BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS: A STUDY OF MOTIVES, MEMBERSHIP, AND PERCEPTIONS OF INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

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BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS: A STUDY OF MOTIVES, MEMBERSHIP, AND
PERCEPTIONS OF INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership
in the
Department of Education and Educational Psychology
at
Western Connecticut State University
2016
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS: A STUDY OF MOTIVES, MEMBERSHIP, AND
PERCEPTIONS OF INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

Jennifer Ann Eraca, B.A., M.S.
Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

School Boards in the United States have existed for over 200 years. During this time, they have evolved into complex governing bodies that yield great fiscal power over school districts. Membership is comprised mostly of laypersons and requirements of membership continue to be minimal. While oversight and policy are key roles of Boards of Education, the relationship among School Board members, school superintendents, and various stakeholders is crucial to effective leadership and meeting district goals.

Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this phenomenological study explored School Board members’ motives for membership, eligibility requirements, and the perceptions of School Board members’ influence on education policy. A survey was sent to 5,000 New York State Board of Education (NYS BOE) members and 5,006 community members. Respondents included 60 NYS BOE members and 191 community members. Data were collected from the survey and served to inform and guide focus group discussions and interview questions. Additionally, a reflexive journal was kept to add qualitative validity.

All items were analyzed and coded by the researcher and subsequently, by outside, independent auditors. The triangulation of data sources was survey data, focus group information, and interview transcriptions.
Data analysis resulted in eight themes as it related to the study of BOE members’ motivation for membership, eligibility requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. Research indicated that BOE members recognized there was a level of power and influence to service in terms of decision-making. However, BOE members were largely motivated to have a positive impact on children and give back to their community by making positive changes on programs and policies for future generations.

These BOE members indicated that serving on the BOE is one of the purest forms of democracy in the United States. Respondents noted that BOE members are elected by their peers, are not affiliated with a political party, and membership criteria is minimal thus allowing a cross-representation of skills and backgrounds.

Data analysis also indicated there was a misperception why BOE members serve. This was in contrast to what BOE members indicated as their motives of why they serve. The study participants indicated that while they believed BOE members served for altruistic intentions of making a positive impact on children and giving back to their community, the perception by both BOE and community members of why they serve was in a more self-regarding manner.

The study found that there is frustration over the loss of local control with unfunded mandates by the federal government. Results further indicated that Boards of Education would be better served if their BOE were branded. Results suggested that BOE members use the school district’s mission or vision to brand themselves and then market this mission or vision to their community with consistent messages.

Finally, data suggested there was a negative stigma to serving on the BOE that correlates to the misperception of why BOE members serve. Study participants indicated
that transparency and communication were crucial in creating positive change for school districts.
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS: A STUDY OF MOTIVES, MEMBERSHIP, AND PERCEPTIONS OF INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“And so rock bottom became the solid foundation for which I rebuilt my life.” J.K. Rowling

Like so many, I too have a story that led to this doctoral journey and a laundry list of important people who contributed to my completion and ultimate success. Bits and pieces of experiences and people molded who I am.

First off, I would like to thank Dr. Marcy Delcourt. A year before I applied to the program, she sat with me and allowed me the opportunity to thumb through dissertations...the end product of this degree. As a result, I came into the program eyes WIDE open!

In addition, my work would not be complete without the help and love of key people. I would like to thank:

Dr. Lois Favre and Dr. Raina Kor: my secondary advisors, for giving their time and contributing their wealth of experience to add to mine.

Dr. Phyllis Amori: for being my auditor, colleague, and professional confidante. I am very grateful for having worked under your leadership.

Dr. Jane Gangi: for being my reader and role model for instruction and human capacity in which I try to emulate. You are my academic hero.

Patty Hogan: for suggesting and supporting my run for the BOE...without you, I would not have a dissertation topic! Words are powerful. Thank you for using yours to help shape mine and for seeing something in me that I did not see in myself. Leadership and a voice for the masses...I will always try to show “restraint of pen and tongue.”
Irene Humbach: who taught me how to effectively communicate. You’ve impacted more lives than you know by teaching a newly married couple how to do it many moons ago.

Dr. Karen Burke: the “fun nun,” my primary advisor/part-time therapist/and private prayer hotline who embraces “us” heathens…thank you for being my little piece of home with your NY sass in CT where they pronounce their Rs and are polite. I am indebted to you for your guidance, direction, and invaluable friendship and wisdom.

Matt Correia: Five years ago, on a warm, sunny late August afternoon, I took an empty seat next to a person who would end up being a lifelong friend and confidante in this process. Matt, affectionately known to my family and friends as my cohort husband, has been my partner in crime in this program. It has been a privilege to see your life with Jess grow and your career blossom. The field of education is better because of you and I am too because I get to call you my friend. The ride would not have been as fun or as entertaining without you as my sidekick!

Mom and dad: for your late night phone calls on my long ride home from class and for begging me to “just get a skill” when I initially set off to college. From you, I have learned the tenacity of making your own future and that nothing without a little risk and hard work is ever as rewarding…I love you.

My husband and best friend, Greg: oh the roller coaster ride it’s been! On that same August day I began this program, we had been recovering from a monumental financial tsunami and were still licking our wounds from the fiscal shock and awe. We lost pretty much everything we had including our pride. We had four little mouths to feed, our souls to repair, and no idea how we were going to do it. Just to be sure life had our full attention, on the first day of this program, we had $5 bucks in the checking account, I was one week out
of radioactive iodine treatment for thyroid cancer, was recently unemployed due to budget cuts and 3 days away from our health insurance expiring. I was also waiting to hear back from a job interview with baited breath hoping that I was adequately able to sell myself all the while trying to hide the recent scar across my neck that became my latest identifying factor of “they were the worst of times.”

Amazingly, five years have gone by… I did get that job, we have a little more than $5 bucks in our account, my health is well but most importantly, I am still happily married to you… what an incredibly fulfilling life we have shared …may the love we continue to share spill over into our children’s relationships and feed their souls and multiply. The best things in my life I have truly shared with you….I love you.

Lastly, to my four babies, Jake, Jillian, Mallory and Ava: Thank you for accepting and nurturing my desire to grow and expand. I am eternally grateful for your unwavering support and unconditional love that only a child could show. You are my life’s work and living proof of what success looks and feels like. My hope is that you use what you have learned from this ride and fuel it to achieve your own personal goals.

Nothing… nothing is unachievable without education. Education is power.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Greg who is the love of my life, my partner, best friend, true companion…the best things in my life I have shared with you. I love you more every day.

To my children- Jake, Jillian, Mallory and Ava. You have been my reasons to push on when I did not want to…you are my cheerleaders …you are my life’s work…I am so proud and humbled by how truly beautiful each of you are inside and out…you are my living proof of what success looks and feels like. I love you. We are rich in love…poor in wallet.

To my mom and dad. Thank you for the foundation of what if? and risk.

To my grandma…for being a spirit of the person I live to emulate.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Dating back to the early nineteenth century, School Boards in the United States originated in New England with roots of the system in Massachusetts. According to Land (2002), over 200 years ago, Selectmen from Massachusetts charged laypersons with the task of overseeing local control of education. As the population grew, members of the state legislature saw a need to have a greater role in education. As a result, in 1837, the first state Board of Education was established in Massachusetts with the pretense that local School Boards retained control over their schools. As more towns emerged and populations grew so did schools and the need for separation of districts. Consequently, in 1891, Massachusetts enacted legislation that afforded fiscal and administrative control over local school districts to communities. This system of educational governance spread throughout the colonies with each entity structuring its schools and Boards to meet the needs of the respective region. Today, this layperson governing system, unique to the United States, is the framework of School Boards throughout the nation. While there are differences in the way School Boards function, a commonality among all is oversight and management of public education with only a third of members nationwide being paid (Land, 2002).

The role of superintendent began to dominate the educational landscape in the mid-1800s. Originally presiding over instructional matters, a superintendent’s role evolved to include more managerial responsibilities and oversight (Land, 2002). With the onset of the 20th century, School Boards followed a corporate template of governance with a focus on policy with superintendents at the helm. This progressive shift from a professional superintendent seen as the chief executive officer working in conjunction with a small board
of lay persons is considered among researchers to be the last major reform to School Boards (Land, 2002).

The federal government’s role in education began to emerge in the second half of the 20th century. In 1954, the Brown vs. Board of Education proceedings declared segregation of schools unconstitutional. This landmark ruling was a turning point for federal involvement in education. A few short years later in 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik and thus began “the Space Race” between the two nations. The launching of Sputnik coupled with already growing criticism of the American education system “set the stage for an unprecedented infusion of funding from the federal government to reform public education at all levels” (Jolly, 2009, p. 50). In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The NDEA was aimed at creating an “elite generation” of students and workers (Jolly, 2009). As a result, government involvement began to permeate education with reports like A Nation at Risk in 1983 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation enacted in 2001. More recently, with initiatives such as Race to the Top (RTTT) in 2009 and the adoption and endorsement of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, the federal government continues to take on a more prominent role generating concern that its influence compromises local control (“Standards in your state,” 2014).

With a burgeoning educational reform movement sweeping across the nation, stakeholder roles are being examined and redefined (Bush, 2014). Boards of Education reflect the values of the community with their decision-making and policies yet there is limited research about Board of Education members’ individual motives for membership (Boyle, 2004). Furthermore, the body of research examining eligibility requirements is scarce. This research study examined Board of Education members’ motives for
membership, eligibility requirements, and the perceptions of Board of Education members’ influence on education policy. Additionally, it sought to examine perceptions of Board of Education members as viewed by community members.

**Rationale for Selecting the Topic**

With over 73.7 million children in the United States, School Boards have an enormous impact over education and policy as it relates to the districts they serve (“America’s children: Key national indicators of well-being,” 2013). Additionally, Board of Education members are charged with creating a shared vision on the future of education as well as a healthy school district culture for work and learning (“Running for the school board,” n.d.). They need to believe in public education and in the democratic process, and understand that their role is to act strategically, in line with the interests of the entire school community (Great Schools Staff, n.d.). Given that School Boards by design are comprised of laypersons from the community, it is imperative that there is greater understanding of Board of Education members’ motives, membership, and perceptions of influence on education policy. By creating awareness, new information can assist in the functioning of a School Board as a means to reduce individual Board of Education members’ personal agendas and motives superseding the Board as a whole (Caruso, 2004). As such, Board of Education members’ intentions and motives for membership need to be aligned to this responsibility.

Eligibility requirements to become a School Board member can vary from state to state and district to district but most follow very banal requirements. For the purpose of this research, the requirements of New York State Boards of Education will be addressed. The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) outlined the eligibility requirements for New York State candidates. According to NYSSBA, School Board candidates must be
18 years of age or older, a resident of the community for at least one year, and cannot be an employee of the school district. Additionally, candidates must hold a high school diploma or equivalent and must be able to read and write (“Running for the school board,” n.d.).

Finally, candidates can be a convicted felon however, they must have served their term of conviction, been pardoned, or had their conviction overturned (NYSSBA representative, 2015).

Board of Education members are elected by community members to represent the community’s view and values. Theoretically, they function more effectively when there is a balanced representation of varying professions, trades, and businesses of a school district. Since there are no clearly specified criteria for balanced membership, an evaluation of eligibility requirements was needed. For School Boards to make sound and informed decisions, all aspects of effectively overseeing a school system need to be taken into consideration. To that end, School Board eligibility requirements were examined as personal interest to the researcher.

According to the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), “local School Boards exercise responsibility for the decision and policy making for individual school districts. Local School Boards of Education are charged with creating the conditions within their school districts that will foster student achievement and for engaging the community in support of this central mission” (“About the state boards of education,” n.d.). Additionally, local School Boards are charged with meeting state education mandates and are responsible for fiscal oversight of their community’s budget (“About the state boards of education,” n.d.). With such lofty, fiscal expectations and academic standards, the researcher explored Board of Education members’ perceptions of influence on education policy.
**Statement of the Problem**

School Boards have the authority to make final decisions on the adoption of programs and hiring of staff and administrative leaders although they commonly follow a superintendent’s recommendation (“School district governance team roles & responsibilities,” n.d.). The functioning of the Board as a governing body impacts funding, curriculum initiatives, and policies (“About the state,” n.d.). Togneri and Anderson (2003) noted that “School Boards that have adopted a policy governance role that emphasizes policy development, goal and standards settings, strategic planning and monitoring of systems/school progress in relation to district plans, priorities, and accountability systems” are more successful (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 44). When Board of Education members are typically not well versed in education pedagogy or practice, it directly impacts the livelihoods of the educators it employs and the students they ultimately serve. Due diligence is critical to effective stewardship. Stability in Board of Education membership and constructive long-term relations with the district administration are also essential to a district’s success as School Boards are key instigators for reform and are instrumental in getting reform-minded superintendents into place (Leithwood, et al., 2004, p. 44). Serving for reasons unrelated to the betterment of education and the children they serve, raises concerns and fractures systems (“School district governance team roles & responsibilities,” n.d.). Therefore, this study was conducted to examine Board of Education members’ motives for membership, eligibility requirements for membership, and perceptions of influence on education policy.
Significance of the Research

School reform is unfolding before our eyes. The nation is at the precipice of a national set of education standards (“Should all U.S. students meet a single…,” 2012). With federal government garnering more control over local school districts and corporations extending their influence into districts’ budgets and curriculum (“Waging war over public education and youth..,” 2005), there is even more of a need to be cognizant of the underpinnings of School Boards (“August 2009 newsletter,” 2009). Available research on this subject is somewhat limited. There are very few data driven studies that evaluate the effectiveness of Boards (Johnson, 2011). This study served to further examine the topic and add to the literature. It can also serve to inform boards of education and affiliated associations. The study identified what motivates board of education members for service as well as provided recommendations to address board of education membership criteria. Additionally, the research identified specific methods Boards of Education can use to dispel inaccurate community perceptions of their functioning and their role of education policy.

Description of Potential Benefits of the Research

This research study had three main purposes. It aimed to identify Board of Education members’ motives for membership and eligibility requirements, and sought to examine Board of Education and community members’ perceptions of influence on education policy.

The study sought to provide a greater understanding of why an individual serves as a Board of Education member. While there is conjecture as to why Board of Education members serve, very little data are available in regard to motives for membership. The study sought to reveal dynamics among Board of Education members and what is deemed counterproductive protocols (personal agendas, power). As a result, data collected can
inform individuals how to better prepare Board members for service. Potential benefits of the study may include a deeper understanding of the functioning of Boards, improvement of eligibility requirements and protocols for governance.

With minimal Board of Education eligibility requirements, the researcher sought to gain deeper understanding of potential Board members’ qualifications. The researcher also examined eligibility requirements that would improve Board of Education functioning and alternative ways to restructure Board member selection.

The researcher sought to contribute to the limited body of research about the perceptions of Board of Education members and their influence on education policy. “The chance of any reform improving student learning is remote unless district and school leaders agree with its purposes and appreciate what is required to make it work” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 4). With increasing federal influence with initiatives such as RTTT and CCSS, stakeholders need a better understanding of how decisions are made and what factors are contributing to the decision-making process.

Nationally, the purview of Boards of Education has been experiencing criticism. In Jefferson County, Colorado, the state’s second largest school district, a conservative BOE proposed to amend the local high school Advanced Placement U.S. history course to avoid teaching and not condone lessons that were related to the country’s history of civil disobedience (Healy, 2014). “In an unprecedented move, the College Board had threatened to withdraw recognition of the county’s AP U.S. history courses if the School Board changes the way the course is taught” (Tumulty & Layton, 2014, para. 22).

As a result of the School Board’s proposal, impassioned parents and community members created grassroots organizations and websites such as JeffCo United for Action and
JeffCoSchoolBoardWatch.org to fight against the board’s proposal. In June 2015, JeffCo United for Action filed a recall petition to have conservative board members removed in the hopes of freeing up five spots on the board to be filled by less conservative members. The group cited not only the AP history course concern but that the current board lacked transparency and wasted taxpayer money (Hubbard, 2015). Due to the group’s efforts, in November 2015, the Jefferson County Board of Education members were voted out with over 60% of the voters in favor of the recall (Aguilar & Robles, 2015).

In August 2015, New York State’s East Ramapo School District was appointed three NYSED experts “to study the district’s operations and offer recommendations to the School Board…” (Taylor, 2015, para. 1) The Orthodox Jewish community in the school district was unhappy that the School Board would not violate State law and provide more tuition benefits to their children to attend yeshivas. As a result, the Orthodox Jewish community made concerted efforts to gain the majority of seats on the School Board and has maintained control since 2005.

For years, the school district and the head rabbis had a “deal.” Steve White, an activist in East Ramapo stated:

“The original deal that was made many, many years ago was if we don't investigate whether or not there's education going on in the yeshivas, then the rabbis won't tell their people to vote down our school budget” (Calhoun & Glass, 2014).

Typical of many school districts, voters are apathetic and turnout is low for School Board elections (Townley, Sweeney, & Schmieder, 1994). In the past, East Ramapo candidates would get approximately 2000 votes. However, when Orthodox Jewish candidates began to run for the School Board, the Orthodox Jewish community would bus
voters in with candidates receiving 5,000 – 6,000 votes. Since 2009, the Board of Education has eliminated 445 positions and reduced full-time kindergarten to a half day. They have sold school district property at below market value to yeshivas and cut programs and extracurricular activities significantly while increasing spending on transportation and special education for children in private schools (Taylor, 2015). In addition, they fired the school’s attorney, a former student of the district, who was discounting his services as a gratuitous measure to his alma mater. The School Board in turn hired a new attorney at twice the cost (Calhoun & Glass, 2014). While roughly 8,000 students, most of whom are black and Latino, attend the public schools, approximately 24,000 students attend yeshivas that are funded by taxpayer money. The school district is struggling financially as well as academically. Relations between public school parents and the Board have been both hostile and contemptuous resulting in public fights, and a divided, failing school district (Taylor, 2015).

In addition to East Ramapo, New York State as a whole is experiencing an educational groundswell (Lowry, 2014). Several school districts have returned RTTT funds in an effort to make a symbolic gesture to the New York State Education Department (NYSED; Studley, 2013). Additionally, small factions of disgruntled parents and teachers formed grassroots organizations to overturn the CCSS and asked for NYSED’s Commissioner of Education, Dr. John King’s resignation in 2013 (“Resignation of NYS Commissioner John King,” n.d.). King, a staunch supporter of the Common Core and former charter school leader, stepped down as NYS Education Commissioner in December 2014 for the second-highest-ranking job at the federal Education Department. King was senior adviser to Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (Taylor, 2014). In October 2015, King was
appointed Secretary of Education due to Duncan’s resignation ("AP sources: Education Secretary Arne Duncan to step down in December," 2015).

With King’s resignation, in May 2015, NYSED appointed MaryEllen Elia as new commissioner. Elia comes to the state’s education helm with a storied past of Board of Education indifference having left Florida’s Hillsborough County after claims of erosion of trust, inconsistent communication, and lack of transparency (Taylor, 2015).

“Effective education leadership makes a difference in improving learning” and “leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related in its impact on student learning” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3). The data obtained from this study sought to inform NYS BOE members of their roles in education reform. Additionally, information acquired can contribute to Board of Education classes that are a requirement of new Board of Education members and mandated in NYS. It can also inform Boards of Education on how to diminish inaccurate perceptions and how to promote transparency and communication to the community they serve.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following is a list of key terms and definitions that will be referred to throughout the study.

1. *Attitude* refers to “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chain, 2007, p. 582).

2. *Democracy* is defined as “regular occurrence of free, open, fair, and contested elections by which an inclusive electorate selects its representatives in government.”
Patrick stated “thus, there is government by consent of the governed in which the people's representative are accountable to the people” (as cited in Huntington, 1991, p. 7).

3. *Education reform* is defined as “explicit attempts to change pedagogy, coupled with a relatively strong intellectual and practical base” (Elmore, 2004, p. 15).

4. *Empowerment* is defined by Chamberlin and Schene (1997, p. 43) as:
   1. Having decision-making power.
   2. Having access to information and resources.
   3. Having a range of options from which to make choices (not just yes/no, either/or).
   4. Assertiveness.
   5. A feeling that the individual can make a difference (being hopeful).
   6. Learning to think critically; unlearning the conditioning; seeing things differently:
      e.g.,
      a) Learning to redefine who we are (speaking in our own voice).
      b) Learning to redefine what we can do.
      c) Learning to redefine our relationships to institutionalized power.
   7. Learning about and expressing anger.
   8. Not feeling alone: feeling part of a group.
   9. Understanding that people have rights.
   10. Effecting change in one's life and one's community.
   11. Learning skills (e.g., communication) that the individual defines as important.
   12. Changing others' perceptions of one's competency and capacity to act.
   13. Coming out of the closet. (Not relevant to the purpose of this research study.)
14. Growth and change that is never ending and self-initiated.

15. Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

5. *Membership* is defined as “the state of belonging to or being a part of a group or organization; the state of being a member” (Membership [Def. 1]. In *Merriam-Webster Online*, Retrieved October 7, 2014 from, http://www.easybib.com/reference/guide/apa/dictionary).

6. *Motivation* refers to “mobilizing a large number of people to put in their energy and otherwise invest in what will be required to reap and sustain major improvements” (Fullan, 2006, p. 12).

7. *Motives* are defined as “meaning that which acts as an inducement to preference or choice; a very strong influence toward some object to be attained” (Bertolette, 1916, p. 7).

8. *Power* is defined as “the ability to control or influence others at lower levels of the organization” (Mountford, 2004, p. 709).

9. *Stakeholder* is defined as “an individual or group with an interest in the success of an organization in fulfilling its mission- School Boards, teachers, administration, parents, students, taxpayers, community members” (“Engaging stakeholders: Including parents and the community to sustain improved reading outcomes,” 2009, p. 4).

**Research Questions**

The researcher sought to examine and analyze data to investigate the following questions:

RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?
RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?

RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine BOE members’ motives, eligibility requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy through the framework of the above stated key terms and research questions. It is anticipated that the above stated research will lend to the literature on Boards of Education.
CHAPTER 2: RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the literature is divided into five sections. The first section refers to theoretical support of the study. The second section discusses motives and power as it relates to School Board membership. The third section highlights eligibility requirements. The fourth section reviews the research on School Boards’ influence on education. The final section examines democracy, governance, and School Boards.

Theoretical Support

For Boards of Education to have effective stewardship and governance, they need to work as communicative, cohesive group to meet the needs of those they serve. The ability to put aside self-interests and serve unbiased is critical to a Board’s success. Consequently, for change and effective leadership to occur, an organization needs to establish shared understandings about their functioning and goals as they align with the organization’s mission (Leithwood et al., 2004). Goal-based theories of human motivation offer evidence of “leaders’ direction-setting practices” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 23). Leithwood and colleagues also maintained “people are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling, as well as challenging but achievable. Having such goals helps people make sense of their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context” (2004, p. 24).

An equally important trait of Board members is their ability to transform and adjust accordingly. To that end, “change theory or change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies and, in turn, getting results – but only in the hands (and minds, and hearts) of people who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of how the
factors in question operate to get particular results” (Fullan, 2006, p. 3). As such, change theory is the theoretical foundation for this study.

Fullan (2006) studied change theory in education and wrote extensively on the topic. He proposed to effect change, “standards-based reform by itself does not address changing the setting in which people work.” For effective education reform to occur there needs to be tri-level engagement. Tri-level engagement refers to school and community, district, and state involvement. When this level of engagement occurs, it fosters “permeable connectivity” (Fullan, 2006, p. 11). He asserted that standards, assessments, curriculum, and professional development alone “are seriously incomplete theories of action because they do not get close to what happens in classrooms and school cultures” (Fullan, 2006, p. 4-5). In addition, he affirmed the need for capacity building, with a focus on results. He defined this as the “collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning which involves helping to develop individual and collective knowledge and competencies, resources, and motivation” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). Fullan concluded, “change knowledge is not a disembodied set of facts, but rather a deeply applied phenomenon in the minds of people. Moreover for this knowledge to have an impact it must be actively shared by many people engaged in using the knowledge” (2006, p. 13).

Fullan’s tri-level engagement concept requires Boards of Education to be actively involved in education policy and reform. As such, the related literature below provided an overview of four studies that necessitated further study of Board of Education members’ motives, membership requirements, and influence on education policy. As a result of data collection, the literature examined motives and power, democracy, governance and School Boards.
Motives and Power of School Boards

In an effort to investigate the influential association of School Boards and superintendents, Mountford (2004) conducted a qualitative study that examined the relationship of motivation and power with respect to School Board membership and the dynamics between these members and the superintendent. The purpose of the study was to explore these concepts and to develop suggestions for board-training and healthier relationships among respective parties. Mountford (2004) used motivation theory as the theoretical basis of her research.

Participants were selected from several school districts on the basis of having a minimum of one year of board experience and recommendation from the superintendent regarding members who would most likely participate. Additional factors for participant selection were informed consent, time, and logistical constraints (Mountford, 2004).

In 2001, Mountford had already identified five factors that impacted the relationship between superintendents and School Boards. Of the five factors (motivation, power, change initiative, voice, and approaches to decision making), Mountford (2004) chose to focus on motivation and power and how they relate to superintendent and School Board member relationships.

Mountford's (2004) study indicated that there was a relationship between how board members defined power and the kind of motivation they had for service. Additionally, there were differences by gender between motivation and power. Male members had mixed results in that their motives were based on both altruism and power, while female members ran for the board based on altruistic and personal reasons. Additionally, female members had more
specific reasons (child in school) to serve on a board as compared to their male counterparts (Mountford, 2004).

Mountford (2004) concluded that the most significant finding of the study was a pattern between a board member’s perception of power and his or her motivation for running or being on the board. Mountford also noted that the pattern suggested that if a board member viewed power as *power over*, the board member had a more personal reason for membership. Whereas, if a board member viewed power as *power with*, the board member was more likely to have an altruistic motive for membership.

Mountford’s (2004) research noted that “half joined the board for predominantly personal reasons whereas half joined for an altruistic reason” (Mountford, 2004, p. 734). Mountford also noted that if a superintendent could understand a member’s reason for joining the board of education, the superintendent would likely have a better sense of the manner in which members’ behave in terms of the way the board member uses their power. She further stated that it was imperative that both board members and superintendents examine their personal intentions, conceptions of power and motivation. Additionally, the study noted that it is critical that these teams (members and superintendent) be mindful of how these factors can influence and affect relationships with each other and the district as a whole. Mountford studied patterns of behavior of board members and not of superintendents.

**Membership Requirements of School Boards**

Frederick Hess, a resident scholar and director of education policy at the American Enterprise Institute spent the greater part of his career examining education, reform, policy and School Boards. In 2002, a report was prepared for the National School Boards
Association entitled *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century* that he authored (Hess, 2002). The study was a stratified random sample with targeted respondents being mailed an eight-page survey. Hess (2002) disaggregated response rates by district size and social profile. Findings were based on surveys of board of education members from 2,000 school districts. Hess noted that School Boards in large districts (25,000 or more students) are political bodies with costly election campaigns versus small districts that are apolitical, attract little attention, and are inexpensive. Hess also stated that large school districts make up 2% of the school districts in the nation. Yet, concerns such as school violence and teacher shortages, which are common themes in large school districts, become a “national crisis” despite these issues not being major concerns in small districts. Hess concluded that this is an issue of policy making. He stated, “it appears that the public image of School Boards and systems is informed largely by the conditions that prevail in the scant 2% of districts that enroll 25,000 or more students” (Hess, 2002, p. 3).

Findings from Hess’s (2002) report revealed four themes. Policy concerns on national, state and local levels were identified as a theme. Board service and preparation to address policy issues and govern wisely was also identified. In addition, profile of Board Members and the political process that governs School Boards were noted (Hess, 2002). The researcher surmised that 95% of members were elected versus being appointed. In general, boards consisted of between six and eight members. If there were nine members, it was due to representing large school districts. On average, members served about four years. It was also noted that there was greater voter turnout when elections were held on the same day as state or national elections. Hess indicated that members contributed considerable time to their role and that student achievement was a major concern among Board members. He
maintained that in larger school districts, members dedicated more hours to the board and were predominantly homemakers and retirees (Hess, 2002). Additionally, most members were affiliated with other boards with few having a professional background in education. Hess found that as a nation, membership was less racially diverse with most members being upper middle class males. He concluded that public perception of education is shaped by media coverage but the study suggested caution about generalizations (Hess, 2002, p. 41).

A staple of School Boards is raising student achievement. Hess (2008), however, noted they “are often overshadowed by petty and not so petty areas of ethical concern” which is a delimiter in boards achieving their goals (Hess, 2008a as cited in Feuerstein, 2009). He noted that School Boards are “amateur and informal, featuring weak and inexperienced members” and in urban areas where there is mayoral governance, “they are pursued by candidates who lack much in the way of tools, resources, or organization” (Hess, 2008b, p. 6). “New Board members require socialization to the culture and character of the organization in which they will serve” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 11). In 2009, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) conducted a study of School Boards and superintendents from 7,100 districts throughout the United States (Hess & Meeks, 2010). The study concluded “ongoing training and learning is a must for new and veteran Board members” (Hess & Meeks, 2010, p. 5).

School Boards and Influence on Education

In 2003, a study was conducted by Learning First Alliance to examine student achievement, how districts promote good instruction (measurable goals/accountability systems in place) and what strategies guided district reform efforts. The researchers studied five high-poverty districts in the United States where educators were “making strides in
improving student achievement” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 1). Researchers determined participating districts using both primary and secondary criteria. Primary criteria included success in increasing math and reading achievement over three or more years; improvement in student achievement across grade levels, races, and ethnicities; poverty rate of at least 25%; and a reputation for effective professional development practices. Secondary criteria included size, demographics, geographic location, and union affiliations (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Togneri and Anderson (2003) drew several findings from their study that could help guide school districts and Boards of Education with the decision and policy-making process. Through the combined efforts of stakeholders that included Board of Education members and superintendents they noted that “districts that had the courage to acknowledge poor performance” and had “the will to seek solutions” had greater student achievement (p. 5). They found that a district’s system-wide approach to improving instruction was also a factor in improving student achievement and that teacher support from Board members was essential to attaining this future success. Togneri and Anderson stated that districts having mission statements that were clearly defined and followed and “made decisions based on data, not instinct” were largely more successful (p. 6). They also noted that “School Boards who shepherded instructional improvement efforts” in that they had the “courage” to “jump-start reform efforts” made gains in student achievement (p. 7). “School Boards did not simply galvanize change; they followed through by promulgating policies that supported instructional improvement” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 7). They noted that while Boards of Education held staff, in particular the superintendent accountable, they did not engage in the day-to-day administration of reforms. Lastly, they concluded that for districts to have
sustained student achievement, they needed to be committed to reform over the long haul that was concurrent with having a superintendent and Board of Education members serve for eight years or more (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

**Democracy, Governance, and School Boards**

Research indicated that local School Boards that have a stated vision, commitment to strong governance, and resources to make data-based decisions can impact children’s lives (Hess & Meeks, 2010, p. 5). School Board service has been viewed as the representation of the purest form of democracy in that members are not typically paid, represent all different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and are elected by the community they serve. “Democracy, arguably in its most ideal sense, champions a presupposed equality of persons” (Meroe, 2014, p. 485). As such the democratic process “holds greater potential for encouraging and supporting human development through the practice of freedom, self-determination and moral autonomy” and “presupposes three types of equality: (a) the intrinsic equality of all people; (b) the entitlement of all competent adults to have the autonomy to determine what is in their best interest; and (c) political equality, as defined by the constitutional provisions for democratic practice” (Meroe, 2014, p. 488). As a representative democracy, School Boards rely on the informed trust of the citizens to oversee the fiduciary responsibilities of the district and future of the community’s children (“Washington State School Directors’ Association,” n.d.). School Boards are in control of significant resources in the forms of money, jobs and our nation’s youth. They are under increased public scrutiny as a result of federal legislation such as NCLB and RTTT. With rapid economic changes to globalization to a growing disenchantment of how students in the United States perform internationally as compared to their peers, School Boards are
experiencing increased pressure to “do better” with an emphasis on student achievement and accountability. “School Boards are changing and reinventing their practices to move beyond an oversight role to one of shared leadership with the superintendent” (Hess, 2010, p. 4). They are a critical link between the school administration and community and embody “the possibility that public engagement with school issues can result in reasoned judgements acceptable to all citizens” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 22).

In 2009, Abe Feuerstein examined School Board ethics, effectiveness and School Board governance in the state of Pennsylvania. Feuerstein defined effectiveness using six areas of board competency that include “decision making, the ability to function as a group, the ability to exercise authority, connecting with community, working toward board improvement, and acting strategically” (Jackson & Holland, 1998 as cited by Feuerstein, 2009, p. 12). Feuerstein noted that despite trends of increasing state and federal influence in education, School Boards are still valued by the public because they represent the promise of democratic governance (Feuerstein, 2009). He further noted that ethical boards should stand apart from test scores and ability to implement state and federal regulation as it is a narrow focus and limits and weakens the role of the democratic institution School Boards play in developing local aims (Feuerstein, 2009). “Ethical boards could and should be empowered to ask broader questions and facilitate discussion about the value of educational goals and the processes used to develop and pursue them” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 9).

According to Kirst (2008), “the public views School Boards as the governance mechanism to keep schools close to the people and to avoid excessive control by professional educators or state authorities” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 5). School Boards are seen as the vehicle through which a state is able to implement its educational policies. Yet Feuerstein (2009)
concluded that School Board governance goals are significantly impacted by state and federal government policies. As a result, School Board members set targets without questioning the quality or desirability of goals. Land (2002) noted that while School Board effectiveness is largely based on student achievement, there are specific attributes of effective School Boards. They included the: ability to focus on district policy rather than micromanagement; (2) development of positive relationship among board members between the board and the superintendent; ability to set district priorities; and focus on professional development and evaluation (Land, 2002).

Effective governance is necessary for school improvement. However, Segal (2004) noted there are limited examples of good governance and they rarely garner as much attention as do issues of board member misconduct, nepotism, and overall board corruption (Segal, 2004 as cited in Feuerstein, 2009, p. 9). Interestingly, many of the assumed weaknesses of School Boards are not caused by democratic governance but by the outdated framework of the school district itself (Hess, 2010). “There exists in the world no scientifically validated best model of governance; there exists only arrangements that work better or worse for certain purposes, in certain contexts, and at certain times” (Hess, 2010, p. 17). Governing schools through School Boards embodies our nation’s democratic aspirations; However, Feuerstein noted the reality is that school autonomy has been largely stripped away over the last 30 years. He further stated that “without an explicit focus on reinvigorating democracy in local communities, the day may soon come when School Boards simply become relics of the past” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 23).
Chapter Summary

The research in the literature review sought to support the study’s research questions. Motives and power as it relates to School Board membership were examined through the literature as were eligibility requirements. The researcher also analyzed School Boards’ influence on education and democracy, governance, and School Boards. This literature supports the underpinnings of this study’s exploration of BOE members’ motives, membership, and perceptions of influence on education policy.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Considered the “father of phenomenology,” Edmund Husserl studied, researched and authored several books and studies relating to the phenomenological movement of the early 20th century (1913-1930). Husserl identified the world, time, and life as major themes in phenomenology and followed the phenomenological sense of “die Sachen selbst” – return to the things themselves to understand ideas (Bruzina, 2004, p. xvii). Bruzina (2004) in his exploration of phenomenology noted that Husserl stated “no topic and no finding can stand alone and that every “sache”- thing- “is a knot of the cross-weaving of many ‘Sachen’ – things- “and the tug along any thread of connection will lead to endlessly many more” (Bruzina, 2004, p. xvii). Husserl stressed, “we are only vaguely aware of things in the margin or periphery of attention, and we are only implicitly aware of the wider horizon of things in the world around us” (Smith, 2003, para. 9).

“Phenomenology is the study of ‘phenomena’: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience” (Smith, 2003, para. 2). Phenomenology examines different types of experiences that involve what Husserl called “intentionality” which refers to “the directedness of experience toward things in the world” (Smith, 2003, para. 6). These experiences also known as “qualia” refer to the introspectively accessible, phenomenal aspects of our mental lives ("Qualia", n.d.). Phenomenological experiences range from “perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity” (Smith, 2003, para. 7).
Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted “phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality (Greene, 1978 as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Reality, consequently is “socially constructed” (Berger & Luckemann, 1967 as cited in Bogkin & Biklen, 2007).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) posit that researchers who use a phenomenological perspective attempt to understand the meaning of people’s behavior as it relates to events and interactions in particular situations. Using a phenomenological approach emphasizes the subjective aspect of people’s behavior or experiences from the first person point of view. Therefore, “a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Additionally, the phenomenological approach “translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant” (Lester, 1999, p. 1). As such, this study was grounded in phenomenology examining of board of members’ motives, membership and perceptions of influence on education policy.

Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this phenomenological study included a survey administered to NYS BOE and community members, interviews, and focus groups. Data collected from the survey served to inform and guide focus group discussions and interview questions and examine the study’s three research questions.

A reflexive journal was kept to add qualitative validity. Ruby (1980) noted “reflexivity refers to assessment of the influence of the investigator's own background, perceptions, and interests on the qualitative research process” (as cited in Krefting, 1991, p.
A reflexive journal is a useful tool because “it includes the effect of the researcher's personal history on qualitative research” (Krefting, 1991, p. 218).

All items were analyzed and coded by the researcher and subsequently audited by an independent researcher. The triangulated data sources are survey data, focus group information, and interview transcriptions.

The following chapter section is a description of where the study was conducted, a narrative of the subjects who participated in the research, and an account of the sampling procedure used to conduct the investigation.

**Description of the Setting, Subjects, and Sampling Procedure**

This study was conducted in New York State (NYS) using a sample of convenience of Board of Education (BOE) members and community members. Data collection consisted of obtaining a representative sample of New York State Board of Education members and community members. The BOE sampling was distinguished by a diversity of demographics such as years of experience on the BOE, gender, age, education and community (urban, suburban, or rural).

**Board of Education Members**

The BOE members were from NYS as compiled from the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA). BOE participants were contacted via email through NYSSBA to ensure board of education membership. The survey population consisted of 5,000 NYSSBA members resulting in a sample size of 60 respondents resulting in ___% of population. Participants were 52% male and 48% female. Of the respondents, 60% did not have school age children.
Suburban communities were represented by 56% of the respondents. Rural communities were represented by 42% of participants. Only 2% of respondents identified as living in an urban community.

Overwhelmingly, BOE members who participated in the survey were over 45 years old. Forty-five percent of BOE members who responded were between the ages of 55 and 64 years old. Twenty-six percent of respondents were between the ages of 45 - 54 years old. Twenty-one percent were between the ages of 65 and 74 years old. BOE members under the age of 44 years old represented a small percentage of participants. Only 5% of BOE respondents were between the age of 35 and 44 years old and 3% were between the 25 and 34 years old (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Age of BOE members who responded to the survey.

A small percentage (3.85%) of respondents lived in communities whose household income was less than $25,000 per year. Forty-eight percent of respondents lived in
communities where the household income was between $25,000- $99,999 a year. Thirty-three percent of respondents lived in communities where the household income ranged from $100,000-$199,999 while 15% lived in areas that were above $200,000 a year (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** BOE members’ community household income represented in thousands.

Thirty-eight percent of BOE member respondents reportedly have a bachelor’s degree. Twenty-seven percent indicated they possessed a master’s degree, and 8% indicated they have a doctoral degree. Eight percent stated they held an associate’s degree while 13% reported some college education. Only 5% of BOE member respondents stated they possessed a high school diploma or equivalent (see Figure 3).
Figure 3: Level of education of Board of Education members surveyed.

Board of Education members who responded to the survey had varying years of service. Respondents serving less than five years were 33% of those surveyed followed closely by 27% of respondents serving 5 - 10 years on the Board of Education. Ten percent of respondents served 11 to 15 years while 10% served 16 to 20 years. Seven percent of respondents served 21 to 26 years while respondents serving more than 26 years made up 7% of the population surveyed (see Figure 4).
Community Member Respondents

Prospective NYS community member participants were contacted via email using email addresses purchased through DirectMail.com, an online survey provider. In order for DirectMail.com to generate a suitable list, they needed to screen their database for specific demographics that met the study’s parameters. They included NYS residency, participants’ gender, age, approximate household income, level of education, community type in which they lived (suburban, urban, rural), and amount of school age children in household. The survey population consisted of 5,006 community members as participants resulting in a 3.9% return of surveys for a sample size of 191 respondents. Of the 191 community members who responded to the survey, 65% were female and 35% were male. Thirty-six percent of community respondents did not have school age children while 74% of respondents did.
Thirty-six percent of community member respondents were between the ages of 45 and 54 years old followed closely by community members who were 35 and 44 year olds representing 34% of participants. Thirteen percent of respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64 years old. Ten percent were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old. The least represented age ranges for community respondents were 18 and 24 year old with 4% of the respondents and 65 and 74 year olds with 2% of the respondents (see Figure 5).

![Age of Community Member Respondents](image)

*Figure 5: Age of community member respondents.*

A small percentage (3%) of respondents lived in communities whose household income was less than $25,000 per year. Sixty-one percent of respondents lived in communities where the yearly household income was between $25,000 and $99,999. Thirty percent of respondents lived in communities where the yearly household income ranged from $100,000 - $199,999 and 5% lived in communities where the yearly household income was above $200,000 a year (see Figure 6).
Figure 6: Representation of community members’ household income based on survey data.

Respondents had a cross section of education. Ten percent of respondents possessed doctoral degrees, 18% had master’s degrees, and 28% had bachelor’s degrees and 13% had associate’s degrees. The remaining respondents had some college (19%), high school diplomas (10%), or less than high school degree (2%) (see Figure 7).
Focus group participants were drawn from the returned sample. The purpose of focus groups was to further examine research questions. Emails outlining time commitment, the method for conducting focus groups (virtually), and a $25 Visa gift card thank you offer to incentivize participation were sent to 27 BOE members and 55 community members who indicated they were willing to participate in focus groups as indicated in the initial survey. All respondents were drawn from a sample of convenience. Participants were selected based on their response to the initial email invitation. Using Doodle, an online scheduling tool willing participants were instructed they would receive a Doodle invite to determine a common time that suited a maximum of seven participants per focus group. Two focus groups were conducted. Seven BOE respondents and four community member respondents participated in separate focus groups. A total of six community members were slated for participation but only four participated virtually. One participant who agreed to participate

**Figure 7**: Level of education of community members surveyed.

![Community Members' Level of Education](chart.png)

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<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate's</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
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but did not attend the virtual focus group acknowledged their misstep the following day and offered their time should the need arise.

As noted earlier, each participant was offered a $25 Visa gift card for their participation. Five BOE participants accepted the gift card while two requested that the funds be donated to a school “backpack” fund. Three community member participants declined the gift card. One community member accepted the gift card.

Both focus groups were conducted virtually using a WebEx link. WebEx is an online conferencing service that allows participants to attend meetings through video or phone. For the Board of Education focus group, four participants attended through phone call while the remaining three participants attended virtually through video conferencing. Three community focus group participants participated virtually through video conferencing while one participant attended by phone connection. Both focus groups were recorded through WebEx as an arf file, a proprietary media file exclusive to WebEx. Files were then converted as an mp4 file and uploaded to Rev, an online transcription service (rev.com). To enhance transcription services, first names and regional accents were provided to identify participants as accurately as possible.

Derived from the focus groups, three BOE participants and three community members were individually interviewed. Interview participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate. Interviews were conducted virtually in August of 2015 using a WebEx link. For the Board of Education focus group, all three participants attended through WebEx. One participant used the video conferencing feature while the two remaining used the phone in feature. Three community focus group participants participated virtually. One respondent participated through video conferencing while the remaining two
participants phoned in for their interviews. Similar to focus groups, interviews were recorded through WebEx as an arf file (a proprietary video file exclusive to WebEx). Files were again converted as an mp4 file and uploaded to rev.com for transcription purposes. Similarly to focus groups, to enhance transcription services, first names and regional accents were provided to identify individual participants as accurately as possible.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and a survey. The survey data that were obtained guided the focus group and interview questions. Instruments developed were designed utilizing the stated research questions as a guide.

Survey

The purpose of the survey was to identify emerging themes among the respondents. “A theme is some concept or theory that emerges from your data” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 200). Themes were derived from patterns in the data. As Spradley (1980) posits, they were formulated from different levels of abstraction from statements about human beings, their behavior, and situations (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This descriptive data helped guide the development of the study. Dissemination of feedback on the survey served to determine focus group and interview questions.

The survey was developed with the intention of investigating and answering the study’s three research questions. The initial 27 question survey was further developed based on survey questions piloted in spring 2014 into a survey specific for BOE members and community members (see Appendices A and B). Since the instrument was a web survey, there was a letter of consent built in prior to participants’ proceeding. Additionally, there was consistent page layout across screens to help respondents to easily process information.
and answer questions (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). To encourage survey completion, a progress bar was placed at the top of the survey to inform participants of their progress. Placing a simple graphic near the title that respondents could identify can encourage participation. The color blue, which cultivates user trust, was used as the survey background (Singh, 2006). The survey questions were grouped on a page to allow for the respondent to process the questions. Additionally, steps were taken “to ensure that e-mails (were) not flagged as spam” (Dillman, et.al., 2009, p. 284). Following suggestions from Dillman, et al. (2009) to ensure survey responses, the survey’s subject line was personalized and used words that implied time sensitivity. Additionally, the survey contained clearly stated directions for participants to follow. While the survey was anonymous, it did offer interested participants incentives for further participation in the study’s focus groups and interviews. Finally, the survey was sent out mid-week after 12:00 P.M. as research indicates response rates are higher (Perfect Timing: The Very Best Time to Send Email Newsletters, n.d.).

Focus Group Questions

According to Dillman et al., focus groups are “a social experience in which people not only express their own opinions but listen to the opinions of others, which then may be taken into account as they express additional opinions” (2009, p. 226). After conducting the survey, the results were coded and themes emerged. As a result, the information obtained served to inform the researcher’s investigation. Focus group questions were developed based upon the coded survey results (see Appendix C). Focus group questions helped to frame emergent themes. Focus group questions were categorized with how they would best answer the three research questions of the study. Participants were asked four main focus
group questions that primarily addressed the research questions. Each question also contained two - five follow up questions so that participants could elaborate in greater detail.

**Interview Questions**

Interview questions consisted of questions that elicited BOE motives, perceptions of eligibility requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. Questions were developed based on themes as determined from the survey and the focus group results. An interview protocol was established prior to commencement (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Protocols consisted of audio recordings with transcriptions to analyze themes. Two separate sets of interview questions containing 17 questions were developed for each respective group of respondents. While themes were consistent, BOE members were asked specific questions that spoke to their term length and what they deemed the most rewarding experience and the most difficult aspects they have faced serving on the BOE. Follow up questions were asked as warranted. Community members were asked about perceptions of what motivates people to serve on the BOE and what their working knowledge of BOE eligibility requirements.

**Reflexive Journal**

The researcher is a current BOE member in NYS. Since the beginning of her 3-year term, she kept a reflexive journal describing experiences and reactions. To determine recurring themes, the journal was coded and analyzed. Additionally, the reflexive journal was audited to ensure transparency to determine possible threats to the researcher’s own bias (Merriam, 2009).

**Research Design**

This study used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenological study “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a
phenomenon” (Creswell, 2006, p. 57). Phenomenological studies consist of data that are collected from individuals who experience the same phenomenon using methods such as in-depth and multiple interviews, observations, and journals (Creswell, 2006). Participants are often asked broad, general questions much like those that make up focus group questions. Data are recorded, transcribed, and coded to identify themes.

In following Cresswell’s (2006) phenomenological study procedure, the researcher collected data from administered surveys. Analysis of survey responses resulted in descriptive data. Consequently, data obtained served as a template for conducting focus groups and interviews. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were administered and the resulting data were recorded, transcribed and coded.

![Triangulation Model](image)

*Figure 8: Triangulation Model*

**Data Analyses**

Survey data were used for descriptive purposes and responses were analyzed for themes. Data were analyzed based on responses to the survey by invited Board members. Focus groups and interviews consisted of BOE and community members who have been selected from survey responses. Data were coded using a qualitative research computer.
program, HyperResearch (http://www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html). All data were audited by an independent source, who also analyzed the triangulation of the data.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The survey instrument was developed in the fall of 2014 (see Appendices A and B). Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was given in December of 2014. During February of 2015, NYSSBA was contacted for Board of Education members’ emails and contact information. This was done to develop an adequate survey sample of NYS BOE members. Surveys were sent out to NYS BOE members via a NYSSBA Area Director email blast in March 2015. Respective NYSSBA Area Directors cover set regions of NYS and are responsible for disseminating specific information as it relates to an area’s geographic region. They are also responsible for distributing relevant news and information as it relates to state and national Boards of Education functioning, education policies, and practices. The researcher provided a survey link to NYSSBA to embed into their email blast. The researcher had no control over when the email blast would occur. The embedded survey link was sent out on a Friday afternoon in March 2015. The embedded survey link was under a heading within the email requesting NYS BOE members to help a fellow board member (see Appendix D).

In March of 2015, DirectMail.com was contacted to develop a community member email list based on demographics comparable to the NYS BOE member participants. The researcher paid for 5,006 email addresses that met these set criteria. Research indicates that for best online survey results, surveys should be emailed mid-week in the afternoon (Perfect Timing: The Very Best Time to Send Email Newsletters, n.d.). To broaden the sample base, the researcher sent out survey requests for three consecutive weeks on a Tuesday afternoon.
between the hours of 12:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M. to prospective community member participants. For both the BOE and community member surveys, participant consent forms were distributed via an online survey provider.

In July of 2015, focus groups took place via WebEx, an online, on demand collaboration and meeting service. Each respective focus group took approximately one hour. Responses from both focus groups were transcribed, coded and analyzed and served to inform and guide interview questions.

In August of 2015, six individual interviews were conducted via WebEx with each taking approximately 30 to 45 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and then uploaded into HyperResearch for coding and analysis.

Focus group and interview participants received consent forms through DocuSign, an electronic signature service as well as an emailed pdf copy of the consent form (see Appendices E and F). Consent for participation in the study occurred simultaneously in the summer of 2015. As previously stated, focus groups and interviews took place during the summer of 2015. All data collection was completed by August of 2015. Data cleaning, analysis, and coding commenced early fall of 2015.

**Limitations (and/or Trustworthiness)**

Four areas of trustworthiness (Cresswell, 2006) were applied to the study. They were credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The development of surveys, questions for focus groups and interviews served to establish transferability. Transferability also was addressed with the use of a developed and piloted instrument. Thick description was used to describe research techniques and data analysis so as to ensure transferability for future research.
Credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. As a result, this study used triangulation with the use of surveys, focus groups and interviews. Triangulation can provide multiple ways to view and examine the data and can illuminate blind spots in interpretative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Background credentials of the researcher, member checking, and peer scrutiny were also employed to ensure credibility.

Dependability was addressed through the use of a reflexive journal and external auditing of data gathering. “Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others” (Research methods knowledge,” 2014). Confirmability was addressed through external auditing to foster accuracy as well as provide opportunities to assess and challenge the researcher’s study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher’s biases as an educator, parent, former employee, and Board of Education member were examined closely through triangulation of interviews, surveys, and focus groups as well as from independent audits of data and the researcher’s reflexive journal. External audits involve having a researcher not involved in the research process examine both the process and product of the research study. The purpose is to evaluate the accuracy and evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data. As a result, confirmability was sought.

**Statement of Ethics**

Written consent was obtained from all participants. All participants had the right to terminate their study involvement at any time. Data collected were kept strictly confidential. Names of the participants were changed to protect their privacy and school districts were not identified. All coding was done by the researcher to protect confidentiality and locked in file cabinet.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to examine Board of Education members’ motivation, membership requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. The researcher used surveys, focus groups, and interview instruments to inform the following research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007):

RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?
RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?
RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Chapter Four presents the analysis of data in response to the research questions. The data were obtained from the three different research instruments that included surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Data Coding

“A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a short word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). “Coding is only the initial step toward an even more rigorous and evocative analysis and interpretation for a report. Coding is not just labeling, it is linking” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 8). To that end, various types of coding were applied to analyze and evaluate the study’s research instruments.

Upon review of open-ended responses from the study’s surveys, analytic memos were recorded. “The purpose of analytic memo writing is to document and reflect on your coding process and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent
patterns, categories, and subcategories, themes and concepts in your data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 32). Upon review of the analytic memos, hand coding commenced of the surveys.

Saldaña noted that “qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience” (2009, p.10). First cycle coding consisted of using aspects of grammatical coding methods to analyze data obtained from the study’s instruments.

Grammatical coding method refers to principles of a coding technique. Within the periphery of this method lies both attribute and simultaneous coding. “Attribute coding is the notation, usually at the beginning of a data set rather than embedded within it” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 55). Attribute coding often refers to participant demographics (gender and community type) and data format that include interviews and surveys. Attribute coding was used in analysis of the surveys’ descriptive data. “Simultaneous coding is the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum or the overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 63). Simultaneous coding was used during focus group and interview transcription analysis.

In addition to grammatical coding method, the researcher used the elemental coding method. Saldaña (2009) noted that elemental coding methods “have basic but focused filters for reviewing the corpus and they build a foundation for future coding cycles” (p. 66). Elemental coding encompasses both structural and in vivo codes. Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (2008) posited that “structural coding is a question-based code that “acts as a labeling and indexing device, allowing researchers to quickly access data likely to be relevant to a particular analysis from a larger data set” (Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson as cited in
Saldaña, 2009, p. 67). Structural coding is suitable for interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses and was applied in this study.

In vivo coding is reviewing an interview or focus group transcript and assigning a label to a particular section of data. The labels can be a word or short phrase taken from a specific section of the data (King, 2008). “In vivo codes serve as symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). The researcher applied Charmaz’s (2006) guidelines when analyzing and applying in vivo codes to transcriptions. Items were coded using “general terms that everyone ‘knows’ that flag condensed and important meanings; terms made up by participants that capture meanings or their experiences; and insider shorthand terms specific to a particular group that reflect their experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55).

**Data Analysis of Surveys**

Survey questions were developed to examine the study’s research questions and to inform the study’s other research instruments. The survey was administered using the web-based survey site, Survey Monkey. Survey results were analyzed and open-ended comments were hand-coded. There was a greater amount of responses from community member respondents than BOE members (see Appendix G). Descriptive data are reported below.

Survey data and open-ended responses aided in the development of focus group and interview questions. Focus groups questions were developed using survey data results and the study’s three research questions as the overarching crux of the examination. Focus groups and interviews were professionally transcribed and uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software, HyperResearch. Both focus groups and interview transcriptions were coded and analyzed for themes.
Surveys were administered to both NYS BOE members and NYS Community members to inform the study’s three research questions and expound upon the study’s other instruments. Survey response data were analyzed and open-ended answers were coded so as to inform and develop focus groups questions and interview questions. The following is an analysis of the survey findings.

**BOE Members’ Survey Analysis**

BOE member survey respondents were administered a 26-question survey related to examining and answering the study’s three research questions. The survey was divided into sections that garnered demographic information for descriptive data and ancillary questions that collected data to answer the study’s three research questions.

**RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?**

Respondents were given four choices to choose from as to why they serve on the Board of Education. Respondents selected as many answers that applied. Overwhelmingly, 89% of respondents primarily served on the Board of Education to serve their community, 88% for the betterment of education, while 8% served to have influence, 5% for power, and less than 2% served for their personal agenda. Interestingly, when respondents were asked to select as many answers that apply about the perception of why Board of Education members serve, 78% responded to serve the community, 70% for the betterment of education, 43% for their personal agenda, 28% to have influence, and 23% to have power.

**RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?**

Eighty-eight percent of Board of Education member respondents overwhelmingly felt that they represent the community’s views and values on education versus 10% who did not
agree that they represent the community’s views and values on education and 2% who did not know. When asked if qualifications to become a BOE member were selective and rigorous for the job it entails, 88% of respondents disagreed, and 12% indicated that they felt qualifications were selective and rigorous. Seventy-one percent of respondents felt the BOE members were qualified to make sound, educational decisions and 70% were informed about education and education policy. Sixty-six percent of the respondents felt they should not receive a stipend for their service.

RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Overwhelmingly, 95% of BOE members felt their role was to establish school policy and 98% stated it was to hire the superintendent. Keeping taxes down was a popular theme among respondents with 58% indicating this as their BOE role. However, respondents were divided about their role to negotiate salaries and contracts with 46% indicating it was their role, 46% stated it was not their role, and 7% indicated they did not know if it was their role. Interestingly, 61% did not think following NYS Education Department recommendations was among BOE members’ roles and responsibilities.

Eighty percent responded that BOE members sought citizens’ viewpoints and suggestions for resolutions to school needs while 82% of BOE members took regular steps to stay informed about significant educational issues that affected school districts.

Community Members’ Survey Analysis

Community member survey respondents were administered a 24-question survey related to examining and answering the study’s three research questions. The survey was divided into sections that garnered demographic information for descriptive data and ancillary questions that collected data to answer the study’s three research questions.
RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

Community respondents varied in their responses. Sixty-seven percent of respondents felt members served on the Board of Education to serve their community and 54% thought BOE members serve for the betterment of education. Twenty-nine percent believed members served to have influence, 22% served for power, and 29% served for their own personal agenda. Interestingly, when respondents were asked to select as many answers that apply about the perception of why Board of Education members serve, 78% responded to serve the community, 70% responded for the betterment of education, 43% responded for personal agenda, 28% to have influence, and 23% to have power.

RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?

Community member respondents had varying views if the BOE members’ represented their community’s views and values on education with 62% agreeing that they did, 20% disagreeing, and 19% unsure. When asked if qualifications to become a BOE member were selective and rigorous for the job it entails, 38% of community respondents agreed, 32% indicated that they felt qualifications were selective and rigorous, and 31% were unsure. Forty-nine percent of respondents felt the BOE members were qualified to make sound, educational decisions in comparison to 27% indicating that the BOE members were not qualified and 20% of respondents unsure. Fifty-eight percent of community members indicated that they felt the BOE members were informed about education and education policy. Forty-five percent of community members indicated that BOE members should be paid a stipend for their service as compared to 41% who did not think BOE members should
be paid. Fourteen percent of respondents were unsure if BOE members should be paid a stipend.

Seventy-six percent of community members strongly indicated that a BOE members’ role was to establish school policy and 61% indicated it was to hire the superintendent. Seventy percent of respondents felt overseeing curriculum and initiatives was the role of the BOE members. However, comparable to their BOE respondents, community members were divided about their role to negotiate salaries and contracts. Forty-nine percent felt it was the role of the BOE members, 28% did not agree that this was their role, and 24% did not know. Interestingly, in contrast to BOE members, 83% of community members felt BOE members needed to follow NYSED recommendations as part of their role and responsibilities.

RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Forty-nine percent of community members responded that BOE members seek citizens’ viewpoints and suggestions for resolutions to school needs. Fifty-two percent of community members think BOE members take regular steps to stay informed about significant educational issues that affect school districts while 27% did not think BOE members took regular steps with 21% unsure if they took any steps. There were mixed results for community members’ thoughts on if they felt confident in BOE members’ ability to influence and lead their school district into the future. Forty-seven percent of community members reported that they did feel confident, 11% were unsure, and 43% did not feel confident in BOE members’ ability to influence and lead their school district into the future. Additionally, community members demonstrated mixed feelings about BOE members as education leaders in the community. Forty percent of community respondents viewed BOE members as education leaders in their community while 34% did not. However, 25% were
unsure if BOE members were education leaders in their community. In addition to these results, 50% of community respondents felt BOE members were effective at changing policy on a local level while 28% did not think they were effective at changing policy at a local level, and 22% were unsure. Community members had mixed results about the BOE members being influenced by the Governor’s office. Fifty-six percent of respondents thought the BOE members were influenced by the Governor’s office as compared to 29% who were unsure and 14% who did not think they were influenced by the Governor’s office. Fifty-nine percent of community members reported that they felt the NYS Board of Regents influenced BOE members, while 11% disagreed, and 29% were unsure. Respondents felt confident in BOE members’ ability to influence and lead their school district into the future. Forty-seven percent of BOE member respondents said they were influence by the Governor’s office as compared to 74% who felt the NYS Board of Regents influenced them. Thirty percent of BOE members indicated they should be paid a stipend for their service versus 66% who did not think they should be paid a stipend.

Data Analysis of Focus Groups

After careful analysis of survey responses, four overarching focus group questions were developed (see Appendix C). Each question addressed one of the three stated research questions and had follow up questions to glean more information to better answer the study’s research questions. As a result of the survey, several themes emerged from the two groups surveyed. These data helped to develop interview questions. Below is an analysis of the three research questions and how BOE members and community members answered them in focus groups.
BOE Member Focus Group Analysis

RQ 1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

Overwhelmingly, BOE members indicated they were motivated to serve as a form of community service with children’s needs being their foremost priority. BOE members made statements such as “I look at it as a way to pay it forward,” “We really do care about the kids,” and “They come number one.”

Focus group BOE members stated while they do not deal with the day to day operations of the school district, they are able to see the “big picture” and hence, have a broader view of the district’s needs. Additionally, they noted that they learned their BOE role while serving.

When I got involved, I learned there was a lot more in terms of the finances and, and the way the budget was going and whether concessions should be offered. And really being on the board is all about priorities. And it’s always a trade off on decisions. So it wasn’t really, let’s just come in and get this thing done, whether it’s full day kindergarten or whatever. But there, it was a lot more complex, and there was a lot more to consider in terms of the, you know the finances versus the taxes versus the program versus the teachers' salaries. Just learning more, that there’s a lot more to education than I had any idea of than when I first got involved in the board. (BOE Focus Group Member #1)

BOE members felt powerful in that they had access to information for decision making and a fiscal responsibility to their communities to make decisions about budgets. They indicated they could provide valuable insight into hiring the superintendent and setting district policy due to this knowledge.
But, but I think we can have power in very broad ways. You know, we are seeing a real culture shift in our district and it’s because of the direction that the board wants to move in. And that’s a really overarching and kind of big systemic change that is being pushed. And it’s not, you’re right, it’s not the micro-manage little things like the flag or even the field trip or, um but it is, it’s a big shift and if we were a different board with a different orientation, it would be happening in a different way. (BOE Focus Group Member #2)

Additionally, BOE members viewed themselves as ambassadors to broadly inform the public and contributed by providing a different point of view with their varied life experiences.

I think I would second what everybody had said about a range of experience. I think it is important to have some people with kids in the district. Because then you’re kind of living the policy that you’re creating…. We have people with different areas of expertise, and it’s nice to be able to lean on your board members for certain kinds of expertise. (BOE Focus Group Member #3)

BOE members indicated they made better decisions as a group and as a result were able to diffuse perceptions of power and influence by acting as a whole.

You know our power and influence tend to be sort of individualistic, but if we think and debate and discuss and decides as a board, and then we speak and act like a board…it’s really a group of folks representing the district or a single voice as opposed to you know one of us wants one thing, one of us wants another. And that’s uh, I think that’s helpful to kind of diffuse that whole perception of, of power and influence. (BOE Focus Group Member #4)
However, BOE members felt they were not powerful in some aspects, especially in the way the BOE is perceived by the public.

What, what I say is, I was elected the first time, by about 1,000 votes and within a couple of days, I met 1,200 people who voted for me and uh, within a week, I met 1,500 people who needed a job. (laughing) Yep. (BOE Focus Group Member #5)

BOE focus group members stated that public perception of the BOE changes when they understand the facts and how the BOE works.

...we can distinguish between the perception of reality is ….if we operate more as a single entity with a single voice. (BOE Focus Group Member #6)

Well, I guess the way you conduct yourself says a lot, you know. Actions always speak louder than words and, um ... You know, I think a good board member is a booster for their district. Um, you know goes to events and, and uh you know, points out the positives that are going on. Um and then disarms people by saying, I could never get that done. (laughs) (BOE Focus Group Member #5)

Participants indicated it is difficult to keep the community informed, as they are apathetic and only come out on hot topics. BOE focus group members also indicated that using school alerts, broadcasting meetings and/or forums online with On Demand or Skype are effective ways to get community involvement.

**RQ 2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?**

In the BOE focus groups, BOE members stated they represented what the community wants and that there was no need to change the current requirements. Participants maintained the BOE membership needs mixed representation but vacillated about having
convicted felons on the BOE. Participants indicated that serving on the BOE was the purest form of democracy and that if a candidate paid their debt to society, they deserved the opportunity if elected.

Really to me, the School Board election is probably one of the purest forms of democracy that’s still left. (BOE Focus Group Member #2)

Focus group members registered concern over how personal agendas can compromise the BOE. One focus group member cited NYS’s East Ramapo School District BOE where Orthodox Jews held the majority of BOE seats and shifted public school taxpayer funds to private yeshivas. Consequently, the school district is facing fiscal insolvency and academic ruin. As a result, NYS Education Commissioner, MaryEllen Elia appointed monitors to oversee the school district and corrects its course to restore academic programs, services, fiscal solvency. Subsequently, commentary about NYS’s East Ramapo School District BOE takeover ensued.

You know, I guess one other question though, cause there is the one school district, was it East Ramapo where they …are sending their um kids to a different uh, school, you know a, a um religious district, and their main purpose of being on the board is to keep taxes low which is then impacting the education for those students. So, you know, that I could see is, is obviously a problem. (BOE Focus Group Member #6)

BOE members stated that while they bring life experience to the Board of Education, they serve for community impact and to maintain their community public school’s appeal. You know that’s why I think it you have to remind yourself all the time that it’s the community’s school and it’s very often the strongest identifier of a community. Is its school and uh, you know for those people I say we, you know we belong to many
churches, but we all worship property values. Um, good schools are good for property values. Right, and I want my neighbor to be um, you know to be the product of a good education. (BOE Focus Group Member #5)

**RQ 3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?**

BOE members had compelling viewpoints on whether BOE members’ influence education policy. While BOE focus group members felt they had a level of control over curriculum and employees who work in their school districts, they ultimately felt their role was to follow protocols and government regulations and laws. As a result, Boards were held accountable for federal regulations that local communities do not necessarily agree with. Participants indicated there was an erosion of local control and that federal mandates created hardships which have impacted the community trust on the BOE. Respondents stated that the federal government dropped local communities and there was no common sense funding from federal government.

…the federal government in particular, you know has a, um kind of a, a Wizard of Oz mentality. You know that they can decree something and not give us the resources to make it happen and then blame us because it didn’t. Um there’s, there’s, there is complete erosion, or not a complete but a definite erosion of, of local control. And uh, and you know it’s, it’s not out there in the public’s perception so much. BOE Focus Group Member #5)

I think a lot of that frustration where we start to feel like it's out of control because we can't do what we need to do on behalf of our district. (BOE Focus Group Member #6)
Community Member Focus Group Analysis

RQ 1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

Community member focus group participants stated that individuals were motivated to run for the BOE because of community impact and service. Focus group participants indicated that BOE members learn their role on the job but serve for their own personal agenda whether it is to influence education in selecting leaders or a district’s educational programs. Participants also stated that serving on the BOE was a platform or foundation to a political career. Respondents stated that BOE members have significant political leverage to make decisions but can lack political savvy to manipulate their position for gain.

Well, contributing, uh, to a community board could be the platform to starting a political career. So, the opportunity to obtain influence and recognition could be done in that type of service. Later on, there could be other influences that could incur because of that history that you attain. (Community Focus Group Member #1)

I would, I would concur, uh, with the last comment that I, I have seen in our community people who have served in a School Board and, and then achieve their non-profit leadership or, or some other position in the community. Most of the people that serve on School Boards that I see though don’t have the political savvy to manipulate that position into a gain. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

Community focus group members indicated that the BOE was powerful as a whole not as individuals. However, BOE members were powerful as individuals in the way they voted but can confuse decision making with problem solving. As a result, a negative stigma to serve public office is perpetuated.
Political power for me is the power to decide. And, oftentimes, School Board members that I encounter, they, they fail to recognize the decisions that they have in front of them, uh, and, and confuse decision-making with problem solving. Uh, I would say that the most significant myth for most School Boards is this significant political leverage they have to make decisions a policy that will affect things. And, and most School Boards don’t realize that that’s possible. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

…because people don’t realize the potential that’s right in front of them. They, they, they want people to join because they want to solve a problem and make a difference, but political, you know, the, the path of political organizations in the United States is to demonize people who serve, and sooner or later they’re going to figure out by serving and demonize that there’s a huge disconnect. And I found, I found a lot of bitterness with the people on School Board because of that, that fact that they’ve been demonized. And they haven’t, they haven’t necessarily made bad decisions. They just haven’t made any decisions. But because they’re involved in a political process, they’ve been seen as something, uh, problematic. (Community Focus Group Member #3)

RQ 2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?

Community member focus group participants varied on their opinions about current NYS BOE eligibility requirements and how they impact BOE practices and functioning. The consensus among community members was to maintain the current minimal qualifications but cited there was a need to have mixed BOE representation. However, community
members were divided with how this could be achieved. Some members cited the desire to have a consultant in a specialized area advising BOE members. They referred to this person as an ex-facto, someone who was impartial with no voting rights but could lend their expertise and opinion. Additionally, community members felt there should not be administrators or teachers on the BOE so as not to influence one group over another.

I believe that advisement is always helpful for the board, so the board can call advisors, but they should be ex-officio, meaning that they do not have voting rights. They can participate in the orientation and the knowledge of the governing board members. They can assist with any specific things. You know, sometimes events can happen, we had a, you know, something disastrous happen and this is the explanation, this was the, uh, cause, this is the corrective action and all that so they can assist with that, but they should remain ex-officio so that the board can have an impartial, unbiased decision as to the governance, not the day-to-day activity, but governance, who’s there to make those decisions and how they should be decided. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

My opinion is that we exclude, uh, administrators from the, uh, education system and, uh, exclude teachers that are actively working. So, we could take up a retired teacher, but not an actively working teacher, simply because we don’t want that influence on the board that it’s more a, a group of people that are observing from the outside, assisting in the decision-making and in the governance. (Community Focus Group Member #3)
On the contrary, community members cited that the BOE suffers due to lack of educational experience represented by BOE members. Some respondents indicated it was imperative to have educators on BOE.

Um, I serve, I served the last 10 years on a hospital board, uh, where one of the chief challenges is that the board is composed of physicians, uh, community members, uh, and, uh, stakeholders in the hospital. Um, so needless to say the conflict of interest statements are very interesting. Um, and I would say from looking at the School Board, um, they are radically different from that. But I think they, they also suffer from the challenge that, that we struggle with. From a hospital board, having physicians and, and, and key nurses on the hospital board is essential to a decision-making process, to understanding the weed that you’re, that you’re walking into. Um, the, I think one of the key weaknesses of a, of a School Board is there’s nobody involved in education. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

Respondents indicated that while BOE members deferred to the school administration, they made better decisions as a group and often made decisions like a judge with oversight of the school district as the focus.

The board members sit like judges. They sit there, they determine what’s best, they apply it, and they evaluate how well it works. That’s really their job. I mean, they can’t run the school day to day because they may not be qualified to run the school day to day, but they can assist because they are an impartial view of overseers. (Community Focus Group Member #3)
RQ 3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Community member focus group participants were quite candid and direct about their viewpoints about how BOE members’ influence education policy. Community members indicated that local BOE’s were losing local control and autonomy to the federal government and as a result had less control or influence.

We, our district right now, at least one of our schools is on the cusp of receivership, meaning where the state will come in to control. And that’s a frustrating, uh, thing for our district, uh, uh, to lose the control of their, the potential loss of control of the, uh, influence of our one school, uh, by the state is a daunting feeling. And I personally think that the state has a huge control in our schools, be it the Common Core testing, Common Core curriculum and the state testing contribute a large amount of control what the state has. And it brings about a challenge for School Boards to make decisions and to find appropriate funding and money for the required mandated items. I think that’s a huge area of control from the state. It’s very hard for the U.S. federal government to determine what the needs are in every community in the United States. (Community Focus Group Member #1)

Respondents stated that the federal government mandates created hardships and disenfranchised local communities. As a result, the federal mandates impacted community trust of BOE members. However, the federal government’s infringement forced communities and BOE members to respond.

In our community, as members, we contribute a direct tax for schools…several thousand dollars, and we try to assist without the dependency on federal money alone so that community boards can continue to function, uh, independently and allow for
those decisions to be made. The pressure by the federal government is great and that has driven a lot of schools to comply with the programs that, that budgeted money comes with. That has caused the conflicts in my community where we’re trying to figure out, do we participate or do we go fully independent. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

Community member focus group participants also stated that the federal government wants to normalize education. While the federal government may care about children as focus group participants suggested, they are misguided in their attempts to help them as they are too far removed from local communities’ needs.

I would like to think that they (federal government personnel) do care about students, but I think that they're going about it the incorrect way, the wrong way. (Focus Group Member # 1)

What the federal government would like to do is normalize things so that it could manage finances more directly and it can manage finances more effectively. That does not benefit the community. That benefits the federal government. (Community Focus Group Member #3)

I don’t think the federal government should be involved in local, um, local, uh, schools, simply because they’re so far removed from the local scene. Uh, I think of, of the federal government in, in a, um, an airplane flying over a community and making decisions from what they see from the window on the airplane. Um, and the local government are those who are, uh, perhaps in a helicopter, but closer to the ground and able to see it at a larger picture, but will see a more refined picture of what is needed. And then the government, the federal government, because they’re
so far removed, are not able to make the best decisions for a particular community.

(Community Focus Group Member #1)

While community member focus group participants were aware that they could be apathetic in their desire to vote and attend BOE meetings, they did indicate several ways to assist Boards of Education to bridge the gap. Community members indicated that the BOE needed to interpret information to convince large groups of people in a more creative fashion such as broadcasting meetings or forums. They suggested that the way the BOE members announce or demonstrate their actions is a way to create dialogue and community involvement. They also indicated that BOE members would benefit from being marketed so the public knew what their positions were as well as being branded so the community knew the BOE members’ identity and what they stood for.

It’s media and marketing. So, what does the media interpret it as that convinces a large group of people to believe it to be. And then, marketing, how do School Boards announce their actions and demonstrate that their members are working and contributing to the community as best as they can. So it’s sort of a shared action. There has to be, you know, media that’s going to pick up on this, but marketing that kind of streamlines that media to focus the benefits that the School Board is doing and not necessarily what could be perceived that’s not well explained. (Community Focus Group Member #2)

I believe marketing is important, but I think the key is actually branding. Uh, the, the brand of the school and the brand of, of the community, uh, creates the brand of the School Board. And the, the problem that, that most School Boards face here, where I live, is that, uh, the only opportunity to encounter a School Board is in a negative
moment, and so their brand is always negative. Uh, it’s always in a weak position. If a School Board could figure out a way of, of controlling the brand in relationship to the community, I don’t, I don’t think you’d be having this survey. (Community Focus Group Member #3)

**Coding Process and Development of Themes from Survey and Focus Group Data**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) cite several types of coding categories. The researcher applied what they define as the subjects’ *ways of thinking about people and objects* style of coding. Bogdan and Biklen state “this family of codes gets at the subjects’ understanding of each other, of outsiders, and of the objects that make up their world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 175). Transcription analysis resulted in 59 codes for the BOE member group (see Appendix H) and 55 codes for the community member group (see Appendix I). The codes were collapsed using first cycle coding methods and some codes were eliminated for redundancy and relevance. An independent researcher audited the codes. Collapsed codes resulted in seven themes from survey and focus group results: positive impact on children, power and influence, democracy, perception of why BOE members’ serve, frustration over loss of local control, transparency and communication, and branding and marketing. “A theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 13).

**Positive Impact on Children**

Both BOE and community member focus groups reported that BOE members ultimately wanted to have a positive impact on children regardless of budget constraints, unfunded mandates, or public perception. Serving on the BOE was deemed a way to “pay it
“forward” to one’s community and seen as a gratuitous way to impact children in a positive manner.

**Power and Influence**

Power and influence were noted as themes that surfaced among survey and focus group participants. While aspects of discussions related to power and influence touched upon negative factors, power and influence consistently emerged as a positive theme. Respondents noted that power and influence was positive in that BOE members could impact change for the better and that their influence was far-reaching into the future to instill programs and policies that educated the local community’s populace.

**Democracy**

Democracy emerged as a theme from both groups. Participants noted that the process and eligibility requirements in becoming a BOE member represented the purest form of democracy. There was a great sense of pride among participants as it related to the election of BOE members and the principle of democracy despite differing opinions on various subject matters.

**Perception of Why BOE Members Serve**

Interestingly, both focus groups concluded that the perceptions of why BOE members’ serve versus the reality of why BOE members serve are different. Both focus groups stated that the perception of why BOE serve was to have influence and power. Respondents indicated that BOE members are perceived to desire influence and power. Respondents noted that the perception is BOE members want influence over programs and power over decisions that are made whether to serve them personally or to fulfill a personal agenda. However, both groups stated that the real reason BOE members serve was for the
betterment of education. Respondents believed that regardless of the perception of why BOE members serve, they served with the altruistic motivation of service to community and the advancement of education.

**Frustration Over Loss of Local Control**

Frustration over the loss of local control in education surfaced as a theme among focus group participants. Respondents indicated that the public was frustrated by unfunded federal and state mandates. They further noted that they were dismayed by the inability for elected BOE members to impact change that the community deemed essential to maintain local control.

**Branding and Marketing the BOE**

The idea of branding the BOE came through as a theme. “Branding is the expression of the essential truth or value of an organization, product, or service. It is communication of characteristics, values, and attributes that clarify what this particular brand is and is not” ("The Difference Between Marketing and Branding," 2011). Participants cited that Boards of Education would benefit from having a specific identity and to establish a defined presence to community members. They further noted that once a brand had been created, Boards of Education would benefit from having this brand marketed to community members so the same consistent message is relayed. In doing so, Boards of Education create loyal supporters and advocates in community members. Marketing refers to actively promoting a service and pushing out a message. Respondents indicated that Boards of Education would benefit from actively promoting their schools’ mission, vision - their brand. Respondents noted increased visibility, accessibility and being present and approachable at school events as ways to market the BOE.
Transparency and Communication

Respondents noted the public or community wanted greater transparency and communication from the BOE. While they recognized aspects of the BOE, having to do with personnel issues, needed to remain confidential, they desired more approaches and techniques of communication. They also stated they wanted to feel more a part of decision-making processes.

In conjunction with the study’s survey and focus group instruments, these codes and themes served to further develop individual interview questions.

Interviews

A total of six interviews were conducted. Interviewees included three BOE members and three community members. Data obtained from focus groups were analyzed and coded to determine to what extent the study’s three research questions were answered. As a result of focus group data, two sets of interview questions were developed to help gather additional data from the interviews. For BOE members, 17 questions were created (see Appendix J). For community members, 12 interview questions were developed (see Appendix K). Five additional questions were asked of BOE members as they related specifically to BOE service. Supplementary questions related to what BOE members learned about themselves and education by serving on the BOE, the number of years members served, as well as what their experience was like serving.

Board of Education Members

RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

Board of Education members had varied and passionate responses to what motivated them to run for the BOE. One member felt he was good at consensus building and could be
an asset to the BOE. One respondent indicated that he wanted to capitalize on his education background and impact his community by participating in the hiring of the next superintendent. Since strong leadership skills are necessary for the role, the member felt he could assist in this manner.

I wanted to be part of selecting a new superintendent and I thought that I would have something to add to that. I thought that I could bring a good perspective with a focus on kids and a focus on education to the selection of the new person. (BOE interviewee #1)

All interviewees wanted to be certain that the BOE had a clear focus on education and children. All members were in agreement that they enjoyed the long-term pride associated with serving on the BOE and the legacy of impact on their community. They also indicated seeing programs working, and students graduating and handing out diplomas were a highlight of service.

My father grew up in the same town as I did and my children did. I have a very long perspective on things. When I handed my daughter her diploma it was just about as big as walking her down the aisle when she got married. Another one of those fatherhood parental things of protection, pride, and satisfaction. When I see the kids walk across the stage, I wouldn’t say anywhere near the majority but, there’s always some that I know from other ways. I knew their parents. I may have coached them. They might have been a friend in the family or even a relative. I’ve seen them from very young childhood to being ready to face the world. I have confidence that we have done for them, and with them, the best that we could. (BOE interviewee #2)
In determining that having a positive impact on children was a main reason BOE members were motivated to run for the BOE, the researcher examined what was the most gratifying aspect of continued service. BOE members interviewed stated that the most gratifying aspect of serving on the BOE was serving their community and seeing decisions that make a positive impact come to fruition. Members gave examples such as hiring people perceived to be good and programmatic changes that altered the academic and social trajectory of the school district.

If kids succeed, that they graduate, that the programs we put in, that the kids are able to do things, move on, those are rewarding to me. Every year, we ask, starting in March typically, “Anybody at risk, not graduating? What are you doing? Or what are you making sure that they get done?” (BOE interviewee #3)

One member however had a poignant and reflective remark about serving on the BOE and the role of public education as a public benefit.

There’s never been any question in my mind about the need for public education as a public benefit. Where a lot of people talk about “we have to do it for the kids,” I say that’s a byproduct. Our mandate is to do it for the people, for the public. We need an educated populous. (BOE interviewee #2)

BOE members noted the personal impact serving on the BOE had on one’s lifestyle. Members indicated service is time-consuming and affects one’s family life. They also observed that there was a period of adjustment to being on the BOE.

I ran as a defensive maneuver, so that this guy wouldn’t win. As it turned out is was like an audition for me. It was also a test drive for my lifestyle. It worked out. I had a one-year commitment. It hadn’t been a goal of mine before the circumstances led
me to run. I wasn’t really sure whether it would be a good fit for my family and my lifestyle. There’s no question that it affects… it affects your career because it takes a lot of time, and interest, and energy. (BOE interviewee #2)

BOE members cited that it is trying and complicated work serving on the BOE. Since all systems affect each other and there are many layers to a school district’s day-to-day operations and systems, hard decisions have to be made by the BOE. Additionally, while BOE members have access to information for decision-making, the confidentiality can be burdensome. The Board of Education’s lack of disclosure to the public makes it difficult for them.

There are always misconceptions… and there are always hurt feelings and complications. We can’t really explain our side of the story, which is fair, but that’s really hard. (BOE interviewee #1)

BOE members stated that the public takes change very personal and make assumptions about people who serve on the BOE. They stated the community wants transparency and to be involved more in decision-making. BOE members noted they are often blamed for things they are not directly in control of. However, they expressed they were better listeners for it and that it was imperative to allow the public to vent their concerns and that members cannot take verbal assaults personally.

We have policies and we have rules, and they’re fine and dandy but they don’t ...

People will interrupt and something but if you cut them off, it just ticks them off. I say, “Let’s listen to them and by listening, it lets them vent.” (BOE interviewee #3)
BOE members stated that setting policy was very powerful and that they had power as an individual in the way they voted. However, they make decisions from an arm’s length but that BOE members were the best example of politicians as there was no personal gain. We’re the best example of what politicians should be in that there’s almost, without exception, no personal gain from being a School Board member. We don’t give up our other career to become a School Board member. Whereas most paid politicians give up their career and their career becomes being a politician. (BOE interviewee #2)

**RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?**

BOE members had a dichotomous position about NYS eligibility requirements. All members interviewed stated that a board works most effectively when there is a balanced representation of professions and skills. They cited having a cross section of literate citizens with and without children provided a good balance and fair representation for communities. They also indicated BOE members needed to be knowledgeable about education and good communicators as they serve as ambassadors to broadly inform and connect with people.

I think it’s very useful to have people with different strengths. We have some people who are very focused on budgets, and that’s really useful, people with a number sense who can look at the budget and understand it quickly, and can ask good questions about that. I think we have a few parents on the board which I think is really important, because when the administration tells you, “Oh, we’re doing this in this school,” you can say, “Wait a minute. This is how that’s playing out for my kid, so let’s talk about how real that is.” I think a parent perspective on the board is actually really important. We have a former teacher on the board, and that’s helpful in the
sense that she brings that perspective and her just wealth of knowledge. (BOE interviewee #1)

BOE members also indicated it was helpful to have educators on the board as a way to vet and legitimize what the school district and administration are doing.

I think that, for some there’s a lack of understanding of education issues, so they don’t know what to ask. If I were serving on a board of an environmental organization, I’m sure I wouldn’t be half as effective as I am on this board because I wouldn’t know what to ask [sic] really be trusting someone else. I think that there’s some of that. I think a strength that I bring is a confidence in the field of education, so if there’s something that looks weird on a plan, a school based plan, I’m not afraid to ask about, because I know there’s something not right about it, but someone else might not know that. I’m certainly not saying that everyone needs to have that kind of background, I don’t think that would be appropriate, but I think that sometimes it means that people don’t ask enough questions. (BOE interviewee #3)

Ultimately interviewees cited that membership is about citizenship and is the purest form of democracy. Members stated that having too many qualifications dilutes the democracy of the BOE. Members noted that they are believers in the ruler of law and that as a society we get our guidelines from the Supreme Court and those are the parameters we need to follow.

I think it’s important to have a public entity and an entity that’s accountable to the public and publicly elected, so I’m not sure that I would change anything. I certainly have some thoughts about what is helpful on a board, and what kind of composition is helpful and useful. (BOE interviewee #1)
I think that citizenship and residence should be the only qualifications and age, 18 is a good age for me. (BOE interviewee #2)

I would say is I’m a believer in the rule of law. If the courts or the legislature has passed laws then you typically have to follow them. (BOE interviewee #3)

Respondents further noted that BOE members make the better politicians than those who are paid for service or work as a politician full time as there are no party lines in NYS. Interviewees stated they are able to focus on listening and connecting with citizens without the minutia of politics.

… I think it is pure democracy. I think you have to be a citizen and a resident. That’s one of the reasons that I’m a School Board member is because as I tell the ‘uber’ politicians, I’m a better politician than they are because I don’t have a party. I don’t have patronage. I don’t have pork. I just connect with the people. (BOE interviewee #2)

Upon examining eligibility requirements further, the researcher noted that convicted felons could serve on the BOE. To gain BOE members’ perspectives and substantiate their fervor for democracy in BOE eligibility, the researcher probed their positions despite the fact that sex offenders fall under convicted felons. All interviewees unequivocally stood behind the principle of democracy.

If a felon ran and got elected, you deal with it and you hope they’re not coming in with an agenda. The public would know what they were doing, probably the record, and they would make the decision depending on what it was. If it’s something when they were 18 and they were now 32 and it was not that serious, who knows. (BOE interviewee #1)
“If they’ve been pardoned or overturned then in fact they’re not a felon. That’s kind of like citizenship. If they’ve been restored to citizenship, I think they should be able to serve. (BOE interviewee #2)

If it’s something that was against kids, or if it was some kind of violence against children, that would be disturbing because then they would have contact with children, sanctioned contact with kids. It’s not like I, as a board member, get … I get invited to school events and those kinds of things, so that would be troublesome I think, but otherwise, I guess that’s the system we have set up. (BOE interviewee #3)

RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

Interviewees expressed that as BOE members they had influence on education policy. However, they recognized their influence was somewhat limited as a result of how NYS has recently responded to federal mandates. BOE members also registered great concern over New York State’s response to federal mandates. BOE members stated that many of the education problems originate with the federal government but the way NYS deals with them is a bigger issue. They cited that NYS was more responsible for the current education concerns in the state and they pose more intrusion on local communities than the federal government. They further indicated that NYS was “selling” out to the federal government for political gain of a few.

The federal government has Race to the Top and as part of that we have the Common Core and the testing, but New York State was the one who said, “We’ll take it,” so all of those … I understand why people say that those are federal, I mean technically it’s a federal initiative, but we took it and we are running with it. Really, I feel like it’s
New York State that’s selling our soul, and continues to sell our soul with the NCLB waivers and all of those kinds of things. (BOE interviewee #3)

BOE members cited that the federal government often imposes their incompetent leadership on municipalities who in turn create new guidelines. These mandates create hardships on the local level as they are often unfunded. As a result, these unfunded mandates create division among community members and often pit one group against one another.

It just seems we get a new president, we get a new agenda. We get a new secretary of education whose experience is often not in districts at all like ours and very often in districts that aren’t succeeding as well as ours. It’s not just taking away local control but it’s imposing incompetent leadership. The leadership changes and we’re given a new goal line and everybody’s supposed to run that way just as hard as they can.

People who have been around for a while understand it’s still about socializing a kid, teaching him how to read, and the other things that we have to do. The state wants a lot of accountability from schools. They’re not very accountable to schools. They come with the full faith and force of the federal government. They just don’t come with the money. (BOE interviewee #1)

Interviewees noted that an uninformed public blames the BOE for things that are out of their control because the perception is the BOE has power. They stated that the public assumes that those who are in control are experts and can figure things out. However, they noted that public perception changes when the public understands the Board of Education’s role and how things work.

I certainly think that people who are not informed blame the Board of Education for things that are outside of our control, or that for our state mandates, or federal
mandates…. I think that people who don’t have an understanding of how things work do blame the Board of Ed for a host of things that we have no control over. (BOE interviewee #1)

BOE members noted that in addition to the public being uninformed about mandates and the Board of Education’s functioning; they were alarmed that several teachers were equally uninformed about the Board of Education’s role.

Smart people, who are very interested in their craft, don’t understand what’s going on politically. They’ve got their union’s point of view, but they don’t understand the system, the mega data, that the population’s going down. There’s shifting emphasis in education. Their job may be in jeopardy because of circumstances way beyond their, and local, control. They’re not aware of it.” (BOE interviewee #2)

Community Member Interviews

RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

Community members interviewed indicated that individuals ran for the BOE for numerous reasons. Primarily, they noted that members run as a way to pay it forward and serve their community. Community members stated that often BOE members felt they have a skill set that would be an asset to the BOE.

They want to serve the community and the educational system. I think based on their background; they’ll feel that their skill set is worth contributing to that. They have to be philanthropic, because you don’t get paid for it. (Community Member interviewee #1)
Community member interviewees noted that BOE members served on the BOE for their own personal agendas, to voice their opinion, and collaborate with vested parties. They also indicated that serving on the BOE could be a platform for a political career.

I would hope that would be an ideal that people want to join because they want to serve the community and make a difference and helping the educational system. The dark side of that is there are people that are climbing the political ladder that are using it as a stepping stone.... (Community Member interviewee #2)

Community member interviewees noted BOE membership required a serious time commitment and vested members were needed as service impacts family life.

It’s very rigorous time dependent, and you have to be involved, so you have to sacrifice. You have to sacrifice a lot of time to be able to participate, personal time, work time. Some of the meetings could go long into hours. (Community Member interviewee #2)

Community member interviewees stated that public education is a public benefit and BOE members need to be able to effectively communicate as they have power and control with their decision-making. They indicated that they are able to make decisions like a judge as they are able to look at a broad view of perspectives and can render positive outcomes for their community.

...you actually get to help children, school teachers, and a major part of our culture here in the United States, education. (Community Member interviewee #3)
RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?

Community member interviewees were unaware of NYS BOE eligibility. The researcher defined the eligibility requirements as identified by NYSSBA. Upon review of the requirements, community member interviewees registered their viewpoints. Community members noted that BOE members have an impact on children, teachers, and the community. Consequently, they need to be impartial and be able to connect with people.

Impartiality is big, because decisions should be clear. The decisions shouldn’t be clouded with interests, such as moving budgets, modifying budgets, things like that. It really should be looking at what are the needs of the children, the school teachers, and that balance. (Community Member interviewee #2)

Interviewees stated that BOE members make decisions from arm’s length and their role is to follow the superintendent’s recommendations. They cited that a superintendent’s recommendation is doing what the BOE is asking. They also indicated that due to the codependent relationship between NYS and the community, BOE members needed to have an understanding of educational systems and needed to be able to effectively communicate.

I also think that you should have people on the Board who understand the difficulties of the education system and what’s been handed to them through the federal government and then your state mandates that are non-funded and all of this other stuff. (Community Member interviewee #3)

Interviewees noted that the BOE represents what the community wants and as such they need to be objective. They stated that BOE members are powerful as a whole not as individuals and that their power lies in looking at the big picture. They also indicated that
due to the rigorous time commitment and responsibility to the community, there needs to be an attendance policy. BOE members needed to be able to commit to the service. 

You have to participate. After the first two absences consecutive, at that point, they really should find someone who’s more dedicated. It makes a big deal. Anybody can be a School Board member because of what they do, how they participate. If they don’t attend, they’re really not an active member. They’re an inactive member. 

(Community Member interviewee #2)

Community members had mixed feelings about having convicted felons serve on the BOE. One member was open to allowing convicted felons on the BOE if they paid their dues to society but did not want pedophiles allowed to serve.

I find it disturbing…does that include pedophiles? (Community Member interviewee #1)

While another member felt very strongly that convicted felons should not be on the BOE or even considered.

I don’t think there is a role for people who are convicted, particularly of very heinous or very violent crimes. Being convicted means that you went through a trial, you were found guilty. The influence that’s available [sic] could be complicated with a crime or someone who has a criminal conviction. To keep it as pure and clear, I think it’s better to not allow those folks to have voting rights. (Community Member interviewee #2)

Community member interviewees concurred that BOE members needed to be able to read and write. However, they vacillated on their views about the need to have mixed representation on the BOE. While they did not want to legislate requirements, they had very
strong opinions of who should be on the BOE. Some felt it was imperative that parents serve on the BOE.

I’m really one for giving people options and choices and not trying to limit them through laws and mandates and things like that. One of the things I would hope to add to that is they must have a child or be associated with a child in the community, because we have some people on the board who never had a child in the community. If you have a child in the system, you know what that system ... You understand the nuances and what’s needed and what’s not. I think you have a better understanding of how effectual you could be. When you don’t have a student that’s gone through it or is in any form associated with it, or you don’t have kids period, I don’t know how you can make good decisions by not having the experience to back up your decision making process or your thought process. (Community Member interviewee #1)

One community member believed it was necessary to have BOE members who had a background in business.

The Board of Ed. Should be run like a business, so ideally you want people who have a business, a successful business mentality because they are working with budgets and guidelines and state things, mandates, legalese, whatever. (Community Member interviewee #2)

Community member interviewees also wavered on whether or not educators should be allowed on the BOE.

We have educators on our board and I don’t know that their decisions are based on trying to help the kids or the teachers. That’s a whole other can of worms.
I’m not going to say that they wouldn’t be a positive contribution, but from my perspective and what I would believe would be the case, think it would be a conflict of interest to be honest. (Community Member interviewee #1)

Another interviewee felt strongly that the BOE should have an ex-facto representative. This person would not have voting rights, would remain impartial but provide the necessary counterbalance.

I think they can serve in an ex officio capacity, where they advise and instruct the board, but they don’t have voting powers. The board remains, in itself, indifferent and nonjudgmental when they make their decisions so they’re clear and impartial.

(Community Member interviewee #2)

**RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?**

Community member interviewees were in agreement that BOE members influenced education policy. Community members indicated that BOE members had influence on education policy with regards to how they vote on agenda items. In addition, they stated that BOE members had influence on education policy with their level of community involvement. As a result of additional community involvement, BOE members’ influence was more powerful.

Board members definitely influence education by their decisions, their votes, and other activity that they get involved in by being in the community board and the School Board. (Community Member interviewee #2)

Interviewees indicated that school districts are losing autonomy to the federal government and are experiencing an erosion of local control. They further stated they are
uncertain if the federal government is capable of meeting districts’ needs effectively as they are too far-reaching and removed from local communities.

There’s too many local governments and I can understand that they want to centralize things and stuff like that and be more of standardized but at the same time they only know so much. They only know it on a broad level of what they’re hearing. I don’t think they could grasp what’s going on locally; I just don’t think they have that capability. (Community Member interviewee #3)

However, one member cited that the federal government involvement in education is necessary for checks and balances of systems to ensure fidelity of school district’s operations.

One of the problems with some school districts is that they are poorly managed, to the point that you actually see children inappropriately losing the opportunity for education. …You have your School Board, and then you have further ways to report it even up to the feds, and that hasn’t happened, so the fed is usually called in because the school is failing very significantly, to the point that the community is affected…I mean that’s what you want the federal government for – to intervene. I don’t think it should be routine, I think it should be a safety net, so if things do go bad, there is someone to run to that will make a difference. (Community Member interviewee #2)

In contrast, community member interviewees had strong opinions about New York State’s adherence to the federal mandates citing that the federal government’s unfunded mandate created hardships and disenfranchised local communities. In addition, the unfunded mandates are divisive and pit community members against each one another.
I agree that New York went to bed with the federal government, because our
particular democratic powers that be loved Obama, loved the democrats, and went to
bed with them. Now as a result of it we have to have certain amounts of schools or we
don’t get our federal funding. (Community Member interviewee #1)

**Reoccurring and Additional Themes**

Analysis of the community member interviews resulted in reoccurring themes as
presented in the BOE and community members’ focus group data. In addition, community
member interview data resulted in additional themes. Community member interviewees
corroborated what focus group data analysis concluded. Transcription analysis resulted in
250 codes for the BOE member interviewees (see Appendix L) and 157 codes for the
community member interviewees (see Appendix M). The codes were collapsed using first
cycle coding methods and some codes were eliminated for redundancy and relevance. An
independent researcher also audited first cycle codes (see Appendix O). Using grammatical
and elemental coding methods, collapsed codes resulted in eight themes (see Appendix N).
Seven themes were consistent to themes determined from the study’s surveys and focus
groups. One additional theme branding and marketing emerged from the interviews. The
themes were: positive impact on children, power and influence, democracy, perception of
why BOE members’ serve, frustration over loss of local control, transparency and
communication, branding and marketing, and negative stigma serving on the BOE.

**Positive Impact on Children**

Both BOE and community member interviewees reported that BOE members
ultimately wanted to have a positive impact on children regardless of budget constraints,
unfunded mandates, or public perception. Serving on the BOE was deemed a way to “pay it
forward” to one’s community and seen as gratuitous way to impact children in a positive manner.

**Power and Influence**

Power and influence were also noted as themes that surfaced among BOE and community member interviewees. While aspects of discussions related to power and influence touched upon negative factors, power and influence consistently emerged as a positive theme. Respondents noted that power and influence were positive in that BOE members could impact change for the better and that their influence was far-reaching into the future to instill programs and policies that educated the local community’s populace.

**Democracy**

Democracy emerged as a theme from both interviewee groups. Participants noted that the process and eligibility requirements in becoming a BOE member represented the purest form of democracy. There was a great sense of pride among participants as it related to BOE members elections and the principle of democracy despite differing opinions on specific subject eligibility.

**Perception of Why BOE Members Serve**

Interviewees from both the BOE and community member groups concluded that the perceptions of why BOE members’ serve versus the reality of why BOE members serve are different. Respondents stated that the perception of why BOE serve was to have influence and power. Interviewees indicated that BOE members are perceived to desire influence and power. Interviewees further noted that the perception is BOE members want influence over programs and power over decisions that are made whether to serve them personally or to fulfill a personal agenda. However, both groups of interviewees stated that the real reason
BOE members serve was for the betterment of education. Respondents believed that regardless of the perception of why BOE members serve, they served with the altruistic motivation of service to community and the advancement of education.

**Frustration Over loss of Local Control**

Community member interviewees noted that federal government infringement forces communities to respond but implied that the BOE is not accountable and does not come up with solutions but rather goes ahead with superintendent’s recommendation.

He’s the one that’s in the trenches, or supposed to be in the trenches of that district knowing what the problems are and what the issues are that need to be addressed. I would hope that’s what we’re paying him the big bucks for. I’m okay with the guy that’s here. He seems to be bringing us into the 21st century and has a good idea of what’s needed. I’m fine with him. He does do that. He does advise the board….As a result, we didn’t have an increase in taxes or we kept it at the 2% cap. He really is diligent. He really is trying to do the best he can without cutting….He’s thinking. That was all his idea and the Board approved it, and we voted and passed it.

(Community Member interviewee #1)

Community member interviewees stated they desired more of a connection to lawmakers and what occurred on a federal and state level.

I wish that the department of education and New York State would hold WebEx’s like this, and then they could [sic] remotely distressing things and they don’t have to travel up and down to Albany. It’s much easier. Albany is one town, and obviously there’s so many towns around it all over, reaching out hundreds of miles away. I
think it would be important for Albany to have other venues, such as these that are a remote access venue to be able to do that. (Community Member interviewee #2)

**Branding and Marketing the BOE**

The concept of branding the BOE came through again as a theme. As previously noted, “branding is the expression of the essential truth or value of an organization, product, or service. It is communication of characteristics, values, and attributes that clarify what this particular brand is and is not” ("The Difference Between Marketing and Branding," 2011). Participants cited that Boards of Education would benefit from having a specific identify to establish a defined presence to community members. They further noted that once a brand had been created, Boards of Education would benefit from having this brand marketed to community members so the same consistent message is relayed. In doing so, Boards of Education create loyal consumers and advocates in community members. Marketing refers to actively promoting a service and pushing out a message. Respondents indicated that Boards of Education would benefit from actively promoting their schools’ mission or vision. As result, the mission or vision could be marketed as the BOE’s brand.

**Transparency and Communication**

Interviewees also indicated the BOE has poor communication with the community. They noted that BOE members need to be more visible, at more events, and more immersed in the community. Community member interviewees indicated that the community wants more outreach, transparency, and their voices heard despite the need for confidentiality on the BOE members’ part.

Maybe reach out more, them sending emails like, ‘Hey, if you have any concerns, here’s a link to get me,’ or whatever. ‘Let’s set up a meeting to talk.’ I really think
there should be more outreach. They’re very secretive, as far as I’m concerned. I think there should be more outreach…Let’s say they had to put together the budget and they knew that that was … That’s an annual thing, but maybe if they reached out and said, ‘What do you guys think about …’ ‘Where do you think the money should be going?’ At least get some input from the community other than, ‘Well, we have a budget vote so this is what we have and you get to vote on it.’ I know a lot of the budget comes from the superintendent...It would be nice to be part of a process, not the end. We hear things at the end when the decisions have already been made. Very rarely are we ... And I’m saying we collectively as the community are included in the decision process or even knowing what the options are until pretty much after the fact….We sat down and had all these closed-door meetings, here’s the results of these meetings, now you get to vote if you want to cast or not. The community’s really not really part of any of that decision making leading up to that… (Community Member interviewee #1)

Community member interviewees gave suggestions for ways in which the BOE could improve their communication with the public. Interviewees noted using podcasts, having more open forums where the public could provide input as well as live web-streaming of BOE meetings.

They have a once a month meeting that’s on the calendar. That’s pretty much how they communicate with us...There is a website. They do at every meeting, which sadly is poorly attended by the community, but they do encourage for anyone that has concerns  (Community Member interviewee #1)
I also know that there are things that they cannot speak to the public about, so if you’re not in their privy council, if you will, they can’t discuss certain things that are happening. They discuss it after the fact, but overall in terms of candor and being open, I don’t think that ... I think they could do a lot better with communication and getting stuff out. A lot of our parents feel that they’re not getting enough input or not being able to provide enough input into the decision process. (Community Member interviewee #1)

**Negative Stigma Serving on the BOE**

Another theme that emerged from data analysis was that there can be a negative stigma to serving on the BOE.

There’s definitely a stigma. The stigma has to do with being able to influence others and get things done because you are a board member as opposed to someone, let’s say, that didn’t participate in that setting. I think that’s kind of big. A lot of people try to utilize that ability to be in communication with many people simultaneously. I think it’s more of a negative than a positive. A positive would be if someone were willing to contribute their time as well, maybe not as a board member but a committee member, something like that, as opposed to asking for something.

(Community Member interviewee #1)

**Conclusion**

Interviews contributed to examining and responding to the study’s three research questions. Data obtained from interviews served to validate and corroborate information learned from the study’s surveys and focus groups. All data were triangulated with the
study’s three research instruments. Chapter Five will discuss the study’s summary and conclusions.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Five presents a summary and analysis of the findings of the research along with the eight themes that emerged from the study. In addition, implications for educators and limitations of the study are considered. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research as it relates to the study.

Summary of the Research

Using three research instruments, this study sought to examine Board of Education members’ motivation for membership, membership requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. Utilizing a qualitative research design, surveys, focus groups, and interviews were administered to both NYS BOE members and NYS community members. As a result of the data obtained and after careful data analysis, eight themes emerged. They are:

1. Positive impact on children
2. Influence and power
3. Democracy
4. Perceptions of why BOE members serve
5. Transparency and communication
6. Frustration over loss of local control
7. Branding and marketing BOE
8. Negative stigma serving on BOE

Review of the Findings Related to the Research Questions

Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this phenomenological study included a survey administered to NYS BOE and community members, interviews, and focus groups.
Data collected from the survey served to inform and guide focus group discussions and interview questions and examine the study’s three research questions:

RQ1: What motivates an individual for Board of Education (BOE) membership?

RQ2: To what extent and how do NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact BOE practices and functioning?

RQ3: To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

The three research questions were answered using the study’s three research instruments.

**Research Question One**

Research Question One sought to explore what motivated an individual to run for the Board of Education. Findings indicated that overwhelmingly, BOE members were motivated to serve on the Board of Education as a form of community service or a way to give back to their community. While BOE members recognized there was a level of power and influence associated with BOE membership, this research indicated altruistic intentions as the predominant motivation for BOE membership.

As a result of the data obtained, the themes of positive impact on children and power and influence emerged. 1. Positive impact on children was seen as a way to impact children’s education in a positive manner through programs and policies. 2. Power and influence developed as a result of the decision-making BOE members had over staffing and budgets.

**Research Question Two**

Research Question Two sought to examine how NYS BOE eligibility requirements impact the practices and functioning of the BOE. 3. Research indicated that regardless of
minimal eligibility requirements, respondents considered serving on the BOE one of the purest forms of democracy remaining in the United States. Despite indications that a balanced representation of skills and backgrounds were desired, respondents believed in the democratic process, in election procedures and following the law. Thus, democracy was established as a theme. While current eligibility requirements do not require lengthy specification criteria, respondents suggested that the limited requirements do impact the practice and functioning of the BOE. However, the finding did not conclude whether the impact was positive or negative or whether there was a need for a change.

Further analysis of data in examining Research Question 2 revealed the theme of perception of why BOE members serve. Respondents noted that the perception of why BOE members serve had a negative connotation. 4. They further implied that the perception of why BOE members serve had underpinnings of hidden personal agendas and selfish intentions. Respondents noted that while the tenets of democracy were the foundation of BOE members’ service, the perception of why BOE members serve was skewed to self-serving aspirations.

**Research Question Three**

Research Question Three sought to examine to what extent and how BOE members’ influenced education policy. Research findings indicated that BOE members have significant influence on education policy. While the range of influence varied from setting policy on a local level to frustration over federal policy infringing upon districts, influence was present.

Analysis of data investigating Research Question 3 revealed the themes of 5. transparency and communication, 6. frustration over loss of local control, 7. branding and marketing BOE, and 8. negative stigma serving on BOE. Respondents indicated they
desired greater transparency of BOE functioning from their respective Boards of Education. Respondents revealed they wanted candid, straightforward information from BOE members in regard to programs, policies, budget, and decision-making. In addition, respondents sought greater communication from BOE members whether through dialogue, conversations, or advanced uses of technology on the BOE’s part to keep community members informed.

Respondents noted frustration over the loss of local control as it related to education and education policy. Respondents revealed considerable frustration and disappointment with the state and federal government’s political and financial infringement upon NYS’s education system. Respondents indicated they believed their local school districts were losing control over programs and were discouraged by unfunded federal mandates. They further noted that the federal government was too far removed from local school districts to truly know their needs.

Branding and marketing were also identified as themes that emerged from examining Research Question Three. In conjunction with respondents’ desire to have greater communication, respondents suggested that Boards of Education needed to be branded and marketed. Respondents recommended Boards of Education brand their organization using a school district’s mission statement or vision and resulted in the market of the brand by exhibiting how the district fulfills or achieves its brand. This research suggested that in providing branding and marketing techniques, community members would feel greater transparency and communication from BOE members.

Lastly, examination of Research Question Three revealed a negative stigma related to serving on the BOE as a theme. While respondents indicated they believed BOE members serve with altruistic intentions of having a positive impact on children and for serving their
community, there is a negative stigma associated with serving on the BOE. Respondents indicated the negative stigma is linked to the misuse and misapplication of power and influence. Additionally, respondents cited that often serving on the BOE is perceived as a vehicle to political office. As such, virtuous intentions of serving one’s community were mired with suspicion and skepticism as perceived from community members.

**Discussion of the Literature**

The literature examined in Chapter Two and reviewed here supports change theory and the phenomenological approach of this research. The purpose of the study was to examine BOE members, their motivation for membership, eligibility requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. Upon examination of various methodologies, the researcher selected a phenomenological approach to the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) posited that researchers who use a phenomenological perspective attempt to understand the meaning of people’s behavior as it relates to events and interactions in particular situations. As previously noted, using a phenomenological approach emphasizes the subjective aspect of people’s behavior or experiences from the first person point of view. Therefore, “a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Additionally, the phenomenological approach “translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant” (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Hence, the researcher sought to have a broad and multi-layered view of BOE members and employed a phenomenological approach to the study.
The design utilized triangulation of survey, focus group, and interview data to investigate the study’s three research questions was an effective design in examining BOE members’ perceptions. By using the data obtained from surveys and then conducting focus groups and interviews; the researcher was able to probe deeply into the experiences and views of participants. Subsequently, the researcher was able to understand the lived experiences of participants and their interpretations of BOE members. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted “phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality (as cited in Greene, 1978). Reality, consequently is “socially constructed” (as cited in Berger & Luckemann, 1967). Therefore, this study was grounded in phenomenology examining Board of Education members’ motives, membership, and perceptions of influence on education policy.

For Boards of Education to have effective stewardship and governance, they need to work as communicative, cohesive groups to meet the needs of those they serve. The ability to put aside self-interests and serve unbiased is critical to a Board’s success. Consequently, for change and effective leadership to occur, an organization needs to establish shared understandings about their functioning and goals as they align with the organization’s mission (Leithwood et al., 2004). Goal-based theories of human motivation offer evidence of ‘leaders’ direction-setting practices’ (Leithwood et al., 2004. P. 23). Leithwood and colleagues also maintained “people are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling, as well as challenging but achievable. Having such goals helps people make sense of their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context” (2004, p. 24). The theme of having a positive impact on children and power
and influence identified in the study is supported by the literature on goal-based theories of human motivation.

An equally important trait of Board members is their ability to transform and adjust accordingly. To that end, “change theory or change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies and, in turn, getting results – but only in the hands (and minds, and hearts) of people who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of how the factors in question operate to get particular results” (Fullan, 2006, p. 3). Consequently, change theory was the theoretical foundation for this study.

Fullan studied change theory in education and he proposed that, “standards-based reform by itself does not address changing the setting in which people work” (Fullan, 2006, p. 4). For effective education reform to occur there needs to be tri-level engagement. Tri-level engagement refers to school and community, district, and state involvement. When this level of engagement occurs, it fosters “permeable connectivity” (Fullan, 2006, p. 11). He asserted that standards, assessments, curriculum, and professional development alone “are seriously incomplete theories of action because they do not get close to what happens in classrooms and school cultures” (Fullan, 2006, p. 4-5). In addition, he affirmed the need for capacity building, with a focus on results. He defined this as the “collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning which involves helping to develop individual and collective knowledge and competencies, resources, and motivation” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). Fullan concluded, “change knowledge is not a disembodied set of facts, but rather a deeply applied phenomenon in the minds of people. Moreover for this knowledge to have an impact it must be actively shared by many people engaged in using the knowledge” (2006, p. 13). Tri-level engagement supports the themes of transparency and
communication as identified by the study. Participants noted the desire to have a deeper understanding of BOE members and their decision-making power. They also indicated that by virtue of community members being able to articulate concerns and being listened to, BOE members would garner greater support thus transparency and communication are attained. As a result, the researcher’s themes are confirmed and supported by this theoretical foundation.

Motives and Power of School Boards

In an effort to investigate the influential association of School Boards and superintendents, Mountford (2004) conducted a qualitative study that examined the relationship of motivation and power with respect to school board membership and the dynamics between these members and the superintendent. The purpose of the study was to explore these concepts and to develop suggestions for board-training and healthier relationships among respective parties. Mountford’s (2004) study indicated that there was a relationship between how board members define power and the kind of motivation they had for service. Additionally, there were differences by gender between motivation and power. Male members had mixed results in that their motives were based on both altruism and power, while female members ran for the board based on altruistic and personal reasons. Additionally, female members had more specific reasons (child in school) to serve on board as compared to their male counterparts (Mountford, 2004).

Mountford (2004) concluded that the most significant finding of the study was a pattern between a board member’s perception of power and his or her motivation for running or being on the board. Mountford also noted that the pattern suggests that if a board member viewed power as *power over*, the board member had a more personal reason for membership.
Whereas on the contrary, if a board member viewed power as *power with*, the board member had more likely an altruistic motive for membership.

Mountford’s research is consistent with other research in that “half joined the board for predominantly personal reasons whereas half joined for an altruistic reason” (2004, p. 734). This study’s findings of power and influence as themes are supported by Mountford’s research. The current study did not identify specific differences of power and influence by gender or kinds of power and influence as Mountford asserts. However, the researcher’s findings on power and influence are corroborated by the study’s findings and add to the body of research.

**Membership Requirements of School Boards**

Frederick Hess authored a study in 2002 that prepared for the National School Boards Association entitled *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. Hess stated, “it appears that the public image of school boards and systems is informed largely by the conditions that prevail in the scant 2 percent of districts that enroll 25,000 or more students” (Hess, 2002, p. 3). In addition, findings from Hess’s (2002) report revealed several themes. Policy concerns on national, state and local levels were identified as a theme. Board service and preparation to address policy issues and govern wisely were also identified. In addition, profile of board members and the political process that governs school boards were noted (Hess, 2002). He concluded public perception about education is shaped by media coverage but the study suggested caution about generalizations (Hess, 2002).

Hess further noted that School Boards are “amateur and informal, featuring weak and inexperienced members” and in urban areas where there is mayoral governance, “they are pursued by candidates who lack much in the way of tools, resources, or organization” (Hess,
2008, p. 6). “New board members require socialization to the culture and character of the organization in which they will serve (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 11). In 2009, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) conducted a study of school boards and superintendents from 7,100 districts throughout the United States (Hess & Meeks, 2010). The study concluded that “ongoing training and learning is a must for new and veteran board members” (Hess & Meeks, 2010, p. 5).

Eligibility requirements were examined in this study. The researcher found that while there was a desire for mixed BOE representation, a need for membership attendance polices, the research did not indicate a need for BOE members’ ongoing training. While the study addressed aspects of BOE member credentials, it did not clearly define set characteristics of BOE member candidates. Rather, the study highlighted that the election of BOE members was one of the purest forms of democracy in the United States and therefore, specific criteria were not warranted.

Additionally discussed in the literature review, public perception of education is shaped by the largest 2% of school districts. Public perception is also skewed by how the media presents information. This literature review lends support to the study’s themes of democracy, perceptions of why BOE members serve, community members’ frustration over loss of local control, and negative stigma associated with serving on the BOE.

**School Boards and Influence on Education**

In 2003, a study was conducted by Learning First Alliance to examine student achievement, how districts promote good instruction (measurable goals/accountability systems in place) and what strategies guided district reform efforts.
Togneri and Anderson (2003) drew several findings from their study that could help guide school districts and Boards of Education with the decision and policy-making process. Through the combined efforts of stakeholders that included Board of Education members and superintendents they noted that “districts that had the courage to acknowledge poor performance” and had “the will to seek solutions” had greater student achievement (p. 9). They found that a district’s system-wide approach to improving instruction was also a factor in improving student achievement and that teacher support from Board members was essential to attaining this future success. Togneri and Anderson stated that districts having mission statements that were clearly defined and followed and “made decisions based on data, not instinct” were largely more successful (p. 13). They also noted that “school boards who shepherded instructional improvement efforts” in that they had the “courage” to “jump-start reform efforts” made gains in student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 7). “School boards did not simply galvanize change; they followed through by promulgating policies that supported instructional improvement” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 7). They noted that while Boards of Education held staff, in particular the superintendent accountable, they did not engage in the day-to-day administration of reforms.

As noted in the above literature review, setting policy is a fundamental principle of Boards of Education. While the research from the study supports the concept that setting policy is a charge of BOE members, it did not emerge as a theme. However, the above literature cited that Boards of Education that had a clearly defined mission statement were largely more successful. As such, these data support the study’s findings of the need for BOE members to brand and market their board. The findings of this study suggest that BOE
members who brand their district mission or vision and then market the mission have greater community support and buy-in of the BOE and its members.

**Democracy, Governance, and School Boards**

Research indicated that local school boards that have a stated vision, commitment to strong governance and resources to make data-based decisions can impact children’s lives (Hess & Meeks, 2010, p. 5). This literature review directly supports the researcher’s theme of having a positive impact on children. In addition, it supports the theme of branding and marketing as the researcher’s finding specifically cites Boards of Education would benefit from using their stated vision to brand their Board.

School Board service has been viewed as the representation of the purest form of democracy in that most members are not paid, represent all different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and are elected by the community they serve. “Democracy, arguably in its most ideal sense, champions a presupposed equality of persons” (Meroe, 2014, p. 485). As such the democratic process “holds greater potential for encouraging and supporting human development through the practice of freedom, self-determination and moral autonomy” (Meroe, 2014, p. 488). “School Boards are changing and reinventing their practices to move beyond an oversight role to one of shared leadership with the superintendent” (Hess, 2010, p. 4). They are a critical link between the school administration and community and embody “the possibility that public engagement with school issues can result in reasoned judgements acceptable to all citizens” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 22). This literature review directly supports the study’s themes of democracy, and transparency and communication.
In 2009, Abe Feuerstein examined school board ethics, effectiveness, and school board governance in the state of Pennsylvania. Feuerstein defined effectiveness using six areas of board competency. They included what Jackson and Holland (1998) noted as “decision making, the ability to function as a group, the ability to exercise authority, connecting with community, working toward board improvement, and acting strategically” (as cited in Feuerstein, 2009, p. 12). Feuerstein noted that despite trends of increasing state and federal influence in education, school boards are still valued by the public because they represent the promise of democratic governance (Feuerstein, 2009). As outlined in the above literature review, this examination again supports the study’s theme of democracy in that community members (the public) believe in the democratic process.

Segal (2004) noted “effective governance, it is believed, is necessary for school improvement, yet examples of good governance rarely garners as much attention as do issues such as board member misconduct, nepotism, and overall board corruption (as cited in Feuerstein, 2009, p. 9). Interestingly, “many of the supposed frailties of boards aren’t caused by democratic governance but by the anachronistic structure of the school district itself” (Hess, 2010, p. 18). “There exists in the world no scientifically validated best model of governance; there exists only arrangements that work better or worse for certain purposes, in certain contexts, and at certain times” (Hess, 2010, p. 17). “While governing schools through locally elected school boards may continue to embody our nation’s democratic aspirations, the reality is that school autonomy has been largely stripped away over the last 30 years. Without an explicit focus on reinvigorating democracy in local communities, the day may soon come when School Boards simply become relics of the past” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 23).
This aspect of the literature alludes to disenchantment of the loss of local control. However, it does not directly support the researcher’s theme of frustration over loss of local control.

According to Kirst (2008), “The publics views school boards as the governance mechanism to keep schools close to the people and to avoid excessive control by professional educators or state authorities” (Feuerstein, 2009, p. 5). School boards are seen as the vehicle through which a state is able to implement its educational policies. Yet Feuerstein (2009) concluded that school board governance goals are significantly impacted by state and federal government policies. While Feuerstein’s study alluded to increased state and federal influence in education, it does not directly support the theme of frustration over loss of local control as is evident in the researcher’s study. Feuerstein indicated an impending loss of local control; however, his research did not indicate whether it was deemed positive or negative. Since Feuerstein’s research was conducted in 2009 and the effects of RTTT and CCSS had not been in full effect nor fully experienced by local school districts, this could warrant his findings as compared to the researcher’s conclusions.

**Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Four areas of trustworthiness were applied to the study. The development of surveys, questions for focus groups and interviews served to establish transferability. Transferability also was addressed with the use of a developed and piloted instrument. Thick description was used to describe research techniques and data analysis so as to ensure transferability for future research.

Credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. As a result, this study used random sampling and triangulation with the use of surveys, focus groups and interviews. Triangulation can provide multiple ways to view and examine the
data and can illuminate blind spots in interpretative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Background credentials of the researcher, member checking, and peer scrutiny were also employed to ensure credibility.

Dependability was addressed through the use of a reflexive journal and external auditing of data gathering. “Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others” (Research methods knowledge,” 2014). A confirmability was addressed through external auditing to foster accuracy as well as provide opportunities to assess and challenge the researcher’s study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability audit was completed by an examiner who has conducted research in qualitative research and phenomenology. The researcher’s biases as an educator, parent, former employee, and Board of Education member were examined closely through triangulation of interviews, surveys, and focus groups as well as from independent audits of data (see Appendix O) and the researcher’s reflexive journal. External audits involve having a researcher not involved in the research process examine both the process and product of the research study. The purpose is to evaluate the accuracy and evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data. As a result, confirmability was pursued.

**Implications for Education**

The researcher is both an educator and a BOE member. While conducting the research, examining notes cited in the reflexive journal, and reflecting on statements made by the study’s participants, it is noted that teachers were unaware of the functioning and role of the Board of Education. Given the power and influence the Board of Education can have on a school district in terms of goals, policy and programs, the researcher suggests greater
exposure in teacher preparatory programs and professional development of the role of the Board of Education.

In addition, it is noted that professional development on the part of all stakeholders could have a more positive impact as it relates to communication and a deeper understanding of each respective groups’ role in education. In particular, “PD related to the importance of ethical practice might prove more beneficial in changing board member behavior than pronouncements in the form of policy” (Fueurstein, 2009, p. 21). Improving communication and ethical practice not only improves the reputation of the board but also can directly impact the culture and morale of a school district. Appealing to various units to keep them informed demonstrates communication. It also shows representation and a cohesive framework for working together.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study sought to examine Board of Education members’ motivation for membership, membership requirements, and perceptions of influence on education policy. While the three research questions were answered and supported by the three research instruments designed for the study, listed below are recommendations for future research.

The study only included NYS BOE members who had a paid membership with NYSSBA and who volunteered to participate. As a result, NYS BOE members who either chose not to affiliate with NYSSBA, or were restricted due to financial constraints, or chose not to participate were excluded from the study. As a result, possible data were excluded from the study.

The researcher analyzed data from both NYS BOE members and community members. However, the data were not compared against each other. Future research may
include a comparison of groups. Additionally, teachers and superintendents were not directly involved in the study. Garnering information from these groups could help to better answer the study’s research questions.

The study was conducted strictly in NYS. Future studies could take a more comprehensive approach and expand on a national level in the United States using members who associate with the National School Boards Association (NSBA). In doing so, the study would provide a wider lens and offer a broader view of school boards throughout the nation.

Using a comparison of neighboring states and the way in which the Boards of Education function would also serve to inform the study. In particular, it is noted that in the state of Connecticut, BOE members are affiliated with their local town government. This is in contrast to NYS where if potential candidates meet the eligibility requirements, they can run for the BOE and have no political ties to the town government.

Lastly, future research could consist of a case study framework where individual Boards of Education are studied using the same three research questions as the ones examined here. The case study model could result in different themes or conclusions after data analysis.
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Appendix A: Board of Education Members Survey
Board of Education Member Survey

Q1: Electronic Consent: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that: you have read the above information * you voluntarily agree to participate * you are at least 18 years of age. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the “disagree” button.
   ___ Agree
   ___ Disagree

Q2: Are you male or female?
   ___ Male
   ___ Female

Q3: What is your age?
   ___ 18 to 24
   ___ 25 to 34
   ___ 35 to 44
   ___ 45 to 54
   ___ 55 to 64
   ___ 65 to 74
   ___ 75 or older

Q4: How many children that live in your household attend the public schools in your school district?
   ___ None
   ___ 1
   ___ 2
   ___ 3
   ___ 4 or more

Q5: What is the highest level of education you have completed?
___ Less than high school degree
___ High school degree or equivalent (e.g.: GED)
___ Some college but no degree
___ Associate’s degree
___ Bachelor’s degree
___ Graduate degree
___ Doctoral degree

Q6: In what type of community do you live?
___ City or urban community
___ Suburban community
___ Rural

Q7: What household income best describes household income in your school district?
___ $0 - $24,999
___ $25,000 - $49,999
___ $50,000 - $74,999
___ $75,000 - $99,999
___ $100,000 - $124,999
___ $125,000 - $149,999
___ $150,000 – $174,999
___ $175,000 - $199,999
___ $200,000 and up

Q8: The primary reasons BOE members are: (Check all that apply)
___ Betterment of education
___ Personal agenda
Q9: How many years have you served on the BOE?

Q10: What are your perceptions of the primary reasons other BOE members serve are: (Check all that apply)
___ Betterment of education
___ Personal agenda
___ Power
___ Influence
___ Serve community

Q11: BOE members represent my community’s views and values on education.
___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ____________________________________________

Q12: BOE members have acknowledged their responsibility for an ill-advised or ill-timed decision.
___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
Q13: Qualifications to become a BOE member in my school district are selective and rigorous for the job it entails.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ________________________________________________

Q14: BOE members are qualified to make sound, educational decisions.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ________________________________________________
Q15: BOE members should be paid to a stipend for their service.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q16: The BOE is comprised of members who are informed about education and education policy.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q17: Please respond yes, no or I don’t know/not sure to the following- The role and responsibility of a BOE member is to:

___ Establish school policy
___ Hire the superintendent
___ Negotiate salaries/contracts
Q18: The BOE are education leaders in my community.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________

Q19: BOE members participate in important decisions about school programs/policies.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________

Q20: BOE members seek citizens’ viewpoints/suggestions for resolutions to school needs.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
Q21: BOE members take regular steps to stay informed about significant educational issues that might affect school districts.

__ I don’t know
__ Somewhat disagree
__ Disagree
__ Strongly disagree
Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q22: I am confident in the BOE members’ ability to influence and lead my school district into the future.

__ Strongly agree
__ Agree
__ Somewhat agree
__ I don’t know
__ Somewhat disagree
__ Disagree
__ Strongly disagree
Comments: __________________________________________________________
Q23: BOE members are effective at changing policy on a local level.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ______________________________________________________

Q24: The BOE is influenced by the Governor’s Office.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ______________________________________________________

Q25: The BOE is influenced by the NYS Board of Regents.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
____ Strongly disagree

Comments: ___________________________________________________________

Q26: Kindly fill in the information below.

Name

Company

Address

City/Town

State

Zip Code

Email

Phone
Appendix B: Community Survey
Community Member Survey

Q1: Electronic Consent: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that: you have read the above information * you voluntarily agree to participate * you are at least 18 years of age. If do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the “disagree” button.

___ Agree
___ Disagree

Q2: Are you male or female?

___ Male
___ Female

Q3: What is your age?

___ 18 to 24
___ 25 to 34
___ 35 to 44
___ 45 to 54
___ 55 to 64
___ 65 to 74
___ 75 or older

Q4: How many children that live in your household attend the public schools in your school district?

___ None
___ 1
___ 2
___ 3
___ 4 or more
Q5: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

___ Less than high school degree
___ High school degree or equivalent (e.g.: GED)
___ Some college but no degree
___ Associate’s degree
___ Bachelor’s degree
___ Graduate degree
___ Doctoral degree

Q6: In what type of community do you live?

___ City or urban community
___ Suburban community
___ Rural

Q7: What household income best describes household income in your school district?

___ $0 - $24,999
___ $25,000 - $49,999
___ $50,000 - $74,999
___ $75,000 - $99,999
___ $100,000 - $124,999
___ $125,000 - $149,999
___ $150,000 – $174,999
___ $175,000 - $199,999
___ $200,000 and up

Q8: The primary reasons BOE members are: (Check all that apply)
Betterment of education

Personal agenda

Power

Influence

Serve Community

Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q9: BOE members represent my community’s views and values on education.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q10: BOE members have acknowledged their responsibility for an ill-advised or ill-timed decision.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________________________
Q11: Qualifications to become a BOE member in my school district are selective and rigorous for the job it entails.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ________________________________

Q12: BOE members are qualified to make sound, educational decisions.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ________________________________

Q13: BOE members should be paid to a stipend for their service.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
Q14: The BOE is comprised of members who are informed about education and education policy.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: __________________________________________________________

Q15: Please respond yes, no or I don’t know/not sure to the following- The role and responsibility of a BOE member is to:

___ Establish school policy
___ Hire the superintendent
___ Negotiate salaries/contracts
___ Oversee curriculum and initiatives
___ Keep taxes down
___ Follow NYS Education Department recommendations

Q16: The BOE are education leaders in my community.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
Q17: BOE members participate in important decisions about school programs/policies.

___ Somewhat disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ______________________________________________________

Q18: BOE members seek citizens’ viewpoints/suggestions for resolutions to school needs.

___ Strongly agree

___ Agree

___ Somewhat agree

___ I don’t know

___ Somewhat disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ______________________________________________________

Q19: BOE members take regular steps to stay informed about significant educational issues that might affect school districts.

___ Somewhat disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ______________________________________________________
Q20: I am confident in the BOE members’ ability to influence and lead my school district into the future.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree
Comments: ______________________________________________________

Q21: BOE members are effective at changing policy on a local level.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ______________________________________________________
Comments: ____________________________________________________________

Q22: The BOE is influenced by the Governor’s Office.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ____________________________________________________________

Q23: The BOE is influenced by the NYS Board of Regents.

___ Strongly agree
___ Agree
___ Somewhat agree
___ I don’t know
___ Somewhat disagree
___ Disagree
___ Strongly disagree

Comments: ____________________________________________________________

Q24: Kindly fill in the information below.

Name

Company

Address
Appendix C: Focus Group Questions
Focus Group Questions:

1. (R1) Survey results indicated that while BOE members serve was to have positive impact on children, the perception was BOE members serve for influence and power. Describe what betterment positive impact on children means…what does it look like?
   - What do you think influence refers to? What kind of influence?
   - What do you think power refers to? What kind? Power over? Power to?

2. (R3) Why is the perception of why BOE members serve (influence and power) different than why BOE members actually serve (betterment of education)…
   - Why do you think there is a discrepancy between reality and the perception?
   - How do we bring this closer to reality? How do we amend the perceptions people have of the BOE in terms of why they serve and the perceived influence they have?
   - What do we need to do/Is it necessary to change the perception?
   - Are they benefits to changing the perception?
   - How does this play out in school setting?

3. (R2) Talk to me about the qualifications of becoming a NYS BOE member…
   - What are your thoughts on the process?
   - Is it necessary to change qualifications and/or BOE member requirements?
   - How would changes in requirements impact schools?
   - How do current qualifications impact BOEs?

4. (R3) Survey results indicated a level of frustration on the loss of local control..too much government control
   - What are your thoughts on the matter? Do you agree? Disagree?
   - How is federal government impacting your district?
   - Should the federal government be involved?
Appendix D: Email Survey Request from NYSSBA on Behalf of Researcher
As stated in an email blast to NSSYBA members:

“Would you like to help a fellow board member? Jennifer Eraca is a member of the Arlington Central School District in Dutchess County. She is also a doctoral at Western Connecticut State University who is researching the factors that motivated current board members to become members of their boards, eligibility requirements and the perceptions of school board members’ influence on education policy. To help conduct her research, she is asking all school board members across the state to complete the following survey [link here]. All data will be reported in the aggregate and will be anonymous. Data collected from the survey will serve to inform and guide focus group discussions and interview questions to learn how to improve school board functioning. Thank you for your help.”
Appendix E: Focus Group Consent Form
WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Participant Assent Form for Research Study

Research Study: Board of Education Members: A Study of Motives, Membership, and Influence on Education
Researcher Name: Jennifer Eraca

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM: Adult Participation in a Focus Group

What is the Research?
You have been asked to take part in a research study about perceptions of the Board of Education (BOE).
The purpose of this study is to find out about Board of Education and community members’ perceptions about
BOE motives, membership, and influence on education.

Voluntary Participation
This discussion is voluntary—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If any questions make you
feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

Privacy
Your privacy will be protected. Your name will not be used in any report that is published. The discussion will
be kept strictly confidential. Auditors, Advisors or Institutional Review Board Members that oversee research
may see research records to make sure that the researchers have followed regulatory requirements. All research
data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and the tapes will be destroyed after the talk has been studied.

Audiotape Permission
I have been told that the discussion will be tape recorded only if all participants agree. I have been told that I
can state that I don’t want the discussion to be taped and it will not be. I can ask that the tape be turned off at
any time.
I agree to be audio taped ___Yes ___No

Questions
I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this evaluation. If I have any additional
questions about the evaluation, I may call Dr. Karen Burke at 203-837-8879. If I have any questions about my
rights as a research subject, I may contact WCSU IRB@wcsu.edu. I have received (or will receive) a
copy of this form.

Please write your name below and check yes or no. If you want to take part Sign your name at the bottom.

____________________
NAME

_____ Yes, I would like to take part in the focus group.
_____ No, I would not like to participate in the focus group.

SIGNATURE DATE

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Appendix F: Interview Consent Form
Research Study: Board of Education Members: A Study of Motives, Membership, and Influence on Education
Researcher Name: Jennifer Eraca

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM: Adult Participation in Interview

What is the Research?
You have been asked to take part in a research study about perceptions of the Board of Education (BOE). The purpose of this study is to find out about Board of Education and community members’ perceptions about BOE motives, membership, and influence on education.

Voluntary Participation
This discussion is voluntary—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

Privacy
Your privacy will be protected. Your name will not be used in any report that is published. The discussion will be kept strictly confidential. Auditors, Advisors or Institutional Review Board Members that oversee research may see research records to make sure that the researchers have followed regulatory requirements. All research data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and the tapes will be destroyed after the talk has been studied.

Audiotape Permission
I have been told that the discussion will be tape recorded only if all participants agree. I have been told that I can state that I don’t want the discussion to be taped and it will not be. I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.
I agree to be audio taped ___Yes ___No

Questions
I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this evaluation. If I have any additional questions about the evaluation, I may call Dr. Karen Burke at 203-837-8879. If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact WCSU at IRB@wcsu.edu. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Please write your name below and check yes or no. If you want to take part Sign your name at the bottom.

________________________
NAME

______ Yes, I would like to take part in the interview.

______ No, I would not like to participate in the interview.

SIGNATURE________________________
DATE
Appendix G: Open-ended Survey Codes
Below are survey open-ended codes with frequency amount. The frequency amount refers to the amount of times the code presented itself in the data. These codes were then condensed, collapsed and eliminated due to repetition and redundancy.

**Survey Open-Ended Code and Frequency Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>better decision making as a group</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE not accountable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring life experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broad reasons serve</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control taxes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiscal responsibility</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow government regulations/laws</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow the money</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inconsistent decision making</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence/control</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informed BOE member</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaded</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joint responsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn BOE role on the job</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>losing local control</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lucky-no personal agenda</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimal qualifications</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimal/no training-unaware of role as BOE member</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oversight</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent interest in achievement not learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal agenda</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive impact on children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive influence/role model</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power/influence/control over other BOE members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem solver/damage control</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questionable leadership/accountability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>super and admin have true educational experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too much government control</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vested</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below is the frequency of codes from this instrument and how they support the study’s themes.

*Survey Open-Ended Theme and Frequency Table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact on Children</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and Influence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of Why BOE Members Serve</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration Over Loss Over Local Control</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and Communication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stigma Serving on BOE</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Board of Education Member Focus Group Codes
Below are BOE Member Focus Group codes with frequency amount. The frequency amount refers to the amount of times the code presented itself in the data. These codes were then condensed, collapsed and eliminated due to repetition and redundancy.

**BOE Member Focus Group Code and Frequency Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>access to information for decision making</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apathetic community members-several attempts at</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicating to public-come out on hot items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back to school night-successful way of</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicating to community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better decision making as a group</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE as ambassador to broadly inform</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE critical role in influencing ed/finances/leadership</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE held accountable for federal regs that local communities don't agree with</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE member represents community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members see big picture-broader view of district's needs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE power is in looking at big picture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE represents what the community wants</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring life experience</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcast meetings/forums online-effective use of community</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about kids/#1 priority</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service/impact</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribution- different point of view</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control over who works in district/curriculum/delivery model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control taxes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diffuse perceptions of power and influence by acting as a whole</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't deal with day to day operations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ramapo-overthrow of BOE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erosion of local control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal government dropped communities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal mandates create hardships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiscal responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow government regulations/laws</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow protocols</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important-hire superintendent/set policy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence on education/leader/programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaded</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn BOE role on the job</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>losing local control</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misperception of BOE power</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need mixed BOE representation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no need to change requirements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no common sense funding from fed. govt for sped/esl-out of touch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not in it for power/recognition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not powerful in some aspects</td>
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<tr>
<td>personal agenda</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive impact on children</td>
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<tr>
<td>positive influence/role model</td>
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<tr>
<td>powerful</td>
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<tr>
<td>powerful decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>public perception changes when public understands facts/how BOE works</td>
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<tr>
<td>put up with fed. reg if money matched sacrifice</td>
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<tr>
<td>school alerts effective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school is greatest community identifier-belong to many churches but all worship the property value</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set policy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>split voting-power issues among board members</td>
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<tr>
<td>superintendent's recommendation is doing what Board is asking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tax cap creates limitations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers a part of making kids priority- BOE looks at what's best for kids</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tough to keep community informed</td>
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<tr>
<td>video on demand/Skype</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Below are the frequency of codes from this instrument and how they support the study’s themes.

**BOE Member Focus Group Theme and Frequency Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact on Children</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and Influence</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of Why BOE Members Serve</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustration Over Loss Over Local Control</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stigma Serving on BOE</td>
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</table>
Appendix I: Community Focus Group Codes
Below are Community Member Focus Group codes with frequency amount. The frequency amount refers to the amount of times the code presented itself in the data. These codes were then condensed, collapsed and eliminated due to repetition and redundancy and helped shape BOE and Community member interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Member Focus Group Code and Frequency Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apathetic community members-several attempts at communicating to public-come out on hot items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better decision making as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE have significant political leverage to make decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE makes decisions like judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members lack political savvy to manipulate position gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members see big picture-broader view of district's needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE needs to be branded to sell ideas to community</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE platform or foundation to political career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE powerful has a whole not individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOEs suffer due to lack of education experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>branding-who's selling it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcast meetings/forums online-effective use of community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service/impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confuse decision making with problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>consultant in specialized area advising BOE outside of school employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defer to administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult to normalize education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-facto remain impartial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-facto-no voting rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fed govt underutilized in school district due to superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal govt infringement forces communities to respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal government’s intrusion is political orchestration on to dismantle teachers' union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt cares about children-just misguided and ill advised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- federal govt disenfranchising local communities 2
- federal govt does not care about children/nor local level communities 1
- federal govt wants to normalize education 2
- federal mandates create hardships 3
- follow government regulations/laws 1
- follow protocols 3
- how BOE announce actions/demonstrate 4
- imperative to have educators on BOE 1
- influence on education/leader/programs 3
- Influence/control 2
- interpret info to convince large group of people 2
- learn BOE role on the job 1
- listen to all sides 2
- losing autonomy to govt; communities need to fight back 2
- losing local control 3
- marketing-what selling 2
- media and marketing 5
- minimal qualifications 1
- need mixed BOE representation 3
- no admin or teachers to influence one groups' ideas 2
- no federal govt in local schools-too far removed 2
- oversight 1
- personal agenda 1
- powerful as individual in the way they vote 1
- reportive vs creative info 1
- set policy 1
- setting policy very powerful-impacts 1
- stigma to serve in public office 2
- teachers unions and districts can work together 3
- too much policy development on BOE's part 1

| Community Member Focus Group Code and Frequency Table |
|----------------|----------------|
| THEME                        | FREQUENCY |
| Positive Impact on Children   | 4          |
| Power and Influence           | 20         |
| Democracy                     | 25         |
| Perception of Why BOE Members Serve | 5          |
| Frustration Over Loss Over Local Control | 16         |
| Transparency and Communication| 29         |
| Branding and Marketing        | 20         |
| Negative Stigma Serving on BOE | 2          |
Appendix J: BOE Interview Questions
BOE Member Interview Questions

- **What motivates an individual for BOE membership?**
  1. What motivated you to run for the BOE?
  2. Is there a stigma associated with serving on the BOE?
  3. What has your experience been like as a BOE member?
  4. What have you learned about yourself having been on the board?
  5. What have you learned about education?
  6. Do you feel as a BOE member you have influenced education? If yes, how? If no, why?
  7. How many terms have your served?
  8. Why have you continued to run for more than one term?
  9. What has been the most difficult problem you has a BOE member has faced?
 10. What has been the most rewarding experience on the BOE?

- **To what extend and how do the NYS eligibility requirements for Board members impact BOE practices and functioning?**
  11. What do you wish you could change about BOE membership?
  12. What do you think of the eligibility requirements?
  13. My research has indicated that by and large most people do not feel there is a need to change the eligibility requirement for BOE members. That serving was the “purest form of democracy” and as such BOE members represent the communities they serve. Currently, requirements for NYS BOE members are: candidates need to be 18 years or older, a resident of the community, not employed by the District they serve and need to be able to read and write. Interestingly BOE members can be convicted
felons. I checked with NYSSBA and confirmed this. They can serve if they were pardoned, if they served their entire term of conviction or if the conviction was overturned. What are your thoughts on this? Does it impact your opinion?

14. My research also indicated that several people wanted to have a balanced representation of skills, in particular, they wanted members who were in the education field. Respondents suggested that by having no educators on the BOE, it hurt them. That it was imperative. What are your thoughts on that?

15. Some even suggested rather than educators on the Board but rather an ex facto representative, one who is an expert in the field but has no voting rights just advises. Thoughts?

➢ To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

16. My research indicated that there is great frustration over the federal government’s impact on local BOE function. The research indicated that respondents felt that the federal government wants to normalize education and as a result we are losing- there is an erosion local control…that the federal government is impacting community trust on BOE. What are your thoughts on this?

17. 61% BOE survey respondents indicated that it was not their role or responsibility to follow NYSED recommendations versus 83% of community members surveyed felt that BOE’s role and responsibilities was to follow NYSED recommendations. Why do you think there is such a discrepancy?
18. Respondents also felt that federal government mandates influences and creates hardships….that it disenfranchises communities…however, as a result, it forces community to respond (seen as a positive-collective unity) ..What are your thoughts on this?
Appendix K: Community Member Interview Questions
Community Member Interview Questions

➢ **What motivates an individual for BOE membership?**

1. What do you think motivates people to run for the BOE?
2. Is there a stigma associated with serving on the BOE?
3. Do you feel BOE members influence education? If yes, how? If no, why?
4. What do you think is the most difficult problem a BOE member deals with?
5. What do you think is the most rewarding experience about the BOE?

➢ **To what extend and how do the NYS eligibility requirements for Board members impact BOE practices and functioning?**

6. What do you wish you could change about BOE membership?
7. What do you know about the eligibility requirements?
   
   7a. What do you think of eligibility requirements?
8. My research has indicated that by and large most people do not feel there is a need to change the eligibility requirement for BOE members. That serving was the “purest form of democracy” and as such BOE members represent the communities they serve. Currently, requirements for NYS BOE members are: candidates need to be 18 years or older, a resident of the community, not employed by the District they serve and need to be able to read and write. Interestingly BOE members can be convicted felons. I checked with NYSSBA and confirmed this. They can serve if they were pardoned, if they served their entire term of conviction or if the conviction was overturned. What are your thoughts on this? Does it impact your opinion?
9. My research also indicated that several people wanted to have a balanced representation of skills, in particular, they wanted members who were in the
education field. Respondents suggested that by having no educators on the BOE, it hurt them. That it was imperative. What are your thoughts on that?

10. Some even suggested rather than educators on the Board but rather an ex facto representative, one who is an expert in the field but has no voting rights just advises. Thoughts?

➢ **To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?**

11. My research indicated that there is great frustration over the federal government’s impact on local BOE function. The research indicated that respondents felt that the federal government wants to normalize education and as a result we are losing local control- there is an erosion of local control which in turn feels as if the federal government is impacting community trust on BOE. What are your thoughts on this?

12. Respondents also felt that federal government mandates influences and creates hardships for local Board of Educations….that it disenfranchises communities…however, as a result, it forces community to respond (seen as a positive-collective unity) .What are your thoughts on this?

13. My research also indicated that several people wanted to have a balanced representation of skills, in particular, they wanted members who were in the education field. Respondents suggested that by having no educators on the BOE, it hurt them. That it was imperative. What are your thoughts on that?
14. Some even suggested rather than educators on the Board but rather an ex facto representative, one who is an expert in the field but has no voting rights just advises. Thoughts?

➢ To what extent and how do BOE members’ influence education policy?

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16. 61% BOE survey respondents indicated that it was not their role or responsibility to follow NYSED recommendations versus 83% of community members surveyed felt that BOE’s role and responsibilities was to follow NYSED recommendations. Why do you think there is such a discrepancy?

17. Respondents also felt that federal government mandates influences and creates hardships….that it disenfranchises communities…however, as a result, it forces community to respond (seen as a positive-collective unity) ..What are your thoughts on this?
Appendix L: BOE Interview Codes
Below are the open-ended codes that presented itself in the BOE Member interview data.

1. adjustment to being on BOE
2. anyone can serve
3. BOE as ambassador to broadly inform
4. BOE member best example of politician- no personal gain
5. member better politician- no party/no pork
6. BOE member connect with people
7. BOE member know more about state house than classroom functions
8. members see big picture-broader view of district's needs
9. BOE represents what the community wants
10. BOE role hire and evaluate superintendent
11. BOE members are politicians
12. change takes time
13. relationship between state and community
14. commitment
15. commitment to community
16. community pride
17. community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE
18. confidence in students
19. disappointment doesn't have to make you unhappy
20. effort
21. employee discipline challenging
22. erosion of local control
23. fed govt good intentions but unfunded mandates
24. fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE
25. fed govt infringement forces communities to respond
26. federal govt cares about children-just misguided and ill advised
27. federal govt disenfranchising local communities
28. federal mandates create hardships
29. follow government regulations/laws
30. government impact often imposes their incompetent leadership upon local municipalities
31. IDEA unfunded-creates division among community take from one area to give to another
32. influence on education/leader/programs
33. learned patience as BOE member
34. impact on family
35. likes personal impact having on BOE
36. BOE making decisions at arm's length
37. membership is about citizenship
38. misperception of BOE power
39. no need for balanced representation on BOE
40. need for ex facto
41. no need to change requirements
42. no students on BOE-window dressing
43. not in classrooms a lot
44. just about kids- ultimately to have educated populous
45. NYS impacted by special interest attorneys not seen in other parts of country
46. ok with current qualifications
47. oversight
48. positive experience as BOE member
49. powerful
50. powerful as individual in the way they vote
51. powerful decision making
52. protection/pride/satisfaction
53. education is public benefit
54. public takes change very personal
55. form of democracy
56. rewarding- handing out diplomas
57. satisfaction in knowing students have done well because of choices BOE made
58. greatest shame of nation-still unfunded
59. serve community
60. service easier when retired
61. service impacts your personal life/career
62. service is time consuming
63. setting policy very powerful-impacts
64. sometimes unqualified candidate
65. state and community are separate
66. state wants accountability from schools; not accountable to students
67. stigma to serve in public office
68. teachers are uninformed about BOE functioning yet greatly impacts them
69. time and energy
70. time commitment
71. too many qualifications dilutes democracy of BOE
72. unfunded mandates pit community members against each other
73. vested
74. motivated to run by concern over taxes
75. learned quickly how things work/protocols for way BOE works
76. so long-25 years- initial motivation was taxes
77. motivated to serve- had young kids
78. got on BOE - no one liked incumbent
79. campaigned against incumbent-called voters
80. prior to BOE tenure-attended a few meetings
81. spoke with superintendent-before tenure about concerns
82. concern over teacher salaries
83. superintendent said make a good BOE member
84. unclear if good BOE member
85. more curious about teacher salary as compared to personal job
86. attended budget hearing- asked about teacher salaries
87. no stigma to serving on BOE
88. perception is serving on BOE is thankless
89. feels if thinks it is thankless-serving for wrong reasons
90. obligation to stay -support superintendent when there is turnover
91. fair to new superintendent if BOE has huge turnover
92. serve to maintain and support district
93. serve to maintain and support superintendent
94. care for district
95. obligation to stay -support superintendent when there is turnover
new BOE member the board is not thrilled with
tolerate new BOE member
longer than 3 years term is prison sentence esp if the BOE does not gel
apathetic community members- several attempts at communicating to public-come out on hot items
apathetic voters-in terms of long standing BOE members-think they will just win
no fun being BOE president
served as BOE several times-years
BOE president-figurehead-spokesperson
BOE president not a fun place to sit-esp in times of controversy
other BOE members not stupid- no one wants BOE pres job
BOE blamed for things they are not directly in control of
learned objectivity
learned turning off irrational talk and really trying to hear what is at heart of people's concern
good at consensus building
imperative to listen to public
imperative to allow public to vent concerns
can't take verbal assaults personal
new superintendents rely on BOE for direction more
seasoned superintendent did not need the guidance and feedback as new superintendents
lost presidency felt bothered
BOE peers felt impact from change in presidency-felt adversely affected district's budget
serving on BOE is rewarding
better listener
better person from overall experience
learn tremendous amount about education being of BOE
learn regulations and laws
learn acronyms and vocabulary
learn about programs new curriculum
public perception is BOE has power
reality is BOE does not have a lot of power
follow federal regulations
BOE follows policies established contracts negotiated regulations put into law
BOE has influence despite not a lot of control
set budget
programs or eliminate programs
most difficult thing suicide
most difficult being personally attacked
most difficult thing is sue held libel name on court proceedings
difficult thing 3020a
most difficult thing effecting someone's livelihood
most rewarding thing handing my son his diploma
most rewarding thing - long term pride legacy of impact
most rewarding thing students graduating
139. most rewarding thing programs working
140. need cross section of population on BOE
141. need people without children on BOE
142. need literate people on BOE
143. believer in ruler of law
144. guidelines come from Supreme Court-follow rules for membership
145. no sex offenders on BOE
146. if age is 18 and 32 might need to reconsider sex offender label and allow on BOE
147. sure if for or against sex offender-too many variables
148. do feel BOE is purest form of democracy
149. good teacher knows what other teacher should be doing
150. good teachers on board have positive impact on BOE
151. balanced representation but not requirement
152. public can hurt BOE members livelihood if not happy with contracts
153. not patronize business as retaliation
154. no ex facto
155. fed govt has no more or less control than they have in the past
156. more of an issue with spec ed kids having more rights than other students
157. supporter of centralization of admin
158. centralization saves money
159. centralization creates diversity
160. public blames NYSED for common core and APPR
161. some regulation is good some is bad how implemented is the difference
162. regents dept eliminated that's why we have the current testing structure
163. regents exam were respected
164. regents exam showed knowledge-were challenging
165. now hiring other companies to design test
166. for BOE because wanted to be a part of superintendent hiring
167. felt could contribute to superintendent hiring process
168. focus on kids
169. focus on education
170. need strong leader in superintendent
171. incoming BOE member felt current BOE members ignorant about education
172. ran for BOE because had education background-could contribute to BOE
173. public makes assumptions about people who serve on BOE
174. complicated-difficult work being on BOE
175. hard choices have to be made on BOE
176. trying work being on BOE
177. gratifying being on BOE
178. gratifying when make decisions that impact kids in a positive way
179. work at high policy level
180. do not always see day to day impact of decisions BOE makes
181. feel positive about the decisions BOE has made
182. gratifying to be able to hire good people and make programmatic changes
183. positive impact on children
184. gratifying when make decisions that impact kids in a positive way
185. gratifying being on BOE
186. gratifying when make decisions that impact kids in a positive way
187. most rewarding has been seeing decisions come to fruition and impact kids in a positive way
188. gratifying to be able to hire good people and make programmatic changes
189. gratifying when make decisions that impact kids in a positive way
190. greatest reward-serve community
191. most rewarding experience is when efforts come to fruition
192. most rewarding thing - long term pride legacy of impact
193. most rewarding thing programs working
194. most rewarding thing students graduating
195. most difficult thing has been personnel issues
196. personnel issues difficult because they are personal
197. BOE's lack of disclosure to public makes it difficult on members
198. public takes change very personal
199. community wants transparency
200. community wants to be involved more in decision making process not just vote
201. access to information for decision making

202. confidentiality can be burdensome as BOE member
203. most difficult thing has been personnel issues
204. most difficult thing is letting people go
205. learned appreciation for operation and systems of how to run school district
206. learned to ask questions
207. learned all systems effect each other and has impact
208. learned how difficult it is to implement programs- and make change
209. public takes change very personal
210. important to have BOE accountable to public
211. BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community
212. BOE needs balanced representation of skills
213. balanced representation but not requirement
214. better decision making as a group
215. diversified BOE members provide prospective
216. need people on the BOE that are not afraid to ask questions
217. balanced representation of skills provides community with well-rounded perspective
218. important to have BOE member with various backgrounds that help run a school
219. balanced representation of professions-skills helps trouble shoot flaws in systems
BOE members need to be knowledgeable about many systems. Knowledge about different systems allows for checks and balances for district. No need for ex facto convicted felon poses a conflict of interest. Convicted felons allowed on BOE depending upon crime. BOE members need to have understanding of educational system. Important to have educator on board. Have an expert in specific field on BOE-super anticipates questions that are going to be asked. Expert in field is only BOE member who asks questions. Important to have educator on board. Educator on BOE able to provide inside perspective of initiatives and potential impact on kids. Educator brings the students into decision making process. Educator brings human element into decision making for BOE. Need to be proceed cautiously when relying on expertise of one BOE member. Can develop complacency and rely on experts in one field. Fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE. Public perception changes when public understands facts/how BOE works. Public perception is BOE has power. NYS selling out to federal govt. Uninformed public blames BOE for things they have no control over. Education and communication are key to bridging gap with community-public. Community does not have time to engage in complex issues. Public assumes those in control are experts and can figure things out. Got a lot of push back for cc implementation but BOE had to follow mandates. Federal govt infringement forces communities to respond. NYS poses intrusion on local communities more than federal govt. NYS selling out to federal govt. NYS poses intrusion on local communities more than federal govt. NYS more responsible for current education debacle. Federal govt one time influx of funds. Education problems originate with federal govt but way NYS deals with it is the bigger problem.
Below are the BOE interview codes with frequency amount. The frequency amount refers to the amount of times the code presented itself in the data. These codes were cross-referenced with both BOE and Community Focus Group data and then condensed, collapsed and eliminated due to repetition and redundancy. They were sorted by how they supported and answered the study’s research questions. The last column indicates the themes that emerged from the codes.

**Research Question #1 Code, Frequency, and Theme Table**

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<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>motivated to run by concern over taxes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned quickly how things work/protocols for way BOE works</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>campaigned against incumbent-called voters</td>
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<td>concern over teacher salaries</td>
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<td>attended budget hearing- asked about teacher salaries</td>
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<td>perception is serving on BOE is thankless</td>
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<td>feels if thinks it is thankless-serving for wrong reasons</td>
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<td>obligation to stay -support superintendent when there is turnover</td>
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<td>fair to new superintendent if BOE has huge turnover</td>
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<td>care for district</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
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<td>new BOE member the board is not thrilled with</td>
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<td>apathetic voters-in terms of long standing</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE members-think they will just win</td>
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<tr>
<td>no fun being BOE president</td>
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<tr>
<td>served as BOE several times-years</td>
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<td>BOE president-figurehead-spokesperson</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE president not a fun place to sit-esp in times of controversy</td>
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<tr>
<td>other BOE members not stupid- no one wants BOE pres job</td>
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<td>BOE blamed for things they are not directly in control of</td>
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<td>learned objectivity</td>
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<td>learned turning off irrational talk and really trying to hear what is at</td>
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<td>concern</td>
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<td>good at consensus building</td>
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<tr>
<td>imperative to listen to public</td>
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<td>imperative to allow public to vent concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>can't take verbal assaults personal</td>
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<td>new superintendents rely on BOE for direction more</td>
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<td>seasoned superintendent did not need the guidance and feedback as new</td>
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<td>lost presidency felt bothered</td>
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169
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOE peers felt impact from change in presidency-felt adversely affected district's budget</td>
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<td>Serving on BOE is rewarding</td>
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<td>better listener</td>
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<td>better person from overall experience</td>
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<td>learn tremendous amount about education</td>
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<td>being of BOE</td>
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<td>learn regulations and laws</td>
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<td>learn acronyms and vocabulary</td>
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<td>learn about programs new curriculum</td>
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<td>follow federal regulations</td>
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<td>BOE follows policies established contracts</td>
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<td>negotiated regulations put into law</td>
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<td>BOE has influence despite not a lot of control</td>
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<td>set budget</td>
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<td>programs or eliminate programs</td>
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<td>most difficult thing suicide</td>
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<td>most difficult thing effecting someone's livelihood</td>
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<td>most rewarding thing handing my son his diploma</td>
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<td>most rewarding thing - long term pride legacy of impact</td>
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<td>most rewarding thing students graduating</td>
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<td>most rewarding thing programs working</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<td>BOE because wanted to be a part of superintendent hiring</td>
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<td>felt could contribute to superintendent hiring process</td>
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<td>focus on kids</td>
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<td>focus on education</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<td>need strong leader in superintendent</td>
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<td>incoming BOE member felt current BOE members ignorant about education</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>ran for BOE because had education background-could contribute to BOE</td>
<td>Perception</td>
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<tr>
<td>public makes assumptions about people who serve on BOE</td>
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<td>complicated-difficult work being on BOE</td>
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<td>hard choices have to be made on BOE</td>
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<td>trying work being on BOE</td>
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<td>gratifying being on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>gratifying when make decisions that impact kids in a positive way</td>
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<tr>
<td>work at high policy level</td>
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<td>do not always see day to day impact of decisions BOE makes</td>
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<td>feel positive about the decisions BOE has made</td>
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<td>gratifying to be able to hire good people and make programmatic changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>positive impact on children</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>greatest reward-serve community</td>
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<tr>
<td>most rewarding experience is when efforts come to fruition</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most rewarding thing - long term pride legacy of impact</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>most rewarding thing programs working</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most rewarding thing students graduating</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>most difficult thing has been personnel issues</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>personnel issues difficult because they are personal</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE's lack of disclosure to public makes it difficult on members</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>public takes change very personal</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>community wants transparency</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>community wants to be involved more in decision making process not just vote</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>access to information for decision making</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidentiality can be burdensome as BOE member</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most difficult thing has been personnel issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most difficult thing is letting people go</td>
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<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned appreciation for operation and systems of how to run school district</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned all systems effect each other and has impact</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned how difficult it is to implement programs- and make change</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to community</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community pride</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence in students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disappointment doesn't have to make you unhappy</td>
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<td>Effort</td>
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<td>Power and influence</td>
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<td>Employee discipline challenging</td>
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<td>Power and influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence on education/leader/programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned patience as BOE member</td>
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<td>Impact on family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likes personal impact having on BOE</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE making decisions at arm's length</td>
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<td>Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misperception of BOE power</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not just about kids- ultimately to have educated populous</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive experience as BOE member</td>
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<td>Positive impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerful</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerful as individual in the way they vote</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerful decision making</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection/pride/satisfaction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education is public benefit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
public takes change very personal 5  Transparency and communication  
rewarding- handing out diplomas 2  Positive impact  
satisfaction in knowing students have done well because of choices BOE made 2  Positive impact  
serve community 4  Positive impact  
service easier when retired 1  Positive impact  
service impacts your personal life/career 3  Positive impact  
service is time consuming 4  Power and influence  
setting policy very powerful-impacts 5  Positive impact  
state and community are separate 2  Frustration  
state wants accountability from schools; not accountable to students 2  Negative stigma  
time and energy 4  Positive impact  
time commitment 3  Positive impact  
Vested 1  Positive impact  

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Research Question #2 Code, Frequency, and Theme Table</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CODE</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>need people without children on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>need literate people on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>believer in ruler of law</td>
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<tr>
<td>guidelines come from Supreme Court-</td>
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<tr>
<td>follow rules for membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no sex offenders on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>if age is 18 and 32 might need to reconsider</td>
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<tr>
<td>sex offender label and allow on BOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sure if for or against sex offender- too</td>
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<tr>
<td>many variables</td>
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<td>do feel BOE is purest form of democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>good teacher knows what other teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>should be doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>good teachers on board have positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>impact on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>balanced representation but not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public can hurt BOE members livelihood if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not happy with contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not patronize business as retaliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>no ex facto</td>
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<td>important to have BOE accountable to public</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE needs balanced representation of skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>balanced representation but not requirement</td>
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<td>better decision making as a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>diversified BOE members provide prospective need people on the BOE that are not afraid to ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>balanced representation of skills provides community with well-rounded perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important to have BOE member with various backgrounds that help run a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balanced representation of professions-skills helps trouble shoot flaws in systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE members need to be knowledgeable about many systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge about different systems allows for checks and balances for district</td>
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<tr>
<td>no need for ex facto</td>
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<td>convicted felon poses a conflict of interest</td>
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<td>convicted felons allowed on BOE</td>
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<td>depending upon crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOE members need to have understanding of educational system</td>
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<tr>
<td>important to have educator on board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have an expert in specific field on BOE-super anticipates questions that are going to be asked</td>
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<tr>
<td>expert in field is only BOE member who asks questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>important to have educator on board</td>
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<tr>
<td>educator on BOE able to provide inside perspective of initiatives and potential impact on kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>educator brings the students into decision making process</td>
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<td>educator brings human element into</td>
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</table>

Transparency and communication

Transparency and communication
decision making for BOE
need to be proceed cautiously when relying on expertise of one BOE member 1

Transparency and communication

can develop complacency and rely on experts in one field membership is about citizenship not in classroom a lot no need for balanced representation on BOE need for ex facto no need to change requirements no students on BOE-window dressing ok with current qualifications Oversight purest form of democracy sometimes unqualified candidate teachers are uninformed about BOE functioning yet greatly impacts them too many qualifications dilutes democracy of BOE 1

Democracy

Research Question #3 Code, Frequency, and Theme Table

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
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<tr>
<td>fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public perception changes when public understands facts/how BOE works public perception is BOE has power</td>
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<td>Perception</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYS selling out to federal govt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uninformed public blames BOE for things they have no control over education and communication are key to bridging gap with community-public</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>community does not have time to engage in complex issues public assumes those in control are experts and can figure things out got a lot of push back for cc implementation but BOE had to follow mandates</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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Democracy

Transparency and communication
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<tr>
<td>Federal govt infringement forces communities to respond</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS poses intrusion on local communities more than federal govt</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS selling out to federal govt</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS more responsible for current education debacle</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal govt one time influx of funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education problems originate with federal govt but way NYS deals with it is the bigger problem</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erosion of local control</td>
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<td>Fed govt good intentions but unfunded mandates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fed govt infringement forces communities to respond</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal govt cares about children-just misguided and ill advised</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal govt disenfranchising local communities</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<td>Federal mandates create hardships</td>
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<td>Follow government regulations/laws</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government impact often imposes their incompetent leadership upon local municipalities</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDEA unfunded-creates division among community take from one area to give to another</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYS impacted by special interest attorneys not seen in other parts of country greatest shame of nation-still unfunded</td>
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<td>Unfunded mandates pit community members against each other</td>
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<td>Form of democracy</td>
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Collapsed Codes with Frequency indicating support for Themes
The chart below represents the eight themes that emerged from the data collected. In addition, the frequency of codes (collapsed, condensed, and redundant) are indicated.

Collapsed Codes with Frequency and Themes Table

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<td>Positive Impact on Children</td>
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<td>Power and Influence</td>
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<td>Perception of Why BOE Members Serve</td>
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<td>Frustration over Loss of Local Control</td>
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<td>Transparency and Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
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<td>Negative Stigma Serving on BOE</td>
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</table>
Appendix M: Community Member Interview Codes
Below are the open-ended codes that presented itself in the Community Member interview data.

1. absurd to evaluate teachers based on test scores
2. BOE follows superintendent’s recommendations
3. BOE has poor communication with community
4. BOE hides
5. BOE members 50/50 split of why serve-some pure-some for own agenda
6. BOE members can be self-serving-on agenda
7. BOE members need to have understanding of educational system
8. BOE members should have children in school district
9. BOE members should have had children in district to know history of district
10. BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community
11. BOE needs to be at more events
12. BOE needs to be branded to sell ideas to community
13. BOE needs to be more visible to community
14. BOE needs to do better job at communicating with public
15. BOE not accountable
16. BOE platform or foundation to political career
17. power is in looking at big picture
18. BOE privy to personal information
19. BOE role hire and evaluate superintendent
20. BOE set policy; more administrative role
21. BOE work with state and county
22. BOE members are politicians
23. bring life experience
24. codependent relationship between state and community
25. community wants to be involved more in decision making process not just vote
26. community wants to be involved more in decision making process not just vote
27. community oblivious to time commitment of BOE
28. community perception of BOE is poor
29. community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE
30. community service/impact
31. community wants more outreach
32. community wants transparency
33. community wants validation of concerns
34. community wants voices heard
35. conflict of interest to have members who are in education on BOE
36. convicted felons allowed on BOE depending upon crime
37. convicted felons serve if paid dues to society
38. defer to administration
39. erosion of local control
40. fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE
41. federal govt disenfranchising local communities
42. federal govt wants to normalize education
43. federal mandates create hardships
44. how BOE communicates with its public effects its education policy output
45. implied that BOE does not come up with solutions but rather decides to move ahead with super rec or not
46. jaded
47. losing local control
48. making decisions at arm's length
49. rewarding experience is when efforts come to fruition
50. negative stigma serving on BOE
51. no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements
52. no convicted pedophiles on BOE should clearly be stated in qualifications
53. no need for ex facto
54. NYS is a whore-went to bed with federal govt
55. podcasts-websites-attendance at events- not enough for community to feel informed
56. rigorous time commitment
57. serve because like it
58. serve community
59. serving on BOE a way to get know community
60. stigma to serve in public office
61. admin have true educational experience
62. superintendent's recommendation is doing what Board is asking
63. too much confidentiality on BOE part
64. tough to keep community informed
65. unfunded mandates pit community members against each other
66. wants to normalize education
67. BOE member needs to read and write
68. BOE members see big picture-broader view of district's needs
69. BOE members voice opinions
70. BOE work with state and county
71. collaborate with vested parties/unions
72. community member limited understanding of eligibility requirements
73. community pride
74. community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE
75. community service-pay it forward- paying taxes
76. community service/impact
77. unaware of BOE role
78. control over who works in district/curriculum/delivery model
79. convicted felons allowed on BOE depending upon crime
80. convicted felons serve if paid dues to society
81. dialogue/discussion with fellow BOE members/super/admin
82. fed mandates impacts community trust on BOE
83. federal govt infringement forces communities to respond
84. federal government's intrusion is political orchestration on to dismantle teachers' union
85. federal govt disenfranchising local communities
86. federal govt does not care about children/nor local level communities
87. federal govt wants to normalize education
88. government impact often imposes their incompetent leadership upon local municipalities
89. leave decisions to local control-they know community
90. losing autonomy to govt; communities need to fight back
91. most challenging thing is balancing budget
92. need mixed BOE representation
93. negotiate/mediate parties interests
94. no admin or teachers to influence one groups' ideas
95. no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements
96. no federal govt in local schools-too far removed
97. no need for ex facto personal agenda
98. serve because like it
99. serve community
100. serve for own children
101. too much government control
102. wants to normalize education
103. work with superintendent
104. working with unions
105. Albany/BOE/state officials hold WebEx like this to create dialogue/communication
106. attendance impacts decisions/voting
107. BOE critical role in influencing ed/finances/leadership
108. BOE makes decisions like judge
109. BOE makes decisions like judge
110. BOE member connect with people
111. BOE need attendance policy
112. BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community
113. BOE members qualifications need to be able to commit to service-no absenteeism
114. BOE members see big picture-broader view of district's needs
115. BOE need attendance policy
116. BOE power is in looking at big picture
117. BOE power is in looking at big picture
118. BOE powerful has a whole not individual
119. represents what the community wants
120. BOE writes policy to represent community values/goals
121. communities do not necessarily like to help offered by federal govt
122. convicted felon poses a conflict of interest
123. convicted felons could impact/complicate voting-decision making
124. ex-facto remain impartial
125. ex-facto-no voting rights
126. fed govt is called in when communities are failing its public
127. govt infringement forces communities to respond
128. federal govt comes in one they are called upon
129. federal govt disenfranchising local communities
130. federal mandates create hardships
131. follow government regulations/laws
132. follow protocols
133. government impact often imposes their incompetent leadership upon local municipalities
134. how BOE announce actions/demonstrate
135. how BOE communicates with its public effects its education policy output
136. for Albany/state/federal govt to hear communities' voice
137. improve things-positive change
138. influence on education/leader/programs
139. Influence/control
140. interest in making a change/having an impact
141. local BOE have opportunity to work with state and local officials
142. need balanced community representation on BOE
143. need BOE members who are impartial
144. need mixed BOE representation
145. need to be vested
146. negative stigma serving on BOE
147. no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements
148. oversight
149. positive impact on children
150. education is public benefit
151. rigorous time commitment
152. serve community
153. service impacts your personal life/career
154. service is time consuming
155. set policy
156. setting policy very powerful-impacts
157. stigma to serve in public office
Below are Community Member Interview open-ended codes with frequency amount. The frequency amount refers to the amount of times the code presented itself in the Community interview data. These codes were cross-referenced with BOE and Community Focus Group data and then condensed, collapsed and eliminated due to repetition and redundancy. They were sorted by how they supported and answered the study’s research questions. The third column indicates the themes that emerged.

*Research Question #1 Community Open-Ended Interview Codes, Frequency, and Theme Table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOE members 50/50 split of why serve-some pure-some for own agenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members can be self-serving-on agenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE privy to personal information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE platform or foundation to political career</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE work with state and county</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE set policy; more administrative role</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members are politicians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring life experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigorous time commitment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve because like it</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serving on BOE a way to get know community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigorous time commitment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve for own children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community member limited understanding of eligibility requirements</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Branding and marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community pride</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
education is public benefit 1
local BOE have opportunity to work with state and local officials 1
need balanced community representation on BOE 1
need BOE members who are impartial 1
need mixed BOE representation 1
service impacts your personal life/career 1
community service-pay it forward-paying taxes influence on education/leader/programs 1
Influence/control 1
interest in making a change/having an impact 1
positive impact on children 1
personal agenda 4

Research Question #2 Community Open-Ended Interview Codes, Frequency, and Theme Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOE follows superintendent’s recommendations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE has poor communication with community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE hides</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members need to have understanding of educational system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Power and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE member needs to read and write convicted felons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felons poses a conflict of interest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felons could impact/complicate voting-decision making</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-facto remain impartial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-facto-no voting rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felon poses a conflict of interest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no convicted pedophiles on BOE should clearly be stated in qualifications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community oblivious to time commitment of BOE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service- pay it forward by serving on BOE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members should have children in school district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>codependent relationship between state and community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defer to administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE depending upon crime convicted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felons serve if paid dues to society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict of interest to have members who are in education on BOE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members should have had children in district to know history of district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewarding experience is when efforts come to fruition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felons allowed on BOE depending upon crime</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felons serve if paid dues to society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convicted felons allowed on BOE depending upon crime</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE impact children/ community/ teachers/ education/culture of US</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE makes decisions like judge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE member connect with people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE members qualifications need to be able to commit to service-no absenteeism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no admin or teachers to influence one groups’ ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no convicted felons should be added to BOE member requirements</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no federal govt in local schools-too far removed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no need for ex facto</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no admin or teachers to influence one groups’ ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE needs to be able to communicate effectively with community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE power is in looking at big picture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE powerful has a whole not individual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brand: **Positive impact**

Marketing: **Transparency and communication**

Frustration: **No need for ex facto**

Branding and marketing: **Transparency and communication**
represents what the community wants  |  2  |  Branding and marketing

**Research Question #3 Community Open-Ended Interview Codes, Frequency, and Theme Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>absurd to evaluate teachers based on test scores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS is a whore—went to bed with federal govt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implied that BOE does not come up with solutions but rather decides</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with super rec or not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erosion of local control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal mandates create hardships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt disenfranchising local communities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fed mandates impacts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community trust on BOE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt wants to normalize education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>losing local control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fed mandates impacts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community trust on BOE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt infringement forces communities to respond</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal government's intrusion is political orchestration on to</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dismantle teachers' union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt disenfranchising local communities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt does not care about children/nor local level communities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal govt wants to normalize education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too much government control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants to normalize education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work with superintendent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communities do not</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
necessarily like to help offered by federal govt
fed govt is called in when communities are failing its public
govt infringement forces communities to respond federal govt comes in one they are called upon federal govt disenfranchising local communities federal mandates create hardships making decisions at arm's length admin have true educational experience superintendent's recommendation is doing what Board is asking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>community wants to be involved more in decision making process not just vote community perception of BOE is poor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community wants more outreach community service/impact community wants voices heard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community wants validation of concerns community wants transparency BOE not accountable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOE needs to be at more events</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Branding and marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The codes below were codes that did not support the study’s three research questions. But rather, emerged as new themes from the study’s data analysis.

*Ancillary Codes Table*
BOE needs to be branded to sell ideas to community  3  Branding and marketing
BOE needs to be more visible to community  3  Branding and marketing
BOE needs to do better job at communicating with public  1  Transparency and communication
Power is in looking at big picture  4  Power and influence
BOE role hire and evaluate superintendent  1  Negative stigma
Negative stigma serving on BOE  1  Negative stigma
Stigma to serve in public office  2  Negative stigma
Podcasts-websites-attendance at events- not enough for community to feel informed  1  Branding and marketing
Set policy  1  Power and influence
Setting policy very powerful-impacts  1  Power and influence
Albany/BOE/state officials hold WebEx like this to create dialogue/communication  1  Transparency and communication
How BOE announce actions/demonstrate  3  Branding and marketing
Too much confidentiality on BOE part  1  Branding and marketing
Tough to keep community informed  1  Transparency and communication

**Collapsed Codes with Frequency indicating support for Themes**
The chart below represents the eight themes that emerged from the data collected. In addition, the frequencies of codes (collapsed, condensed, and redundant) are indicated.

**Collapsed Codes with Frequency and Themes Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact on Children</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and Influence</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Why BOE Members Serve</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration over Loss of Local Control</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and Communication</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stigma Serving on BOE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N: Final Themes and Coding Frequency
Below is a chart consolidating themes and frequency data. This data was consolidated using information obtained from Survey codes, BOE and Community Member Focus Group Data, and BOE and Community Interview Data (Appendices: G, H, I, L, M).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact on Children</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and Influence</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Why BOE Members Serve</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration Over Loss Over Local Control</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and Communication</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Marketing</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stigma Serving on BOE</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix O: Qualitative Audit
Qualitative Audit on behalf of Jennifer Eraca
Phyllis A. Amori, Ed. D.

Background for audit suitability:

I completed a phenomenological study of moral educational leadership in 2010 at Teachers College, Columbia University. That study is utilized as an exemplar in the Manhattanville College doctoral program’s qualitative research course. I am a regular guest lecturer on phenomenological research for each cohort of the program; and, am currently serving as a reader to two doctoral candidates.

Methodology:

Jennifer Eraca and I met at length on February 4, 2016 to review her study, with an emphasis on research protocol. We began by examining the research questions, designed to ultimately explore the qualifications and ultimate impact of Board of Education members upon their school communities.

Bracketing: Jennifer’s unique position as a Board of Education member is very much in keeping with the phenomenological approach. As Van Manen (1990) notes, lived experience is the starting and end point of this research tradition. I was satisfied that she had effectively utilized bracketing to control for her own experiences and biases. Her main tool for this process was the reflective journal as described in her protocol.

Coding: Jennifer and I spent considerable time examining the lengthy process she utilized for data analysis, beginning with professionally described transcripts of two focus groups and six participant interviews of community and board of education members. Jennifer’s grounded coding strategies followed Charmaz (2006) and Saldana (2009). Cases were created in HyperResearch for initial coding. Code books were printed and further
delineated according to research questions. Separate colors for themes outside of the research questions were added and thematic research proceeded. Frequency patterns drove decisions for collapsing and condensing the data. Jennifer made these processes explicit in her writing and explanations during our discussion.

Analysis: Jennifer allowed herself to be “open to the data” as her analysis proceeded to the thematic stages. Codes and themes emerged from the participants’ experiences. Jennifer utilized a systematic, color coded process that kept the codes closely linked to those experiences. This allowed for unexpected themes and findings to emerge, e.g., the positive attitude and more altruistic motivations of participants than might have been expected. I am additionally satisfied that Jennifer’s process prevented context stripping or, the removal of the codes from the original context (Maxwell, 1996).

Conclusion: Due to her ability to thoroughly explain the coding process, her reflective analysis of emerging themes and final decisions regarding findings and unexpected avenues for additional research, I am satisfied that Jennifer Eraca engaged in a well-designed, controlled and careful analysis of her research data that was in keeping with the phenomenological traditions and that allowed for the essence of the participants’ experiences to emerge.


Respectfully submitted February 5, 2016

Phyllis A. Amori, Ed. D.

Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY, 2011-present

Clinical faculty member, Doctoral program in Educational Leadership

Millbrook Central School District, Millbrook, NY, 2010 - present

Principal, Millbrook Middle School