anonymously. Individual and school district anonymity is assured; confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research and the final report. Participants in the study will receive a copy of the final data.

Field testing has indicated that the survey will require approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. If you can give a few minutes from your schedule to contribute to this, I will be most grateful. Your participation is most important; this research is dependent upon your response.

Please return the survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope by Friday, February 23, 2004. Thank you for your time and cooperation. Please remember that participation is voluntary and participants may refuse to answer any question(s). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu to discuss them.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
Doctoral Candidate in Education
The University of New Hampshire
January 30, 2004

Dear School Board Chair,

The last fifteen years have brought about much change in the governance of our schools. These changes have impacted the historic processes that have been in place for decision-making and the collaborative efforts between superintendents and school boards. During this time, we have seen the implementation of the Official Ballot Law (SB2), the Curriculum Frameworks, the NHIEAP testing and school rating, Claremont II, the Safe School Laws, changing demographics as the state grows in population and diversity, and finally, No Child Left Behind. I, personally, have seen a significant shift in the role of the superintendent and school board and therefore a change in their working relations.

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Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
Doctoral Candidate in Education
The University of New Hampshire

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SUPERINTENDENT – SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONSHIPS

School Board Questionnaire

Confidentiality: This questionnaire is identified by a code number to simplify record keeping and follow-up procedures only in reporting the results. NO INDIVIDUAL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT IDENTITY WILL BE DIVULGED. Only group statistical responses will be cited. RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

Directions: Please circle the number of the proper answer for each of the following questions. Where blanks are provided, fill in the requested information. You may use either pen or pencil.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. What is your sex?  
1. Female  2. Male

2. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN YOUR PRESENT COMMUNITY? _____

3. WHICH CATEGORY BEST DESCRIBES YOUR EDUCATIONAL LEVEL? Select only one.

1. Completed elementary school
2. Graduated from high school
3. Graduated from college
4. Some College
5. Master’s Degree
6. Doctorate Degree
7. Professional Degree (law, medicine, etc.)
8. Technical or Trade School

4. WHICH CATEGORY BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OCCUPATION?

1. Professional/technical
2. Manager/official/proprietor
3. Clerical/sales
4. Craftsman/foreman
5. Operative (skilled worker, artisan)
6. Service worker/laborer
7. Farmer
8. Other

ELECTORAL CONDITIONS

5. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU SERVED AS A BOARD MEMBER? (Include the present year.) _____

6. HAS THE DISTRICT EXPERIENCED A BOND ISSUE OR TAX LEVY/REFERENDUM DEFEAT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS?

1. Yes  2. No

7. IN THE LAST SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE SITUATION IN YOUR DISTRICT?

1. There was an absence of competition for the available seats (only one candidate per vacancy)
2. There was competition for the available seats (more than one candidate per vacancy), and the campaigning was spirited and competitive.
3. There was competition for the available seats (more than one candidate per vacancy), and the campaigning was spirited and competitive.

8. WHEN YOU CAMPAIGNED FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD FOR THE FIRST TIME, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION?

1. An advocate for major change(s) in school district policies and/or programs
2. Supportive of the present status except for minor changes I advocated
3. Interested in maintaining the status quo.

9. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR REASON FOR SEEKING BOARD MEMBERSHIP?

1. Motivated by civic duty
2. Motivated by a desire to bring about change
3. Motivated to represent a particular group(s)
4. Other, please specify

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10. FOR EACH OF THE ELECTION PERIODS LISTED BELOW, PLEASE INDICATE THE NUMBER OF INCUMBENTS WHO WERE DEFEATED AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS UP FOR ELECTIONS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of incumbents</th>
<th>Number of Seats Up for Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Last election  
2. Two elections ago  
3. Three elections ago

BOARD – SUPERINTENDENT INTERACTION

11. HAS A SUPERINTENDENT LEFT YOUR DISTRICT INVOLUNTARILY DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS?

1. Yes  
2. No

12. WHEN A PROBLEM FIRST ARISES, MEMBERS OF A SCHOOL BOARD OFTEN FIND THAT THEY DISAGREE ABOUT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION. HOW OFTEN IS THIS TRUE OF YOUR BOARD?

1. Almost always  
2. Occasionally  
3. Rarely  
4. Never  
5. Don't know/uncertain

13. WHEN THE SCHOOL BOARD DISAGREES ON ISSUES, HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU SAY THAT SOME MEMBERS TEND TO STICK TOGETHER FROM ONE ISSUE TO THE NEXT? IN OTHER WORDS, HOW OFTEN DO BOARD MEMBERS ENGAGE IN BLOCK VOTING?

1. Almost always  
2. Occasionally  
3. Rarely  
4. Never  
5. Don't know/uncertain

14. HOW MANY HOURS PER MONTH DO YOU SPEND WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD DISCUSSING SCHOOL RELATED ISSUES EITHER IN PERSON OR ON THE PHONE? IF NONE, ENTER ZERO.

(Do not include board meetings.)

15. HOW OFTEN DOES THE SCHOOL BOARD DISAGREE WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT ABOUT MAJOR POLICY ISSUES OR PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE FOLLOWING?

(1 = ALWAYS  
2 = OCCASIONALLY  
3 = RARELY  
4 = NEVER  
5 = DON'T KNOW)

1. Educational program (curriculum, students)  
2. Personnel/personnel policies  
3. School finance/fiscal issues  
4. School closings/facility construction  
5. School board – superintendent roles

16. IF THE SUPERINTENDENT WANTED MAJOR POLICY CHANGES IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS AND THE BOARD INITIALLY DISAGREED WITH THE CHANGE, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT THE BOARD WOULD EVENTUALLY APPROVE THE CHANGE ANYWAY?

(1 = VERY LIKELY  
2 = SOMewhat LIKELY  
3 = RARELY  
4 = NEVER  
5 = DON'T KNOW)

1. Educational program (curriculum, students)  
2. Personnel/personnel policies  
3. School finance/fiscal issues  
4. School closings/facility construction  
5. School board – superintendent roles

17. HOW MANY HOURS PER MONTH DO YOU SPEND WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT CONCERNING SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUES/PROBLEMS, IN PERSON OR ON THE PHONE? IF NONE, ENTER ZERO.

(Do not include board meetings)

18. WHO INITIATES THE MAJORITY OF THESE CONTACTS?

1. I do  
2. The superintendent does  
3. About a 50/50 balance

19. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FIND INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT CONCERNING DISTRICT MATTERS TO BE RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY?

1. Almost always  
2. Occasionally  
3. Rarely  
4. Never  
5. Don't know/uncertain

20. HOW RESPONSIVE IS THE SUPERINTENDENT TO SUGGESTIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOARD?

1. Very responsive  
2. Somewhat responsive  
3. Not very responsive  
4. Not at all responsive  
5. Don't know/uncertain

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21. WHO TAKES THE LEAD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL POLICY?

1. School board 3. Not very responsive 5. Don't know/uncertain
2. School board chairperson 4. Not at all responsive

22. WHO PREPARES THE FORMAL AGENDA FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS?


23. WHAT IN YOUR OPINION IS THE STATUS/PRESTIGE OF THE POSITION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AS EDUCATIONAL OR COMMUNITY LEADER IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT? Select only one.

1. Decreasing in importance and influence 3. Increasing in importance and influence
2. Remaining about the same as it was 10 years ago 4. Don't know/uncertain

24. PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

(SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  DA = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree  DK = Don't know)

1. School boards should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions.
2. School Boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standard and board policy.
3. Policies should be written in a manner that allows the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing the policies.
4. Board members should deal personally with parental complaints and grievances.
5. The superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies.
6. A major responsibility of the board is to supervise the superintendent and his/her staff.
7. Board decisions are only a framework within which the superintendent operates; he/she uses personal discretion in day-to-day operations.
8. Board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff.
9. The superintendent functions as an intermediary between the board and the teachers.
10. The superintendent should develop the formal board agenda.
11. Board members should deal personally with teacher complaints and grievances.
12. The superintendent should stick to “the letter of the law” in enforcing board rules and policies.
13. The superintendent serves as a representative of the teachers to the board.
14. The superintendent’s primary responsibility is as an instructional leader.
15. The school board’s primary function is to legitimate the decisions of the superintendent.

25. ON A SCALE OF 1 (meaning poor) TO 10 (meaning outstanding), HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF YOUR SUPERINTENDENT?

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

26. HOW FREQUENTLY DO REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS CONTACT YOU PERSONALLY TO SEEK YOUR SUPPORT FOR THEIR POSITIONS?

27. HOW DO YOU, PERSONALLY, VIEW SUCH ATTEMPTS?

1. Negatively, I object to such attempts through the
2. Positively, without reservation
3. Positively, depending upon the way I am approached.
4.Positively, if the request is transmitted directly to the board as a whole.
5. Does not apply, I am not approached for such support.

28. LISTED BELOW ARE SOME INDIVIDUAL GROUPS WHICH MAY BE SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS FOR DECISION MAKING PURPOSES. HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE DO YOU GIVE INFORMATION FROM EACH OF THESE GROUPS?

(VI = Very Important SI = Somewhat Important NI = Not Very Important NAI = Not at All Important DK = Don’t know)

1. Superintendent
2. Central office staff
3. Teacher organizations
4. Other School Employees
5. Parents
6. Students
7. Tax payer groups
8. Business leaders
9. Advisory committees
10. School board organizations
11. Local media (Newspapers, radio)
12. Other, Please specify

29. HOW OFTEN DOES THE BOARD IN YOUR DISTRICT TAKE STANDS THAT ARE UNPOPULAR WITH THE COMMUNITY?


30. IN GENERAL, HOW CRITICAL IS THE COMMUNITY WITH REGARD TO BOARD ACTIONS OR DECISIONS?


31. HOW MUCH TENSION OR CONFLICT EXISTS AMONG PEOPLE IN THE DISTRICT WITH REGARD TO QUESTIONS HAVING TO DO WITH SCHOOL POLICIES?


32. HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL CONFLICT BETWEEN YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC AND TO THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION?


33. IN YOUR OPINION, IS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT DECISION MAKING:


34. DO YOU VIEW CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT DECISION MAKING.

1. Favorable 2. Unfavorable 3. Take it or leave it 4. Don’t know/uncertain

35. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS OCCURRING WITH REGARD TO THE DESIRE OF PARENTS AND/OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS?

1. Parents/community are becoming more willing to participate.
2. Parents/community are becoming less willing to participate.
3. Parents/community willingness to participate remains about the same as it’s been over the past 10 years.
4. Don’t know/uncertain
36. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS OF VIEW IS CLOSEST TO YOUR OWN PERCEPTION OF YOUR ROLE AS A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER? Select only one.

1. The board member should do what the public wants him/her to do even if it isn’t his/her own personal preference.
2. The board member should use his/her own judgment regardless of what others want him/her to do.
3. Prefer a combination of both answers #1 and #2 depending on the given situation.
4. Undecided.

37. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TAKE A STAND THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC SEEMS TO DISAGREE WITH?


38. HOW RESPONSIVE IS THE SUPERINTENDENT TO SUGGESTIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND PREFERENCES OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE?


39. IT IS SAID THAT SUPERINTENDENTS TEND TO AVOID CONFLICT BY ACTING IN HARMONY WITH WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE THE PREDOMINANT COMMUNITY VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE SCHOOLS. HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR SUPERINTENDENT ATTEMPT TO MAKE MAJOR POLICY CHANGES OTHER THAN WHAT THE COMMUNITY, IN GENERAL, WANTS?


40. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR DISTRICT?

1. The power structure consists of one, or only a few people. The influential decision making power is most likely to be the economic elite of the community.
2. Several groups of relatively equal power compete for control over important decisions. Decision making involves almost constant conflict between competing interest groups.
3. There is no single power structure. Power is dispersed across many individuals or groups who form alliances/coalitions which constantly change from issue to issue. Decision making tends to usually be consequential.
4. There is no community pressure to impose decisions of the board and the status quo is usually acceptable. There does not appear to be a power structure as far as school issues are concerned.

41. WHAT TYPES OF ISSUES ARE MOST LIKE TO RESULT IN CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE SCHOOL BOARD IN YOUR DISTRICT?

---

42. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN YOUR DISTRICT?

1. The superintendent is a functionary – he/she tends to identify with the dominant interests within the community and takes cues for action from them. He/she carries out policy rather than develops it.
2. The superintendent is a political strategist – he/she works with various factions being careful not to identify too closely with any one faction.
3. The superintendent is a professional advisor – he/she gives professional advice based on educational research and theory. He/she explains alternatives and consequences to an active board.
4. The superintendent is a decision-maker – he/she takes the initiative relative to policy development and actions may impact upon the school system.
APPENDIX E

SUPERINTENDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Superintendent Questionnaire

Confidentiality: This questionnaire is identified by a code number to simplify record keeping and follow-up procedures only in reporting the results. NO INDIVIDUAL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT IDENTITY WILL BE DIVULGED. Only group statistical responses will be cited. RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

Directions: Please circle the number of the proper answer for each of the following questions. Where blanks are provided, fill in the requested information. You may use either pen or pencil.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. HOW MANY SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE REPRESENTED WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT?

2. HOW MANY YEARS, INCLUDING THE PRESENT YEAR, HAVE YOU BEEN SUPERINTENDENT IN YOUR PRESENT POSITION?

3. HAVE YOU HELD PREVIOUS POSITION AS A SUPERINTENDENT? 1. Yes 2. No

4. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL?
   1. Masters Degree
   2. Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study
   3. Doctorate Degree (All But Dissertation)
   4. Doctorate Degree

5. WHAT IS YOUR SEX? 1. Female 2. Male

6. WHAT IS YOUR PRESENT AGE? ______

7. IN THE LAST SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE SITUATION IN YOUR DISTRICT?
   1. There was an absence of competition for the available seats (only one candidate per vacancy).
   2. There was competition for the available seats (more than one candidate per vacancy), but the spirit of competition was rather subdued.
   3. There was competition for the available seats (more than one candidate per vacancy), and the campaigning was spirited and competitive.

8. FOR EACH OF THE ELECTION PERIODS LISTED BELOW, PLEASE INDICATE THE NUMBER OF INCUMBENTS WHO WERE DEFEATED AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS UP FOR ELECTION.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Number of incumbents</th>
<th>Number of Seats Up for Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Last election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two elections ago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Three elections ago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. HAS THE DISTRICT EXPERIENCED A BOND ISSUE OR TAX LEVY/REFERENDUM DEFEAT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS?
   1. Yes 2. No
BOARD – SUPERINTENDENT INTERACTION

10. HAS A SUPERINTENDENT LEFT YOUR DISTRICT INVOLUNTARILY DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS?
   1. Yes  2. No

11. WHEN A PROBLEM FIRST ARISES, MEMBERS OF A SCHOOL BOARD OFTEN FIND THAT THEY DISAGREE ABOUT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION. HOW OFTEN IN THIS TRUE OF YOUR BOARD?

12. WHEN THE SCHOOL BOARD DISAGREES ON ISSUES, WOULD YOU SAY THAT SOME MEMBERS MORE OR LESS TEND TO STICK TOGETHER FROM ONE ISSUE TO THE NEXT? IN OTHER WORDS, DO BOARD MEMBERS ENGAGE IN BLOCK VOTING?

13. PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

   (SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  DA = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree  DK = Don’t know)

   1. School boards should delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions.
      1. SA A DA SD DK

   2. School boards should support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to professional standard and board policy?
      2. SA A DA SD DK

   3. Policies should be written in such a manner as to allow the superintendent to use personal judgment in implementing and interpreting the policies.
      3. SA A DA SD DK

   4. Board members should deal personally with parental complaints and grievances.
      4. SA A DA SD DK

   5. The superintendent should take the lead in the development of school district policies.
      5. SA A DA SD DK

   6. A major responsibility of the board is to supervise the superintendent and his/her staff.
      6. SA A DA SD DK

   7. Board decisions are only a framework within which the superintendent operates: he/she uses personal discretion in day-to-day operations.
      7. SA A DA SD DK

   8. Board members have no authority as individuals for giving directions to the superintendent and his/her staff.
      8. SA A DA SD DK

   9. The superintendent functions as an intermediary between the boards and the teachers.
      9. SA A DA SD DK

  10. The superintendent should develop the formal board agenda.
      10. SA A DA SD DK

  11. Board members should deal personally with teacher complaints and grievances.
      11. SA A DA SD DK

  12. The superintendent should stick to the “letter of the law” in enforcing board rules and policies.
      12. SA A DA SD DK

  13. The superintendent serves as a representative of the teachers to the board.
      13. SA A DA SD DK

  14. The superintendent’s primary responsibility is as an instructional leader.
      14. SA A DA SD DK

  15. The school board’s primary function is to legitimize the decisions of the superintendent.
      15. SA A DA SD DK

14. HOW OFTEN DOES THE SCHOOL BOARD DISAGREE WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT ABOUT MAJOR POLICY ISSUES OR PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE FOLLOWING:

   (1 = ALWAYS  2 = OCCASIONALLY  3 = RARELY  4 = NEVER  5 = DON’T KNOW)

   1. Educational program (curriculum, students)  1 2 3 4 5
   2. Personnel/personnel policies  1 2 3 4 5
   3. School finance/fiscal issues  1 2 3 4 5
   4. School closings/facility construction  1 2 3 4 5
   5. School board – superintendent roles  1 2 3 4 5

15. IF THE SUPERINTENDENT WANTED MAJOR POLICY CHANGES IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS AND THE BOARD INITIALLY DISAGREED WITH THE CHANGE, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT THE BOARD WOULD EVENTUALLY APPROVE THE CHANGE ANYWAY?
15. IF THE SUPERINTENDENT WANTED MAJOR POLICY CHANGES IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS AND THE BOARD INITIALLY DISAGREED WITH THE CHANGE, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT THE BOARD WOULD EVENTUALLY APPROVE THE CHANGE ANYWAY?

(1 = VERY LIKELY  2 = SOMEWHAT LIKELY  3 = RARELY  4 = NEVER  5 = DON'T KNOW)

1. Educational program (curriculum, students)  1 2 3 4 5
2. Personnel/personnel policies  1 2 3 4 5
3. School finance/fiscal issues  1 2 3 4 5
4. School closings/facility construction  1 2 3 4 5
5. School board – superintendent roles  1 2 3 4 5

16. HOW MANY HOURS PER MONTH DO YOU SPEND WITH THE BOARD CONCERNING SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUES/PROBLEMS, IN PERSON OR ON THE PHONE? IF NONE, ENTER ZERO.

(Do not include board meetings) __________

17. ON A SCALE OF 1 (meaning poor) TO 10 (meaning outstanding), HOW WOULD YOUR SCHOOL BOARD RATE YOUR OVERALL PERFORMANCE?

__________________________

18. WHO TAKES THE LEAD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL POLICY?


COMMUNITY INTERACTION

19. HOW OFTEN DOES THE BOARD IN YOUR DISTRICT TAKE STANDS THAT ARE UNPOPULAR WITH THE COMMUNITY?


20. HOW CRITICAL IS THE COMMUNITY WITH REGARD TO BOARD ACTION OR DECISIONS?


21. HOW MUCH TENSION OR CONFLICT EXISTS AMONG PEOPLE IN THE DISTRICT WITH REGARD TO QUESTIONS HAVING TO DO WITH SCHOOL POLICIES?


22. HAVE ANY PERSONS OR COMMUNITY GROUPS TRIED TO HAVE PART OF THE FOLLOWING POLICY AREAS CHANGED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education program (curriculum, students)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel/personnel policies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School finance/fiscal issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School closings/facility construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. IN WHICH OF THESE AREAS WERE THEY SUCCESSFUL?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education program (curriculum, students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>School closings/facility construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS OF VIEW IS CLOSEST TO YOUR OWN PERCEPTION OF THE APPROPRIATE ROLE FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER?

5. The board member should do what the public wants him/her to do even if it isn't his/her own personal preference.
6. The board member should use his/her own judgment regardless of what others want him/her to do.
7. Prefer a combination of both answers #1 and #2 depending on the situation.
8. Undecided.
25. **HOW OFTEN DO YOU TAKE A STAND THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC SEEMS TO DISAGREE WITH?**

|------------------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|

26. **HOW OFTEN DID YOU SERIOUSLY DISCUSS LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MATTERS WITH MEMBERS OF THE FOLLOWING GROUPS DURING THE PAST YEAR?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Friends</th>
<th>2. Civic/community leaders</th>
<th>3. Town/City political officials</th>
<th>4. Media representatives</th>
<th>5. Representatives of various interest groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

27. **WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR DISTRICT?**

| 1. The power structure consists of one, or only a few people. The influential decision making power is most likely to be the economic elite of the community. | 2. Several groups of relatively equal power compete for control over important decision. Decision making involves almost constant conflict between competing interest groups. | 3. There is no single power structure. Power is dispersed across many individuals or groups who form alliances/coalitions which constantly change from issue to issue. Decision making tends to usually be consequential. | 4. There is no community pressure to impose decisions of the board and the status quo is usually acceptable. There does not appear to be a power structure as far as school issues are concerned. |

28. **IT IS SAID THAT SUPERINTENDENTS TEND TO AVOID CONFLICT BY ACTING IN HARMONY WITH WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE THE PREDOMINANT COMMUNITY VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE SCHOOLS. HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR SUPERINTENDENT ATTEMPT TO MAKE MAJOR POLICY CHANGES OTHER THAN WHAT THE COMMUNITY, IN GENERAL, WANTS?**

|------------------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|

29. **IN YOUR OPINION, IS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT DECISION MAKING:**

|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|

30. **DO YOU VIEW CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT DECISION MAKING.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Favorable</th>
<th>2. Unfavorably</th>
<th>3. Take it or leave it</th>
<th>4. Don’t know/uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

31. **IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS OCCURRING WITH REGARD TO THE DESIRE OF PARENTS AND/OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Parents/community are becoming more willing to participate.</th>
<th>2. Parents/community are becoming less willing to participate.</th>
<th>3. Parents/community willingness to participate remains about the same as it's been over the past 10 years.</th>
<th>4. Don’t know/uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

32. **WHAT TYPES OF ISSUES ARE MOST LIKE TO RESULT IN CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE SCHOOL BOARD IN YOUR DISTRICT?**

33. **WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN YOUR DISTRICT?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The superintendent is a functionary – he/she tends to find us with the dominant interests within the community and takes cues for action from them. He/she carries out policy rather than develops it.</th>
<th>2. The superintendent is a political strategist – he/she with various factions being careful not to identify too closely with any one faction.</th>
<th>3. The superintendent is a professional advisor – he/she gives professional advice based on educational research and theory. He/she explains alternatives and consequences to an active board.</th>
<th>4. The superintendent is a decision-maker – he/she takes the initiative relative to policy development and actions may impact upon the school system.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX F

FOLLOW UP LETTER & CONSENT FORM TO REQUEST AN INTERVIEW FROM A SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR
May 16, 2004

Dear School Board Chair,

The accompanying letter is a consent letter for an interview which is a part of the repeat study that I am undertaking for my dissertation. Your kindness in completing the survey, the type of district for which you work, and the fact that I am required by my committee to interview one superintendent and one school board chair from each of the five supervisory unions led me to choose your district as a potential interviewee.

I am only asking for about one-half hour of your time at your convenience. If you are willing to be interviewed, please sign and return the accompanying letter of consent required by UNH and I will call you and arrange a time and place with you.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance with this study so far.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
May 16, 2004

Dear School Board Chairperson,

Thank you for completing the survey and returning it to me. I appreciate the time that you took to participate in my study. Now, I am continuing my study with interviews of five superintendents and five of their school board chairs. This research project is being conducted to find out what if any change there has been in superintendent-school board relations since the 1988 study conducted by Dr. Phillip MacCormack. I am asking to participate in the interview portion of this project.

If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to meet with me in your office or some neutral location of your choosing to answer more specific questions and offer insight into the state of superintendent-school board relations. This interview will be audio taped, codified, and transcribed for the purpose of comparison to other responses in similar interviews. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the process.

The potential risks of participating in this study are negated by the assured anonymity of each interviewee. While you will not receive any compensation to participate in this project, the anticipated benefits are that the information garnered from this study will aid those in positions to work on behalf of supporting superintendent-school board relations and enlighten those who have taken action in the past fifteen years that has affected superintendents and school boards.

Participation is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw at any time during the study without penalty.

The investigator seeks to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when the investigator is required to share personally-identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data. You also should understand that the investigator is required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases). Data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home; only I will have access to the data. The audiotapes will be destroyed after the information has been extracted and codified. The information gained from these interviews will be discussed in the final document by using pseudonyms.
The work will be conducted by me alone. I am a doctoral candidate in education at the University of New Hampshire.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like more information before, during, or after the study, you may contact me at 603-224-1679 or by email at bestebbins@comcast.net. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 to discuss them in confidence.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice and return in the enclosed envelope. The other copy is for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
Principal, Armand R. Dupont School
Allenstown, New Hampshire

Yes, I, ____________________________ consent/agree to participate in this research project.

Please print name
Signed, ____________________________
Date ____________________________

No, I, ____________________________ refuse/do not agree to participate in this research project.

Please print name
Signed, ____________________________
Date ____________________________
APPENDIX G

FOLLOW UP LETTER & CONSENT FORM TO REQUEST AN INTERVIEW FROM A SUPERINTENDENT
May 16, 2004

Dear Superintendent,

The accompanying letter is a consent letter for an interview which is a part of the repeat study that I am undertaking for my dissertation. Your kindness in completing the survey, the type of district for which you work, and the fact that I am required by my committee to interview one superintendent and one school board chair from each of the five supervisory unions led me to choose your district as a potential interviewee.

I am only asking for about one-half hour of your time at your convenience. If you are willing to be interviewed, please sign and return the accompanying letter of consent required by UNH and I will call you and arrange a time and place with you.

Thank you for you consideration and assistance with this study so far.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
Dear Superintendent,

Thank you for completing the survey and returning it to me. I appreciate the time that you took to participate in my study. Now, I am continuing my study with interviews of five superintendents and five of their school board chairs. This research project is being conducted to find out what if any change there has been in superintendent-school board relations since the 1988 study conducted by Dr. Phillip MacCormack. I am asking to participate in the interview portion of this project.

If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to meet with me in your office or some neutral location of your choosing to answer more specific questions and offer insight into the state of superintendent-school board relations. This interview will be audio taped, codified, and transcribed for the purpose of comparison to other responses in similar interviews. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the process.

The potential risks of participating in this study are negated by the assured anonymity of each interviewee. While you will not receive any compensation to participate in this project, the anticipated benefits are that the information garnered from this study will aid those in positions to work on behalf of supporting superintendent-school board relations and enlighten those who have taken action in the past fifteen years that has affected superintendents and school boards.

Participation is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw at any time during the study without penalty.

The investigator seeks to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when the investigator is required to share personally-identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data. You also should understand that the investigator is required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases). Data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home; only I will have access to the data. The audiotapes will be destroyed after the information has been extracted and codified. The information gained from these interviews will be discussed in the final document by using pseudonyms.
The work will be conducted by me alone. I am a doctoral candidate in education at the University of New Hampshire.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like more information before, during, or after the study, you may contact me at 603-224-1679 or by email at bestebbins@comcast.net. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 to discuss them in confidence.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice and return in the enclosed envelope. The other copy is for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Betsey Cox Stebbins
Principal, Armand R. Dupont School
Allenstown, New Hampshire

Yes, I, ________________ consent/agree to participate in this research project.

Signed, ____________________________________________

Date ________________

No, I, ________________ refuse/ do not agree to participate in this research project.

Signed, ____________________________________________

Date ________________
APPENDIX H

PROTOCOLS FOR INTERVIEWS
PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEWS

This script will be read at the onset of each interview session to each interviewee. The purpose of this script is to create an atmosphere of trust and a comfort level with the questions that will be asked. This trust and comfort will be based upon the fact that the interviewer is not biased and will be only looking for change in the way the school boards and superintendents are working with each other since 1988.

"Thank you for your time today. This interview should only take one half hour to forty-five minutes depending upon how much you have to say after each question. There are seventeen (19) questions. Every superintendent (school board chairperson) being interviewed is being asked the same questions in the same order.

Again, as in the agreement that you signed to be interviewed, I want to assure you that any information used from this interview will be kept strictly anonymous. That the interviewer has no preconceived notions regarding the state of superintendent – school board relations and does not have a personal agenda to fulfill through the process.

Please answer each question using the broadest range of your experience as a superintendent (school board chair) as trends are important to the study.”
APPENDIX I

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEW
&
SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW
School Board Member Interview

1. Please describe your school district. Consider things such as community attitudes towards education, the local power structure, local economy, shifts in population and changes within your community.

2. How would you describe the appropriate role of a school board member? Of a superintendent?

3. How would you describe the superintendent-school board relations that exist in your district?

4. Have you observed a change in these relations or in the way in which the superintendent functions over the last ten years?

5. What factors impact on your relationship with the superintendent?

6. Is there competition for board positions in your district? Why? Why not?

7. What types of issues, if any, is the board willing to give in to the superintendent’s wishes if you initially disagreed with the particular thing the superintendent wanted? What types of issues, if any, are you unwilling to give in to the superintendent?

8. What types of issues result in conflict between the board and the superintendent in your district?

9. Is there a dominant interest/pressure group with which you work to generate public support for your schools?

10. How would you describe the community’s reaction to and support of the school board’s actions/decisions?

11. What does the future hold for board members in New Hampshire?

12. What characteristics does the superintendent in your district need to possess to be an effective
leader – one who the board and community will support and follow?

13. How great an influence does the community have on your decisions/actions as a board member?

14. Describe the amount and types of discussion that occurs at board meetings among board members and with the superintendent prior to the board making a decision.

15. Does the board “rubber stamp” the action of the superintendent?

16. In light of the recent growth in government legislation in education, does the School Board find itself relying more heavily on the Superintendent’s knowledge of new legislation to make its decisions on budget? On policy?

17. Do the budget requirements of meeting the standards of new legislation create greater discussion over the allocation of funds?

18. Has the continual shift in the funding system for public schools brought greater challenges to the board regarding its ability to appropriately finance its goals for its schools?

19. Does this school board work toward consensus before taking a vote? How successful is that?
Superintendent Interview

1. Please describe your school district. Consider things such as demographics of the area, philosophy of the community, the local power structure, local economy, and the number and size of schools in the district.

2. How would you describe the types of relations that exist between the school board and yourself? Have you observed a change in the superintendent-board relations over the last ten years?

3. What factors do you see as impacting on the superintendent-board relations in your district?

4. Can you identify a dominant interest group with which you work to generate public support? How much time do you spend generating public support for your schools?

5. Will you initiate action that you think will go contrary to the views of the board? Contrary to the community?

6. Do you feel any conflict relative to your philosophy of quality education and that actions needed to attain it and the philosophy of the community/board?

7. Describe the amount and types of discussion that occur at board meetings among board members and with the superintendent prior to the board making a decision.

8. What do you see as the future of superintendent-school board relations?

9. What do you do or what characteristics do you demonstrate that you feel enhance or detract from your ability to control school district decision-making and/or policy development?

10. What do you think is the appropriate role of school board members? Of superintendents?
11. Do you frequently have to give the board several alternatives to respective actions or is it willing to support your best recommendations?

12. What types of issues result in conflict between you and the board in your district?

13. Do you think that school board "rubber stamps" the actions of the superintendent?

14. Do you find that the recent legislative mandates such as NCLB have created a change in the tenor of discussions between all parties at board meetings?

15. In light of the recent growth in government legislation in education, do you find that the School Board need to rely more heavily on your knowledge of new legislation to make its decisions on budget? On policy?

16. Do the budget requirements of meeting the standards of new legislation create greater discussion over the allocation of funds than before the legislation?

17. Has the continual shift in the funding system for public schools brought greater challenges to you regarding your ability to appropriately finance your educational goals for the district?

18. Even though a vote on a motion is always taken, does the school board work with a consensus model or a majority vote model to make decisions?
APPENDIX J

CLAREMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT & A. V. GOVERNOR & A. December 30, 1993 (CLAREMONT I)
Encouragement of Literature clause of New Hampshire Constitution imposes a duty on the State to provide a constitutionally adequate education to every educable child and to guarantee adequate funding. N.H. CONST. pt. 2, art. 83.

Language in New Hampshire Constitution that "it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates . . . to cherish . . . public school" is not merely a statement of aspiration; such language commands, in no uncertain terms, that the State provide an education to all its citizens and that it support all public schools. N.H. CONST. pt. 2, art. 83.

While it is clearly within the power of the State to delegate some of the implementation of its constitutional duty to support public schools to local governments, such power does not include a right to abdicate the obligation imposed by the Constitution. N.H. CONST. pt. 2, art. 83.

In New Hampshire a free public education is at the very least an important, substantive right. N.H. CONST. pt. 2, art. 83.

Right to an adequate education mandated by New Hampshire Constitution is not based on the exclusive needs of a particular individual, but rather is a right held by the public to enforce the State's duty; any citizen has standing to enforce this right. N.H. CONST. pt. 2, art. 83.

Shaheen, Cappiello, Stein and Gordon, of Concord (Andru H. Volinsky and Arpiar G. Saunders, Jr. on the brief, and Mr. Saunders orally), Sulloway and Hollis, of Concord (John Burwell Garvey on the brief), and Edward Damon, of Concord, on the brief, for the plaintiffs.

Jeffrey R. Howard, attorney general (Leslie J. Ludtke, senior assistant attorney general, on the brief and orally), for the State.

New Hampshire Legal Assistance, of Concord (John E. Tobin, Jr. and Abigail Turner on the brief, and Mr. Tobin orally), for Marie Ayer, Charles and Jeanne Watson, and John Bowler, as amici curiae.
BROCK, C.J. The Superior Court (Manias, J.) dismissed the plaintiffs' petition for injunctive relief and declaratory judgment for failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted. The plaintiffs appeal the court's conclusion that the New Hampshire Constitution imposes no duty on the State to support the public schools. We hold that part II, article 83 imposes a duty on the State to provide a constitutionally adequate education to every educable child in the public schools in New Hampshire and to guarantee adequate funding. Accordingly, we reverse and remand for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

The plaintiffs are five "property poor" school districts and five school children and five taxpayers, one from each of the school districts. They filed a petition for declaratory judgment alleging, in six counts, that the system by which the State finances education violates the New Hampshire Constitution: in counts (1) and (2) that the State fails to spread educational opportunities equitably among its students and adequately fund education, both in violation of part II, article 83; (3) that the foundation aid statutes, RSA 198:27 through 33 (1989), unconstitutionally restrain State aid to public education by capping State assistance at eight percent; (4) and (5) that both the State school finance system and the foundation aid statutes deny plaintiffs equal protection; and (6) that the heavy reliance on property taxes to finance New Hampshire public schools results in an unreasonable, disproportionate and burdensome tax in violation of part II, article 5 of the State Constitution.

Part II, article 83, adopted in 1784 as part of this State's Constitution, originally stated: "[Art.] 83. [Encouragement of Literature...] Knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government; and spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country, being highly conducive to promote this end; it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools, to encourage private and public institutions, rewards, and immunities for the promotion of agriculture, arts, sciences, commerce, trades, manufacturers, and natural history of the country; to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and economy, honesty and punctuality, sincerity, sobriety, and all social affections, and generous sentiments, among the people."

The provision was amended in 1877 to prohibit money raised by taxation from being used by religious schools and again in 1903 to add language concerning control of corporations and monopolies.
The trial court granted the defendants' motion to dismiss each of the six counts. Its order states in part:

"New Hampshire's Encouragement of Literature Clause contains no language regarding equity, uniformity, or even adequacy of education. Thus, the New Hampshire Constitution imposes no qualitative standard of education which must be met. Likewise, the New Hampshire Constitution imposes no quantifiable financial duty regarding education; there is no mention of funding or even of 'providing' or 'maintaining' education. The only 'duty' set forth is the amorphous duty 'to cherish . . . public schools' and 'to encourage private and public institution.' N.H. Const., pt. 2, art. 83. The language of pt. 2, art. 83 is hortatory, not mandatory.

In view of the foregoing, the Court finds that the N.H. Const., pt. 2, art. 83 imposes no duty as set forth in count one to equitably spread educational opportunities and advantages or as set forth in count two to equitably and adequately fund education. Absent such a duty, counts one and two of the plaintiffs' petition fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, and therefore, both counts must be dismissed."

Because we conclude that the trial court's determination that the State had no constitutional duty to support public education so permeated its decision to dismiss counts one through five, we will, at this time, address only the question of whether part II, article 83 imposes such a duty. With respect to count six, because petitioners have no had an opportunity to develop a record in support of their claim, we remand that count to the trial court for its further consideration. Our narrow task, therefore, is to determine whether the trial court committed legal error when it concluded that no duty exists.

"In interpreting an article in our constitution, we will give the words the same meaning that they must have had to the electorate on the date the vote was cast." Grinnell v. State, 121 N.H. 823, 826, 435 A.2d 523, 525 (1981)(quotation omitted). In doing so, we must "place [ourselves] as nearly as possible in the situation of the parties at the time the instrument was made, that [we] may gather their intention from the language used, viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances." Warburton v. Thomas, 136 N.H. 383, 387, 616 A.2d 495, 497 (1992) (quotations omitted).

Numerous state courts have in recent years decided cases challenging, on constitutional grounds, systems of financing public education. Most of those cases are of limited value to this court because the constitutional provisions at issue contain language dissimilar to ours and were adopted under circumstances different from those existing in New Hampshire in the 1780s. Massachusetts, however, presents an exception. Given that New Hampshire shares its early history with Massachusetts, that we modeled much of our constitution on one adopted by Massachusetts four years earlier, and that the Massachusetts Constitution contains a nearly identical provision regarding education, we give weight to the interpretation given that provision by the Supreme Judicial Court in McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education, 415 Mass. 545, 615 N.E.2d 516 (1993). See Warburton v. Thomas 136 N.H. at 391, 616 A.2d at 500.

An obvious starting point in interpreting part II, article 83 is to determine what the particular words used meant in 1784: "Encouragement: Incitement to any action or practice, incentive; favour, countenance, support. " T. SHERIDAN, A GENERAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1780 (Scolbar Press 1967); "Literature: Learning; skill in letters," id.; "Diffused: Spread abroad, widespread; dispersed over a large area; covering a wide range of subjects," OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d ed. 1989); "Generally: So as to include every particular, or every individual," id. "Duty: That to which a man is by any natural or legal obligation bound," SHERIDAN supra; "Cherish: To support, to shelter, to nurse up." SHERIDAN supra. See also McDuffy, 415 Mass. 562 n.17, 615 N.E.2d 525 n.17.
The Encouragement of Literature clause, incorporating the sense of these definitions, thus declares that knowledge and learning spread through a community are "essential to the preservation of a free government," and that "spreading the opportunities and advantages of education" is a means to the end of preserving a free, democratic State. The duty of ensuring that the people are educated is placed upon "the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government," and that duty encompasses supporting all public schools:

"The breadth of the meaning of these terms ('duty...to cherish'), together with the articulated ends for which this duty to cherish is established, strongly support...that the 'duty...to cherish...the public schools' encompasses the duty to provide an education to the people of the [State]...[It is reasonable therefore to understand the duty to 'cherish' public schools as a duty to ensure that the public schools achieve their object and educate the people." *McDuffy*, 415 Mass. at 564, 615 N.E.2d at 526

[2] We do not construe the terms "shall be the duty...to cherish" in our constitution as merely a statement of aspiration. The language commands, in no uncertain terms, that the State provide an education to all its citizens and that it support all public schools. Decisions of this court are consistent with this conclusion. See *In re Davis*, 114 N.H. 242, 243, 318 A.2d 151, 152 (1974) (State Constitution "imposes upon government the duty of providing for the education "imposes upon government the duty of providing for the education of its citizens"); *State v. Jackson*, 71 N.H. 552, 553, 1021, 1022 (1902) ("the injunction 'to cherish the interest of literature'" intended as "more than a mere sentimental interest"); *Farnum's Petition*, 51 N.H. 376, 378-79 (1871)(constitution "enjoins the duty" to educate in "comprehensive terms...as one of paramount public importance"); cf. *Fogg v. Board of Education*, 76 N.H. 296, 299, 82 A. 173, 175 (1912) (where student claimed right to State-provided transportation, court noted that providing for education of children, through support and maintenance of public schools, has always been governmental duty resting on the State). To suggest that the language is not mandatory because other States' constitutions, many drafted over 100 years after ours, contain more concrete, tangible standards of quality of education and quantity of support is an analysis we cannot endorse.

An examination of the "surrounding circumstances" at the time the constitution was adopted also supports our conclusion that the framers and the general populace understood the language contained in part II, article 83 to impose a duty on the State to educate its citizens and support the public schools. See *Attorney-General v. Morin*, 93 N.H. 40, 43, 35 A.2d 513, 514 (1943). The Puritans who settled here were deeply committed to education. They emigrated "chiefly to enjoy and propagate their religion; but next to this...to educate their children." N. Bouton, The History of Education in New Hampshire: A Discourse Delivered Before the New Hampshire Historical Society 3 (1833) (transcript available at the New Hampshire State Library). The New England Puritans are credited with "contribut[ing] most that was valuable for our future educational development, and establish[ing] in practice principles which have finally been generally adopted by our different States." E. CUBBERLEY, PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES 15 (1919).

Between 1641 and 1679, New Hampshire and Massachusetts were united as a single province. See *MANUAL FOR THE GENERAL COURT* 117 (1891). The first New England law on education was enacted in 1642, which ordered that all children should be taught to read. See *McDuffy*, 415 Mass. at 571 n.27, 615 N.E.2d at 529 n.27. In 1647, an act was passed by which public schools were established in New Hampshire. *McDuffy*, 415 Mass. at 571 n.28, 615 N.E.2d at 529-30 n.28. The 1647 law expressed the principles that private property was subject to public taxation for support of public
schools, that schooling was to be provided for all children, and that the State would
control education. "It can safely be asserted that these two Massachusetts laws of 1642
and 1647 represent not only new educational ideas in the English-speaking world, but
that they also represent the very foundation stones upon which our American public
school systems have been constructed." CUBBERLEY, supra at 18. In 1669, the towns
of Portsmouth, Dover, and Exeter each contributed money to "aid in erecting a new
edifice for Harvard College." Bouton, supra at 10. Such was deemed by those towns as
"needful for the perpetuating of knowledge both civil and religious, among us, and our
posterity after us." Bouton, supra at 10 (quotation omitted).

When New Hampshire became a separate province in 1680, it re-enacted the education laws
of Massachusetts then in existence. In 1693, the New Hampshire Legislature enacted a
law requiring the towns' selectmen to raise money by "an equal rate and assessment" on
the inhabitants for the construction and maintenance of the schools "and allowing a
Sallary to a School Master." G. BUSH, HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN NEW
HAMPSHIRE 10-11 (1898); see Laws of New Hampshire, Vol. 1 Province Period 560-
61 (1679-1702). A penalty was provided for failure to comply with the statute. BUSH
supra. Similar laws were enacted in 1714, 1719, and 1721. BUSH supra.

The law of 1719 required every town having fifty householders or more to provide a
schoolmaster to teach children to read and write, and in every town of 100 householders,
a grammar school to be kept. Laws of New Hampshire, Vol. 2 Province Period 336-37
(1702-1745). A penalty was to be assessed for failing to comply with the law, to be paid
"towards the Support of Such School or Schools within this Province where there may
be most need." Id. The law of 1721 stated:

"Whereas the selectmen of Sundry Towns within this Province often Neglect to provide
Grammar Schools for their Respective Towns whereby their youths Loose much of
their Time, to the great Hindrance of their learning, For Remedy whereof Be it Enacted
. . . That Not only Each Town but each parish within this Province Consisting of one
Hundred Families shall be Constantly Provided with a Grammar School . . . And [if]
any Such Town or Parish . . . is Destitute of a Grammar School for the space of one
month, the Selectmen . . . shall forfeit . . . the Sum of Twenty Pounds for every Such
Neglect to be paid out of their own Estates, & to be applied towards the Defraying the
Charges of the Province[.]

Id., at 358.

Although these laws required the towns to fund public education, Governor Wentworth
made clear in an address to the Council Chamber of the House of Assembly, on April
13, 1771, the the duty to educate remained with the State: "Religion -- Learning, and
Obedience to the Laws, are so obviously the Duty & Delight of Wise Legislators, that
their mention, justifies my Reliance on your whole Influence being applied to inculcate,
spread & Support their Effect, in e\'vry Station of Life." Governor Wentworth, Executive
Papers & Correspondence (1771). It is also apparent from Governor Wentworth's
subsequent message to the General Assembly on December 14, 1771, that the local town
officials had failed to meet their duties under the prior laws and that corrective action was
necessary by the State itself:

"Among other important Considerations, The promoting of learning very obviously calls
for Legislative Care. The Insufficiency of our present Laws for this purpose, must be
too evident, seeing nine tenths of your Towns are wholly without Schools, or have such
vagrant foreign Masters as are much worse than none; Being for the most part
unknown in their principles & deplorably illiterate."

NEW HAMPSHIRE PROVINCIAL PAPERS VOL. VII 287 (1764-1776). The General
Assembly replied on December 30, 1771:
"We beg leave to observe that we think it very apropos that you have by order of your
message plainly pointed out he necessary [connection] between good Education & the
prosperous state of the People—for as they by the constitution have a share in the
Governmt it is certainly of importance they should be able to sustain the part they are to
bear with honor to themselves & with prosperity to the State which without such an
Education is hardly feasibly But without detaining your Excellency with a long detail of
particulars, it is with pleasure we observe the extensive care your Excellency discovers
for the welfare of the people under your Governmt by pointing out many different
things as the proper objects of their attention of the house, all which they will consider as
other necessary affairs will permit and do what they shall after deliberate consultation."
Id. at 290-91.
Against this background, the constitutional convention began its work drafting the State
Constitution in 1781. The contention that, despite the extensive history of public
education in this State, the framers and general populace did not understand the language
contained in part II, article 83 to impose a duty on the State to support the public schools
and ensure an educated citizenry is unconvincing. Indeed, in 1795 Governor Gilman
addressed the Senate and House of Representatives, stating:

"The encouragement of Literature being considered by the Constitution as one of the
important Duties of Legislators and Magistrates, and as essential to the preservation of a
free Government, will always require the care and attention of the Legislature."
Governor Gilman, Executive Papers & Correspondence (1795). To which the House and
Senate replied:

"The encouragement of Literature is a sacred and incumbent Duty upon the Legislature.
Possessing a Constitution of Government which is founded upon the broad basis of the
natural rights of mankind, we feel on our part, the strongest obligation to revere, to
cherish, and to support it. Without a competent share of information diffused generally
through the community, the natural law as well as the acquired rights, and the duties to
which the social compact necessarily subjects us, must be imperfectly understood, and
consequently will be liable to be perverted and neglected. We shall therefore most
cordially embrace all proper measures to diffuse Knowledge and Information, to
promote Literature and to cherish seminaries of Learning as the most direct and certain
means to perpetuate to posterity that Constitution, which forms our Glory, our Safety,
and our Happiness."
Id. This statement has significant probative value as an indication that the contemporary
understanding was that part II, article 83 imposed a duty on the State to provide universal
education and to support the schools.

[3] We are unpersuaded by the State's argument that the fact that no State funding was
provided at all for education in the first fifty years after ratification of the constitution
demonstrates that the framers did not believe part II, article 83 impose any obligation on
the State to provide funding. But see W. GIFFORD, COLEBROOK "A PLACE UP
BACK OF NEW HAMPSHIRE" 11 (1993)(resolution of Senate and House approved
July 7, 1846, granting 10,000 acres of land to trustees of Colebrook Academy). "That
local control and fiscal support has been placed in greater or lesser measure though our
history on local governments does no dilute the validity" of the conclusion that the duty
to support the public schools lies with the State. McDuffy, 415 Mass. at 606, 615
N.E.2d at 548. "While it is clearly within the power of the [State] to delegate some of the
implementation of the duty to local governments, such power does not include a right to
abdicate the obligation imposed . . . by the Constitution." Id.

[4,5] Having identified that a duty exists and having suggested the nature of that duty, we
emphasize the corresponding right of the citizens to its enforcement. For over two hundred years New Hampshire has recognized its duty to provide for the proper education of the children in this State. Since 1647, education has been compulsory in New Hampshire, and our constitution expressly recognizes education as a cornerstone of our democratic system. We must conclude therefore, that in New Hampshire a free public education is at the very least an important, substantive right. See Carson v. Maurer, 120 N.H. 925, 931-32, 424 A.2d 825, 830-31 (1980); cf. Horton v. Meskill, 195 Conn. 24, 486 A.2d 1099 (1985). The right to an adequate education mandated by the constitution is not based on the exclusive needs of a particular individual, but rather is a right held by the public to enforce the State's duty. Any citizen has standing to enforce this rights. See Fogg v. Board of Education, 76 N.H. 296, 82 A. 173.

We do not define the parameters of the education mandated by the constitution as that task is, in the first instance, for the legislature and the Governor. There is a wealth of historical data upon which the legislature and the Governor may choose to draw in the pursuit of their duty, spanning more than three hundred years from the 1647 statutory mandate that youths be instructed "so far as they may be fitted for the University," to more recently recommended standards and practices such as the State Department of Education's 1958 report on Minimum Standards and Recommended Practices for New Hampshire Secondary Schools. The Encouragement of Literature clause expressly recognizes that free government is dependent for its survival on citizens who are able to participate intelligently in the political, economic, and social functions of our system. The duty placed on the State encompasses cherishing the public schools. The constitution also provides that the legislature and the Governor has a duty to encourage "the promotion of agriculture, arts, science, commerce, trades, [and] manufacturers" and inculcate "the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and economy, honesty and punctuality, sincerity, sobriety, and all social affections, and generous sentiments, among the people." N.H. CONST. pt. II, art. 83. The education necessary to meet the duty to cherish public schools must, of course, "be adapted to the various crises of human affairs." M'Culloch v. Maryland, 17 U.S. (4 Wheat.) 316, 415 (1819) (emphasis omitted).

Given the complexities of our society today, the State's constitutional duty extends beyond mere reading, writing and arithmetic. It also includes broad educational opportunities needed in today's society to prepare citizens for their role as participants and as potential competitors in today's marketplace of ideas. Cf. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1 of King Cty. v. State, 90 Wash. 2d 476, 585 P.2d 71 (1978). We are confident that the legislature and the Governor will fulfill their responsibility with respect to defining the specifics of, and the appropriate means to provide through public education, the knowledge and learning essential to the preservation of a free government.

We remand the plaintiffs' petition for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

Reversed and remanded.

THAYER, J. did not sit; GRIMES, C.J., retired, sat by special assignment under RSA 490:3; all concurred.

Note: Justice Grimes was 82 years old at the time of this decision.

NH Constitution Pt. II, Art. 78 [Judges and Sheriffs, When Disqualified by Age.] No person shall hold the office of judge of any court, or judge of probate, or sheriff of any county, after he has attained the age of seventy years. September 5, 1792
Merrimack
No. 97-001

CLAREMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT & a.
v.
GOVERNOR & a.

December 17, 1997

Stein, Volinsky & Callaghan, P.A., of Concord (Andru H. Volinsky & a. on the briefs, and Mr. Volinsky orally), John E. Tobin, Jr., of Concord, on the briefs and orally, and McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton, of Manchester (Wilbur A. Glahn, III on the briefs), for the plaintiffs.

Philip T. McLaughlin, attorney general (Leslie J. Ludtke, associate attorney general, and Patrick E. Donovan, assistant attorney general, on the brief, and Mr. McLaughlin orally), for the State.

Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green, of Manchester (Thomas J. Flygare on the brief), for An Unnamed Unincorporated Association of Concerned New Hampshire Citizens, as amicus curiae.

Theodore E. Comstock, of Concord, and James F. Allmendinger, of Concord, on the brief, for Joint Education Council, as amicus curiae.

Wiggin & Nourie, P.A., of Manchester (L. Jonathan Ross on the brief), for the New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union, as amicus curiae.

BROCK, C.J. In this appeal we hold that the present system of financing elementary and secondary public education in New Hampshire is unconstitutional. To hold otherwise would be to effectively conclude that it is reasonable, in discharging a State obligation, to tax property owners in one town or city as much as four times the amount taxed to others similarly situated in other towns or cities. This is precisely the kind of taxation and fiscal mischief from which the framers of our State Constitution took strong steps to protect our citizens. The procedural history of the case and the reasons for our decision follow.

This is the second appeal of this case. In 1991, the plaintiffs filed a petition for declaratory and injunctive relief challenging the method by which the State of New Hampshire provides and funds education to New Hampshire children and the disproportionality of the property
taxes levied to pay for education. The plaintiffs are five school districts, five students, and eight taxpayers and parents. The petition was dismissed by the Trial Court (Manias, J.) for failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted. In Claremont School District v. Governor, 138 N.H. 183, 635 A.2d 1375 (1993) (Claremont I), this court reversed, holding that it was the State's duty to provide a constitutionally adequate public education and to guarantee adequate funding, and remanded for a trial on the merits.

On remand, following a trial, the Trial Court (Manias, J.) ruled in a detailed and thoughtful opinion that: (1) the education provided in the plaintiff school districts is constitutionally adequate; (2) the New Hampshire system of funding public elementary and secondary education guarantees constitutionally adequate funding to each of the plaintiff school districts; (3) the New Hampshire system of school funding does not violate the plaintiffs' right to equal protection under the State Constitution, part I, articles 1, 2 and 12; and (4) the system of school financing does not violate part II, article 5 of the State Constitution. We hold that the property tax levied to fund education is, by virtue of the State's duty to provide a constitutionally adequate public education, a State tax and as such is disproportionate and unreasonable in violation of part II, article 5 of the New Hampshire Constitution. Having so decided, we need not reach the plaintiffs' other claims. Accordingly, we reverse.

I

Funding for public education in New Hampshire comes from three sources. First, school districts are authorized to raise funds through real estate taxation. Locally raised real property taxes are the principal source of revenue for public schools, providing on average from seventy-four to eighty-nine percent of total school revenue. Second, funds are provided through direct legislative appropriations, primarily in the form of Foundation Aid, Building Aid, and Catastrophic Aid. Direct legislative appropriations account for an average of eight percent of the total dollars spent on public elementary and secondary education, ranking New Hampshire last in the United States in percentage of direct support to public education. Third, approximately three percent of support for the public schools is in the form of federal aid.

At the present time, the State places the responsibility for providing elementary and secondary public education on local school districts. State statutes, rules, and regulations delineate the requirements to be followed by school districts. See RSA 186:5 (1989) (State Board of Education has same powers over public schools as directors of corporation have over business); RSA 189:1-a (1989) (duty of school board to provide at district expense elementary and secondary education); RSA 194:1 et seq. (1989 & Supp. 1996) (general powers and duties of school districts); N.H. Admin. Rules, Ed 200 et seq. (1996). For example, school districts are required to provide standard schools for 180 days per year, RSA 189:1, :24 (1989); provide transportation, RSA 189:6 (Supp. 1996); provide meals to students, RSA 189:11-a (1989); purchase and provide textbooks, RSA 189:16 (1989); meet minimum standards for school approval, RSA 186:8 (1989); provide special education services, RSA 186:6 (1989); and participate in the school improvement and assessment program, RSA ch. 193-C (Supp. 1996).

To comply with the State's requirements, school districts must raise money for their schools with revenue collected from real estate taxes. RSA 194:34 (1989); RSA 198:1-7 (1989 & Supp. 1996). Every year, the selectmen of each town are required to assess an annual tax of $3.50 on each $1,000 of assessed value for the support of that district's schools. RSA 198:1. Each school district then details the sums of money needed to support its public schools and produces a budget that specifies the additional funds required to meet the State's minimum standards. A sum sufficient to meet the approved school budget must be assessed on the taxable real property in the district. RSA 197:1 (1989); RSA 198:5. The
commissioner of revenue administration computes a property tax rate for school purposes in each district. Using the determined rate, city and town officials levy property taxes to provide the further sum necessary to meet the obligations of the school budget.

As the trial court noted in its order, the total value of the property subject to taxation for local school revenue varies among the cities and towns of New Hampshire.

To some extent, the amount of revenue that a school district raises is dependent upon the value of the property in that district. This point can be illustrated by a comparison of petitioner district Franklin and its comparison district Gilford. In 1994, Franklin's "equalized property value" (property assessed at 100% of fair market value) per student was $183,626, while Gilford's equalized property value per student was $536,761. As a result, "property rich" Gilford had a significantly greater assessed value upon which taxes could be imposed for the support of its schools than did Franklin. Gilford raised more money per student than Franklin, even while taxing its residents at lower rates.

The plaintiffs argue that the school tax is a unique form of the property tax mandated by the State to pay for its duty to provide an adequate education and that the State controls the process and mechanism of taxation. Because of the purpose of the tax and the control exerted by the State, the plaintiffs contend that the school tax is a State tax that should be imposed at a uniform rate throughout the State. The State argues that "because the school tax is a local tax determined by budgeting decisions made by the district's legislative body and spent only in the district, it meets the constitutional requirement of proportionality." According to the State, "property taxation is a stable and expandable source of revenue which allows the citizens of New Hampshire to decide how to organize and operate their schools in a manner which best meets the needs of their children." The question of whether property taxes for schools are local or State taxes is an issue of first impression.

Part II, article 5 of the State Constitution provides that the legislature may "impose and levy proportional and reasonable assessments, rates, and taxes, upon all the inhabitants of, and residents within, the said state." This article requires that "all taxes be proportionate and reasonable - that is, equal in valuation and uniform in rate." Opinion of the Justices, 117 N.H. 749, 755, 379 A.2d 782, 786 (1977) (citation omitted); see Johnson & Porter Realty Co. v. Comm'r of Rev. Admin., 122 N.H. 696, 698, 448 A.2d 435, 436 (1982) (tax must be in proportion to actual value of property and must operate in reasonable manner). "[T]he test to determine whether a tax is equal and proportional is to inquire whether the taxpayers' property was valued at the same per cent of its true value as all the taxable property in the taxing district." Bow v. Farrand, 77 N.H. 451, 451-52, 92 A. 926, 926 (1915). "[T]he property shall be valued within a reasonable time before the tax is assessed." Id. at 452, 92 A. at 926.

In defining the taxing district, the trial court reasoned that whether a tax is a State tax or a local tax depends on "the entity that controls the mechanics of assessment and collection" and "the disposition of the tax revenues after their collection." The court found that each municipality controls the mechanics of assessment and collection of local property taxes, including the budgeting function and the determination of the local assessed value of property within each municipality. In addition, the court found that the property tax, once collected, is managed and expended by each municipality in accordance with its budget and thus does not become a part of the State treasury. The court concluded, therefore, that the school tax is a local tax and not a State tax. Because the trial court found there was no evidence that the school tax operated disproportionately within any local taxing district, it concluded that there was no violation of part II, article 5.

Determining the character of a tax as local or State requires an initial inquiry into its
purpose.

In order . . . that the tax should be proportional . . . it is required that the rate shall be the same throughout the taxing district; -- that is, if the tax is for the general purposes of the state, the rate should be the same throughout the state; if for the county, it should be uniform throughout the county; -- and the requisite of proportion, or equality and justice, can be answered in no other way.

State v. Express Co., 60 N.H. 219, 243 (1880) (Stanley, J.) (emphasis added). We find the purpose of the school tax to be overwhelmingly a State purpose and dispositive of the issue of the character of the tax.

"[T]he local school district, an entity created by the legislature almost two centuries ago, exists for the public's benefit, to carry out the mandates of the State's education laws." Opinion of the Attorney General, No. 82-100-1 (Sept. 8, 1982) (citation omitted). "Indeed, school district monies, a public trust, can only be spent in furtherance of these educational mandates, and to promote the values set forth in the 'Encouragement of Literature' clause, N.H. CONST., pt. 2, Art. 83." Id. As we held in Claremont I, "part II, article 83 imposes a duty on the State to provide a constitutionally adequate education to every educable child in the public schools in New Hampshire and to guarantee adequate funding." Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 184, 635 A.2d at 1376.

Providing an adequate education is thus a duty of State government expressly created by the State's highest governing document, the State Constitution. In addition, public education differs from all other services of the State. No other governmental service plays such a seminal role in developing and maintaining a citizenry capable of furthering the economic, political, and social viability of the State. Only in part II, article 83 is it declared a duty of the legislature to "cherish" a service mandated by the State Constitution. See Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 187, 635 A.2d at 1378 (duty to cherish commands that State support all public schools). Furthermore, education is a State governmental service that is compulsory. See RSA 193:1 (Supp. 1996). That the State, through a complex statutory framework, has shifted most of the responsibility for supporting public schools to local school districts does not diminish the State purpose of the school tax. Although the taxes levied by local school districts are local in the sense that they are levied upon property within the district, the taxes are in fact State taxes that have been authorized by the legislature to fulfill the requirements of the New Hampshire Constitution. See Rose v. Council for Better Educ., Inc., 790 S.W.2d 186, 220 n.1 (Ky. 1989) (Vance, J., dissenting); Opinion of the Justices, 88 N.H. 500, 508, 190 A. 801, 807 (1937) (distinguishing tax revenue to meet State needs from tax revenue for strictly local needs). "The taxes imposed by the legislature for the support of schools . . . are, in their nature, state taxes . . . ." Opinion, 4 N.H. 565, 571 (1829). Consequently, "[t]here is abundant justification in fact for taking this property out of the class taxed locally, and taxing it at the average rate throughout the state." Opinion of the Justices, 84 N.H. 559, 566, 149 A. 321, 325 (1930). For purposes of analysis under part II, article 5, therefore, the taxing district is the State.

The question then is whether the school tax as presently structured is proportional and reasonable throughout the State in accordance with the requirements of part II, article 5. Evidence introduced at trial established that the equalized tax rate for the 1994-1995 school year in Pittsfield was $25.26 per thousand while the rate in Moultonborough was $5.56 per thousand. The tax rate in Pittsfield, therefore, was more than four times, or over 400 percent, higher than in Moultonborough. Likewise, the equalized tax rate for the 1994-1995 school year in Allenstown was $26.47 per thousand while the rate in Rye was $6.86 per thousand - a difference in tax rates of almost 400 percent. We need look no further to hold that the school tax is disproportionate in violation of our State Constitution. Indeed, the trial court
acknowledged that the plaintiffs "presented evidence that the school tax may be disproportionate if it is a state tax."

In addition, we conclude that the school tax as presently assessed is unreasonable. The word "reasonable" as used in part II, article 5 means "just." Opinion, 4 N.H. at 569. "[T]he sense of the clause [is], that taxes shall be laid, not merely proportionally, but in due proportion, so that each individual's just share, and no more, shall fall upon him." Id.

Because the diffusion of knowledge and learning is regarded by the State Constitution as "essential to the preservation of a free government," N.H. CONST. pt. II, art. 83, it is only just that those who enjoy such government should equally assist in contributing to its preservation. The residents of one municipality should not be compelled to bear greater burdens than are borne by others. In mandating that knowledge and learning be "generally diffused" and that the "opportunities and advantages of education" be spread through the various parts of the State, N.H. CONST. pt. II, art. 83, the framers of the New Hampshire Constitution could not have intended the current funding system with its wide disparities. This is likely the very reason that the people assigned the duty to support the schools to the State and not to the towns.

There is nothing fair or just about taxing a home or other real estate in one town at four times the rate that similar property is taxed in another town to fulfill the same purpose of meeting the State's educational duty. Compelling taxpayers from property-poor districts to pay higher tax rates and thereby contribute disproportionate sums to fund education is unreasonable. Children who live in poor and rich districts have the same right to a constitutionally adequate public education. Regardless of whether existing State educational standards meet the test for constitutional adequacy, the record demonstrates that a number of plaintiff communities are unable to meet existing standards despite assessing disproportionate and unreasonable taxes. "If modern conditions make ancient divisions or plans for distributing the tax burden inequitable, it would seem to be a plain legislative duty to enact such constitutional laws as will remedy the defect." Opinion of the Justices, 84 N.H. at 581, 149 A. at 332-33; see State v. Express Co., 60 N.H. at 247 (Doe, C.J.) ("methods of dividing the public expense, equitable enough for practical purposes in the last century, would now be good cause of complaint"). We hold, therefore, that the varying property tax rates across the State violate part II, article 5 of the State Constitution in that such taxes, which support the public purpose of education, are unreasonable and disproportionate. To the extent that the property tax is used in the future to fund the provision of an adequate education, the tax must be administered in a manner that is equal in valuation and uniform in rate throughout the State.

II

Following Claremont I, the trial court, in the absence of legislative action, accepted a definition of educational adequacy developed by the State Board of Education. This definition provides in part: "An adequate public elementary and secondary education in New Hampshire is one which provides each educable child with an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and learning necessary to participate intelligently in the American political, economic, and social systems of a free government." The definition then establishes at length a system of shared responsibility between State and local government. This definition, however, does not sufficiently reflect the letter or the spirit of the State Constitution's mandate. The constitution places the duty to support the public schools on "the legislators and magistrates." N.H. CONST. pt. II, art. 83. As we said in Claremont I, it is for the legislature and the Governor to "fulfill their responsibility with respect to defining the specifics of, and the appropriate means to provide through public education, the knowledge and learning essential to the preservation of a free government." Claremont I,
138 N.H. at 193, 635 A.2d at 1381. Thus, in the first instance, it is the legislature's obligation, not that of individual members of the board of education, to establish educational standards that comply with constitutional requirements.

Our society places tremendous value on education. Education provides the key to individual opportunities for social and economic advancement and forms the foundation for our democratic institutions and our place in the global economy. The very existence of government was declared by the framers to depend upon the intelligence of its citizens. See N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 83; State v. Jackson, 71 N.H. 552, 553-54, 53 A. 1021, 1022 (1902). As the New Hampshire Constitution exists today, education is deemed so essential to the viability of the State that part II, article 83 is one of only two places in the constitution where a duty is affirmatively placed on the legislature. Compare N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 83 ("it shall be the duty of the legislators ... to cherish ... public schools") with N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 5-A (legislature has "duty to provide for prompt and temporary succession to the powers and duties of public officers" in the event of enemy attack). "In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education." Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954).

In this appeal, the plaintiffs ask us to declare a State funded constitutionally adequate public education a fundamental right. In response to the same request, the trial court ruled that "classification of a right as fundamental under the New Hampshire Constitution is a task which properly rests with our Supreme Court." When governmental action impinges fundamental rights, such matters are entitled to review under the standard of strict judicial scrutiny. In Belkner v. Preston, 115 N.H. 15, 18, 332 A.2d 168, 170-71 (1975), this court instructed that "where either a 'suspect' classification (i.e., race, alienage, nationality, and probably, sex) or a 'fundamental interest' (i.e., procreation, interstate travel, voting, first amendment rights) is involved, state statutes are subjected to strict judicial scrutiny with the result that there must be a compelling state interest to sustain the legislation." We learn also from the writing of Chief Justice Doe a little more than one hundred years ago that

[t]he settled constitutional right of equal privileges and equal protection under general law rests on incontestable grounds of wisdom and necessity. The equal protection of the laws recently inserted in the federal constitution has been a New Hampshire doctrine 110 years; and it has been maintained here in a breadth of meaning and a scope of practical operation unknown elsewhere.

State v. Griffin, 86 N.H. 609, 615, 186 A. 923, 926 (1894) (Doe, C.J., see Reporter's Note).

In determining whether, in New Hampshire, a State funded constitutionally adequate elementary and secondary education is a fundamental right, we are guided by two salient factors: one of constitutional interpretation and the other of practicality and common sense. First and foremost is the fact that our State Constitution specifically charges the legislature with the duty to provide public education. See N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 83. This fact alone is sufficient in our view to accord fundamental right status to the beneficiaries of the duty. Claremont I, 138 N.H. 183, 635 A.2d 1375.

It is not the province of this Court to create substantive constitutional rights in the name of guaranteeing equal protection of the laws. Thus, the key to discovering whether education is "fundamental" is not to be found in comparisons of the relative societal significance of education as opposed to subsistence or housing. Rather, the answer lies in assessing whether there is a right to education explicitly or implicitly guaranteed by the Constitution.

Second, and of persuasive force, is the simple fact that even a minimalist view of educational adequacy recognizes the role of education in preparing citizens to participate in the exercise of voting and first amendment rights. The latter being recognized as fundamental, it is illogical to place the means to exercise those rights on less substantial constitutional footing than the rights themselves. We hold that in this State a constitutionally adequate public education is a fundamental right. In so doing we note that "[t]he right to an adequate education mandated by the constitution is not based on the exclusive needs of a particular individual, but rather is a right held by the public to enforce the State's duty." Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 192, 635 A.2d at 1381.

We emphasize that the fundamental right at issue is the right to a State funded constitutionally adequate public education. It is not the right to horizontal resource replication from school to school and district to district. The substance of the right may be achieved in different schools possessing, for example, differing library resources, teacher-student ratios, computer software, as well as the myriad tools and techniques that may be employed by those in on-site control of the State's public elementary and secondary school systems. But when an individual school or school district offers something less than educational adequacy, the governmental action or lack of action that is the root cause of the disparity will be examined by a standard of strict judicial scrutiny.

"Given the complexities of our society today, the State's constitutional duty extends beyond mere reading, writing, and arithmetic. It also includes broad educational opportunities needed in today's society to prepare citizens for their role as participants and as potential competitors in today's marketplace of ideas." Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 192, 635 A.2d at 1381. A constitutionally adequate public education is not a static concept removed from the demands of an evolving world. It is not the needs of the few but the critical requirements of the many that it must address. Mere competence in the basics -- reading, writing, and arithmetic -- is insufficient in the waning days of the twentieth century to insure that this State's public school students are fully integrated into the world around them. A broad exposure to the social, economic, scientific, technological, and political realities of today's society is essential for our students to compete, contribute, and flourish in the twenty-first century.

We look to the seven criteria articulated by the Supreme Court of Kentucky as establishing general, aspirational guidelines for defining educational adequacy. A constitutionally adequate public education should reflect consideration of the following:

(i) sufficient oral and written communication skills to enable students to function in a complex and rapidly changing civilization; (ii) sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices; (iii) sufficient understanding of governmental processes to enable the student to understand the issues that affect his or her community, state, and nation; (iv) sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness; (v) sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage; (vi) sufficient training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently; and (vii) sufficient levels of academic or vocational skills to enable public school students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.

Rose v. Council for Better Educ., Inc., 790 S.W.2d at 212; see McDuffy v. Sec'y of Exec. Off. of Educ., 615 N.E.2d 516, 554 (Mass. 1993). We view these guidelines as benchmarks of a constitutionally adequate public education. "These guidelines accord with our Constitution's emphasis on educating our children to become free citizens on whom the
[State] may rely to meet its needs and to further its interests." McDuffy, 615 N.E.2d at 555. Without intending to intrude upon prerogatives of other branches of government, see N.H. CONST. pt. I, art. 37, we anticipate that they will promptly develop and adopt specific criteria implementing these guidelines and, in completing this task, will appeal to a broad constituency. "While the judiciary has the duty to construe and interpret the word ‘education’ by providing broad constitutional guidelines, the Legislature is obligated to give specific substantive content to the word and to the program it deems necessary to provide that ‘education’ within the broad guidelines." Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1 of King Cty. v. State, 585 P.2d 71, 95 (Wash. 1978).

We agree with Justice Horton that we were not appointed to establish educational policy, nor to determine the proper way to finance its implementation. That is why we leave such matters, consistent with the Constitution, to the two co-equal branches of government and why we did so in the unanimous opinion of this court in Claremont I. We disagree with him that the taxation of property to support education must reach the level of confiscation before a constitutional threshold is crossed. It is our duty to uphold and implement the New Hampshire Constitution, and we have done so today.

III

Our decision does not prevent the legislature from authorizing local school districts to dedicate additional resources to their schools or to develop educational programs beyond those required for a constitutionally adequate public education. We recognize that local control plays a valuable role in public education; however, the State cannot use local control as a justification for allowing the existence of educational services below the level of constitutional adequacy. The responsibility for ensuring the provision of an adequate public education and an adequate level of resources for all students in New Hampshire lies with the State. "[W]hile local governments may be required, in part, to support public schools, it is the responsibility of the [State] to take such steps as may be required in each instance effectively to devise a plan and sources of funds sufficient to meet the constitutional mandate." McDuffy, 615 N.E.2d at 556; see RSA 198:1-7. We agree with those who say that merely spending additional money on education will not necessarily insure its quality. It is basic, however, that in order to deliver a constitutionally adequate public education to all children, comparable funding must be assured in order that every school district will have the funds necessary to provide such education. Imposing dissimilar and unreasonable tax burdens on the school districts creates serious impediments to the State's constitutional charge to provide an adequate education for its public school students.

The State's duty to provide for an adequate education is constitutionally compelled. The present system selected and crafted by the State to fund public education is, however, unconstitutional. While the State may delegate its obligation to provide a constitutionally adequate public education to local school districts, it may not do so in a form underscored by unreasonable and inequitable tax burdens. As the State acknowledged at oral argument, several financing models could be fashioned to fund public education. It is for the legislature to select one that passes constitutional muster.

Decisions concerning the raising and disposition of public revenues are particularly a legislative function and the legislature has wide latitude in choosing the means by which public education is to be supported. Opinion of the Justices, 97 N.H. 546, 547, 81 A.2d 853, 854 (1951); see Opinion of the Justices, 112 N.H. 32, 287 A.2d 756 (1972). The legislature has numerous sources of expertise upon which it can draw in addressing educational financing and adequacy, including the experience of other States that have faced and resolved similar issues. Accordingly, we do not remand for consideration of remedies at this time, but instead stay all further proceedings until the end of the upcoming legislative
session and further order of this court to permit the legislature to address the issues involved in this case. We are mindful of the fact that our decision holding the present system of financing public education unconstitutional raises issues concerning the interim viability of the existing tax system. Because the legislature must be given a reasonable time to effect an orderly transition to a new system, the present funding mechanism may remain in effect through the 1998 tax year. Cf. Merrill v. Manchester, 114 N.H. 722, 730, 332 A.2d 378, 384 (1974).

We are confident that the legislature and the Governor will act expeditiously to fulfill the State's duty to provide for a constitutionally adequate public education and to guarantee adequate funding in a manner that does not violate the State Constitution. See Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 193, 635 A.2d at 1381.

Reversed; proceedings stayed pending further order of the court.

THAYER, J., did not sit; BATCHELDER, J., retired, sat by special assignment under RSA 490:3; HORTON, J., dissented; the others concurred.

HORTON, J., dissenting: I agree with the majority that a proper education, beyond the basics, should include "[a] broad exposure to the social, economic, scientific, technological, and political realities of today's society." I also agree that the current financing matrix for education is far from desirable, for many of the reasons expressed in the majority opinion. My problem is that I was not appointed to establish educational policy, nor to determine the proper way to finance the implementation of this policy. Those duties, in my opinion, reside with the representatives of the people, the Governor, the legislature, and the respective magistrates and legislative authorities in the respective school and taxing districts. My job is to determine whether the structures for providing and financing education, as selected by these direct representatives of the people, meet the mandates of our State Constitution. I should not involve myself in social engineering, no matter how worthy the cause, when the constitution and the decisions of those charged with the obligation of forming social policy are compatible. This is not to say that I infer an absence of regard in the decision of the majority for the proper role of this court. My colleagues simply have a different view of the express constitutional mandate. I write separately to explain to the students and taxpayers of this State why I am unable to effect needed reform.

We have held that our constitution invests in the legislature and the magistrates of this State the duty to provide a constitutionally adequate education and to guarantee the funding thereof. Claremont School Dist. v. Governor, 138 N.H. 183, 184, 635 A.2d 1375, 1376 (1993) (Claremont I). We also held that the implementation of this duty could be delegated. Id. at 191, 635 A.2d at 1381. The majority holds today that the present system of taxation to provide funding to meet this constitutional duty violates part II, article 5 of the State Constitution, because it is not reasonable or proportional. The majority, quite properly, seeks to define the standard for the constitutional duty to provide an adequate education. I disagree with the majority's definition of the standard imposed by the constitution, see N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 83, and further would hold that the delegation of the duty, and its incumbent financing obligation, is proper, and not violative of part II, article 5 of our constitution.

"Constitutional adequacy" is not "general adequacy." The former must be determined by a careful reading of our constitution. The latter may be important to the makers of policy, but
it is clear that one man's adequacy is another's deficiency. Under our system of government, the elected representatives of the people must strike the balance. The constitutional provision material to this inquiry is part II, article 83, which states, in part:

Knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government; and spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country, being highly conducive to promote this end; it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools, to encourage private and public institutions, rewards, and immunities for the promotion of agriculture, arts, sciences, commerce, trades, manufactures, and natural history of the country; to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and economy, honesty and punctuality, sincerity, sobriety, and all social affections, and generous sentiments, among the people . . .

N.H. CONST, pt. II, art. 83.

I read article 83 to have two parts, the "cherish" part and the "encourage" part. We have held that "cherish" is a mandate to support. Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 187, 635 A.2d at 1378. "Encourage" does not contain the same mandate. The same dictionary that drove our interpretation of "cherish," id., defines "encourage" as "to animate, to incite to any thing; to give courage to, to sup[p]ort the spirits, to embolden; to raise confidence, to make confident." T. Sheridan, A General Dictionary of the English Language (London 1780). This is not a duty on the encourager, but a charge to have positive effect on the encouragee. I would parse part II, article 83 and limit my constitutional mandate inquiry to these words:

Knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government; and spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country, being highly conducive to promote this end; it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools . . .

N.H. CONST. pt. II, art. 83.

Taking this as the mandated duty and seeking the constitutional scope of this duty, I search for the constitutional purpose. I find this purpose in the language "the preservation of a free government." The article says that "education through the various parts of the country" is conducive to meet that end. Thus, my constitutional standard for adequacy would be satisfied if the education provided meets the minimum necessary to assure the preservation of a free government.

This standard would also be the subject of some debate, but the policy makers would have a standard mandated by the constitution. It would certainly contain the elements of reading, writing, and mathematics. It would also include exposure to history and the form of our government. Beyond this, arguments can be made for other elements. I would include in the constitutional standard the first three elements of the Kentucky standard adopted by the majority, but not necessarily the balance (mental and physical wellness, arts, preparation for advanced education or vocations). Rose v. Council for Better Educ., Inc., 790 S.W.2d 186, 212 (Ky. 1989). Although it is hard to fault the well-crafted Kentucky standard, it is taken from a constitution that vests in the "General Assembly" the duty to "provide for an efficient system of common schools throughout the state." KY. CONST. § 183. Such a constitutional provision invites an imperative to adequacy in the general sense. It is not
appropriate as an answer to our constitutional mandate. In our analysis, we must look to
education in the constitutional sense and define the level and type of education mandated by
our constitution. It is the latter mandate that I designate the constitutional "nut." It is this nut
that the legislature and magistrates of this State must provide and for which they must
guarantee funding. It is conclusive from the factual findings below that this constitutional
nut has been provided by the school districts, well within their respective resources.

Of course, the definitive holding of the majority on the unconstitutionality of the current
educational finance matrix is that it violates part II, article 5 of our constitution. This article
requires that all taxes levied in the State be proportional and reasonable. Although the scope
of the duty may be material to the question of reasonability, the issue of proportionality, in
this case, is driven by a determination of the appropriate taxing district. If the taxing district
is appropriate, it is clear that proportionality is determined within that taxing district. Keene
v. Roxbury, 81 N.H. 332, 337, 126 A. 7, 10 (1924); State v. Express Co., 60 N.H. 219, 243
(1880) (Stanley, J.); Railroad v. The State, 60 N.H. 87, 97 (1880). The majority, equating
"duty" with "purpose," and ignoring the fact that governmental duty can be delegated to its
subdivisions, holds that since the duty resides with the State, the State is the appropriate
taxing district within which to measure proportionality. I would move from an analysis of
duty to an analysis of purpose, and hold that the purpose in education taxation is a local
purpose, the education of children of the school district. Holt v. Antrim, 64 N.H. 284, 286, 9
A. 389, 389 (1886) ("Local education is a local purpose for which legislative power may be
delegated to towns.").

The State delegates many of its constitutional duties to its political subdivisions and
provides for taxation to support satisfaction of the delegated duties at the local level. See
generally Wooster v. Plymouth, 62 N.H. 193 (1882). It is important to understand that the
State holds the residue of all political power and has been charged with all duties of
government. N.H. CONST. pt. I, art. 7; U.S. CONST. amend. X. The State is the seminal
unit for all aspects of government: the delivery of services, the protection of rights, and the
determination of taxation for support. The State has the power to delegate these functions of
government. It did so in binding delegation to the United States of America, in congress
assembled, with its ratification of the Constitution of the United States. It does so, from time
to time, by the formation of, and delegation of powers and duties to, its political
subdivisions. The general duties of the State, imposed by our constitution, include provision
of the general good (pt. I, art. 1), protection of the people (pt. I, arts. 3, 12), provision for the
general benefit and welfare (pt. II, art. 5), and provision for government and ordering (pt. II,
art. 5). Our constitution further imposes more specific duties, such as the provision of a
constitutionally adequate education and a guarantee of adequate funding (pt. II, art. 83;
Claremont I, 138 N.H. at 184, 635 A.2d at 1376), provision of courts and legal remedies (pt.
I, art. 14; pt. II, art. 4), provision for elections (pt. II, art. 5), and provision for the raising of
taxes (pt. II, art. 5).

Since the counties, towns, cities, and districts of this State do not hold the ultimate sovereign
power and are not vested with the duties of government by the constitution agreed to by our
people, these political subdivisions have no constitutional powers or duties in their own
right. They have no independent constitutional duty to govern and order, to protect, or to
provide for the benefit and welfare. Yet, their role is immense, and arises through delegation.
Many State duties have been delegated to its political subdivisions, and with this delegation
I, art. 28-a (no new or expanded unfunded mandates after enactment). Political subdivisions,
at their own expense, carry out State duties on elections, fire and police protection, land use
control and other exercises of the police power, provisions of highways, sanitation, and the
structure and staffing of local government. For much of our history, the counties, towns, and
cities provided, at their expense, the facilities, and some level of staffing, for our court
system. The local school district, for some time, has financed the education for the children of the district.

Under my determination of duty and delegation, I am driven to a holding that the constitutional education nut is properly delegated and the purpose, for taxation purposes, is demonstrably local. Holt, 64 N.H. at 286, 9 A. at 389. Funds raised by taxation are used for political purposes within the district, for the district's use, and expended by the district to achieve educational standards set by the State and the district, for the sole benefit of the district. See School-District v. Prentiss, 66 N.H. 145, 146, 19 A. 1090, 1090 (1889); cf. Allen v. Bidwell, 68 N.H. 245, 246, 44 A. 295, 295 (1894); Railroad v. The State, 60 N.H. at 96. Given the legislature's proper delegation, its clear designation of the taxing district, the discerned purpose of the tax, and its obvious proportionality within the taxing district, I would hold that the trial court was correct in deciding, in the context of this case, that the part II, article 5 tests of reasonability and proportionality have been met by the current tax system.

The majority gives a passing nod to reasonability, equating it with proportionality. Obviously, these are two different tests since they are separately stated in part II, article 5. Reasonability can involve a number of issues, but not proportionality. Reasonability should be measured against an absolute standard, whereas proportionality involves relative considerations. In this case, I would surmise that reasonability would involve measuring the tax collected against the property assessed, and where the taxing act becomes a taking act, the tax is unreasonable. Cf. Acker v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 258 F.2d 568, 574 (6th Cir. 1958), aff'd, 361 U.S. 87 (1959).

And that is the trigger of the State's guarantee which is mandated in the constitution, as interpreted in Claremont I. Failure of the school districts, the primary obligors, to provide funding for the educational nut by virtue of the unreasonableness of their respective taxes, measured against the total local tax burden, would trigger the State's guarantee obligation. At that point, the State must step in and provide funding, or such part thereof as will reduce the tax burden to a reasonable level. The test of absolute reasonability is not developed in this case.

Although not the basis of the majority's opinion, the majority presents a learned analysis of the right of the student to education. It finds the right to be fundamental. I do not quarrel with this characterization, but note that its materiality is based on the plaintiffs' claim of a violation of equal protection. The majority does not find such a violation. Based on my definition of the constitutional duty owed to these students, I would hold that the record below demonstrates that the constitutional nut is provided to all students and find the funding scheme is not constitutionally infirm. Thus, there is no equal protection violation.

Although I have some quarrels with aspects of the decision below, none are the subject of this appeal, and I agree for the most part with the result reached by the trial court in a mostly excellent opinion.

Accordingly, I respectfully dissent and would affirm the decision below.
APPENDIX L

OFFICIAL BALLOT REFERENDA Section 40:13 (SENATE BILL 2)
TITLE III
TOWNS, CITIES, VILLAGE DISTRICTS, AND UNINCORPORATED PLACES

CHAPTER 40
GOVERNMENT OF TOWN MEETING

Optional Form of Meeting--Official Ballot Referenda

Section 40:13

40:13 Use of Official Ballot. –
I. Notwithstanding RSA 39:3-d, RSA 40:4-e, or any other provision of law, any local political subdivision as defined in RSA 40:12 which has adopted this subdivision shall utilize the official ballot for voting on all issues before the voters.

II. The warrant for any annual meeting shall prescribe the place, day and hour for each of 2 separate sessions of the meeting, and notice shall be given as otherwise provided in this section. Final budgets and ballot questions shall be printed in the annual report made available to the legislative body at least one week before the date of the second session of the annual meeting.

II-a. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all local political subdivisions which adopt this subdivision, who have not adopted an April or May election date under RSA 40:14, X, shall comply with the following schedule pertaining to notice, petitioned articles, hearings, and warrants for the annual meeting:
(a) The final date for posting notice of budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a shall be the second Tuesday in January.
(b) The "budget submission date" as defined in RSA 273-A:1, III and the final date for submission of petitioned articles under RSA 39:3 and RSA 197:6 shall be the second Tuesday in January.
(c) Budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a and RSA 675:3 shall be held on or before the third Tuesday in January.
(d) Warrants under RSA 39:5 and RSA 197:7 and budgets shall be posted and copies available to the general public on or before the last Monday in January.

II-b. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all political subdivisions which hold their annual meetings in April shall comply with the following schedule pertaining to notice, petitioned articles, hearings, and warrants for the annual meeting:
(a) The final date for posting notice of budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a shall be the second Tuesday in February.
(b) The "budget submission date" as defined in RSA 273-A:1, III and the final date for submission of petitioned articles under RSA 39:3 and RSA 197:6 shall be the second Tuesday in February.
(c) Budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a and RSA 675:3 shall be held on or before the third Tuesday in February.
(d) Warrants under RSA 39:5 and RSA 197:7 and budgets shall be posted and copies available to the general public on or before the last Monday in February.

II-c. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all political subdivisions which hold their annual meetings in May shall comply with the following schedule pertaining to notice, petitioned articles, hearings, and warrants for the annual meeting:
(a) The final date for posting notice of budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a shall be the second Tuesday in March.
(b) The "budget submission date" as defined in RSA 273-A:1, III and the final date for submission of petitioned articles under RSA 39:3 and RSA 197:6 shall be the second Tuesday in March.
(c) Budget hearings under RSA 32:5 and RSA 195:12 and hearings under RSA 33:8-a and RSA 675:3 shall be held on or before the third Tuesday in March.
(d) Warrants under RSA 39:5 and RSA 197:7 and budgets shall be posted and copies
available to the general public on or before the last Monday in March.

II-d. The voter checklist shall be updated in accordance with RSA 669:5 for each session of the annual meeting.

III. The first session of the annual meeting, which shall be for the transaction of all business other than voting by official ballot, shall be held between the first and second Saturdays following the last Monday in January, inclusive of those Saturdays; between the first and second Saturdays following the last Monday in February, inclusive of those Saturdays; or between the first and second Saturdays following the last Monday in March, inclusive of those Saturdays at a time prescribed by the local political subdivision's governing body.

IV. The first session of the meeting, governed by the provisions of RSA 40:4, 40:4-a, 40:4-b, 40:4-f, and 40:6-40:10, shall consist of explanation, discussion, and debate of each warrant article. A vote to restrict reconsideration shall be deemed to prohibit any further action on the restricted article until the second session, and RSA 40:10, II shall not apply. Warrant articles may be amended at the first session, subject to the following limitations:

(a) Warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended.

(b) Warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended.

V. [Repealed.]

VI. All warrant articles shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote, including warrant articles as amended by the first session. All special warrant articles shall be accompanied on the ballot by recommendations as required by RSA 32:5, V, concerning any appropriation or appropriation as amended.

VII. The second session of the annual meeting, to elect officers of the local political subdivision by official ballot, to vote on questions required by law to be inserted on said official ballot, and to vote on all warrant articles from the first session on official ballot, shall be held on the second Tuesday in March, the second Tuesday in April, or the second Tuesday in May, as applicable. Notwithstanding RSA 669:1, 670:1, or 671:2, the second session shall be deemed the annual election date for purposes of all applicable election statutes including, but not limited to, RSA 669:5, 669:19, 669:30, 670:3, 670:4, 670:11, 671:15, 671:19, and 671:30 through 32; and votes on zoning ordinances, historic district ordinances, and building codes under RSA 675.

VIII. The clerk of the local political subdivision shall prepare an official ballot, which may be separate from the official ballot used to elect officers, for all warrant articles. Wording shall be substantively the same as the main motion, as it was made or amended at the first session, with only such minor textual changes as may be required to cast the motion in the form of a question to the voters.

IX. (a) "Operating budget" as used in this subdivision means "budget," as defined in RSA 32:3, III, exclusive of "special warrant articles," as defined in RSA 32:3, VI, and exclusive of other appropriations voted separately.

(b) "Default budget" as used in this subdivision means the amount of the same appropriations as contained in the operating budget authorized for the previous year, reduced and increased, as the case may be, by debt service, contracts, and other obligations previously incurred or mandated by law, and reduced by one-time expenditures contained in the operating budget. For the purposes of this paragraph, one-time expenditures shall be appropriations not likely to recur in the succeeding budget, as determined by the governing body, unless the provisions of RSA 40:14-b are adopted, of the local political subdivision.

X. If no operating budget article is adopted, the local political subdivision either shall be deemed to have approved the default budget or the governing body may hold a special meeting pursuant to paragraph XVI to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only; provided that RSA 31:5 and RSA 197:3 shall not apply to such a special meeting. If no operating budget article is adopted the estimated revenues shall nevertheless be deemed to have been approved.

XI. (a) The default budget shall be disclosed at the first budget hearing held pursuant to
RSA 32:5 or RSA 197:6. The governing body, unless the provisions of RSA 40:14-b are adopted, shall complete a default budget form created by the department of revenue administration to demonstrate how the default budget amount was calculated. The form and associated calculations shall, at a minimum, include the following:

1. Appropriations contained in the previous year's operating budget;
2. Reductions and increases to the previous year's operating budget; and
3. One-time expenditures as defined under subparagraph IX(b).

(b) This amount shall not be amended by the legislative body. However, this amount may be adjusted by the governing body, unless the provisions of RSA 40:14-b are adopted, acting on relevant new information at any time before the ballots are printed, provided the governing body, unless the provisions of RSA 40:14-b are adopted, completes an amended default budget form.

(c) The wording of the second session ballot question concerning the operating budget shall be as follows:

"Shall the (local political subdivision) raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling $ __________? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be $ __________, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the (local political subdivision) or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only."

XII. Voting at the second session shall conform to the procedures for the nonpartisan ballot system as set forth in RSA 669:19-29, RSA 670:5-7 and RSA 671:20-30, including all requirements pertaining to absentee voting, polling place, and polling hours.

XIII. Approval of all warrant articles shall be by simple majority except for questions which require a 2/3 vote by law, contract, or written agreement.

XIV. Votes taken at the second session shall be subject to recount under RSA 669:30-33 and RSA 40:4-c.

XV. Votes taken at the second session shall not be reconsidered.

XVI. The warrant for any special meeting shall prescribe the date, place and hour for both a first and second session. The second session shall be warned for a date not fewer than 28 days nor more than 60 days following the first session. The first and second sessions shall conform to the provisions of this subdivision pertaining to the first and second sessions of annual meetings. Special meetings shall be subject to RSA 31:5, 39:3, 195:13, 197:2, and 197:3, provided that no more than one special meeting may be held to raise and appropriate money for the same question or issue in any one calendar year or fiscal year, whichever applies, and further provided that any special meeting held pursuant to paragraphs X and XI shall not be subject to RSA 31:5 and RSA 197:3 and shall not be counted toward the number of special meetings which may be held in a given calendar or fiscal year.

APPENDIX M

RSA 193-D:1, 2
The Safe Schools Law
TITLE XV
EDUCATION

CHAPTER 193-D
SAFE SCHOOL ZONES

Section 193-D:1
193-D:1 Definitions. – In this chapter:
I. "Act of theft, destruction, or violence" means an act set forth in the following statutes regardless of the age of the perpetrator:
   (a) Homicide under RSA 630.
   (b)(1) Any first or second degree assault under RSA 631.
        (2) Any simple assault under RSA 631:2-a.
   (c) Any felonious or aggravated felonious sexual assault under RSA 632-A.
   (d) Criminal mischief under RSA 634:2.
   (e) Unlawful possession or sale of a firearm or other dangerous weapon under RSA 159.
   (f) Arson under RSA 634:1.
   (g) Burglary under RSA 635.
   (h) Robbery under RSA 636.
   (i) Theft under RSA 637.
   (j) Illegal sale or possession of a controlled drug under RSA 318-B.
II. "Safe school zone" means an area inclusive of any school property or school buses.
III. "School" means any public or private elementary, secondary, or secondary vocational-technical school in New Hampshire. It shall not include home schools under RSA 193-A.
IV. "School employee" means any school administrator, teacher, or other employee of any public or private school, school district, school department, or school administrative unit, or any person providing or performing continuing contract services for any public or private school, school district, school department, or school administrative unit.
V. "School property" means all real property, physical plant and equipment used for school purposes, including but not limited to school playgrounds and buses, whether public or private.
VI. "School purposes" means school-sponsored programs, including but not limited to educational or extra-curricular activities.

CHAPTER 193-D
SAFE SCHOOL ZONES

Section 193-D:2
193-D:2 State Board Rulemaking Authority; Public School District Policies. –
I. The state board of education shall adopt rules relative to safe school zones, under RSA 541-A, for public school pupils and public school employees regarding:
   (a) Disciplinary proceedings, including procedures assuring due process.
   (b)(1) Standards and procedures for suspension and expulsion of pupils, including procedures assuring due process.
       (2) Standards and procedures which shall require expulsion of a pupil for knowingly possessing a firearm in a safe school zone without written authorization from the superintendent or designee.
       (c) Procedures pertaining to discipline of pupils with special needs, including procedures assuring due process.
       (d) Procedures for reporting acts of theft, destruction, or violence under RSA 193-D:4.
II. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit local school boards from adopting and implementing policies relative to pupil conduct and disciplinary procedures.

APPENDIX N

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
January 13, 2004

Stebbins, Betsey C
Education, Morrill Hall
5 Surrey Drive
Bow, NH 03304

IRB #: 3089
Study: School Governance in New Hampshire: Revisiting a Study of School Board-Superintendent Relations in Small Rural School Districts

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) reviewed your study and recommended approval of the use of human subjects in this study contingent upon the following:

- The investigator needs to submit to the IRB a letter in support of the study from the faculty advisor.
- The investigator needs to develop a cover letter to accompany the surveys that includes basic consent information such as a statement that participation in the research is voluntary, participants may refuse to answer any questions, approximate length of time to complete the survey, information about reporting data (anonymity, aggregate, etc.) and confidentiality of responses, contact information for the investigator in case of any questions about the research, and the following statement, "If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu to discuss them."
- The investigator needs to develop a consent form for the interviews. As superintendents report to school boards, who establish terms of employment, the investigator needs to explain in the consent form the potential risks posed by the research and how they will be minimized, given the small number of subjects involved. Sample consent forms are available on-line at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/IRB.html

The IRB will continue its review of your study upon receipt of the information requested above. Formal written approval will not be issued until the IRB reviews and approves your response. You may not begin work involving human subjects, including recruitment, instrument testing, or data collection, until formal written approval is issued by the IRB. Please respond to the IRB within sixty days of this letter. If the IRB does not receive a response within sixty days, your study will be withdrawn from consideration.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Regulatory Compliance Manager

cc: File
Barbara Kryskiak, Education

Regulatory Compliance Office, Office of Sponsored Research, Service Building,
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585 * Fax: 603-862-3564

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