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New Hampshire school board members and the elementary schools

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Boston University
School of Education

THESIS

NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS
AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Submitted by

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(Bachelor of Education)
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Professor of Education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The character of public education in any state, in the final analysis, is determined by the board that controls the school. There is an ever-increasing demand to improve teacher training, to improve courses of study, and to improve our schools in general. To a very large degree these improvements depend upon the local boards of education.

It is imperative therefore, to the continuance of improved education, for each school board member to realize that he must represent the community as a whole. He must rise above limited neighborhood thinking. He must keep himself well informed locally and on nationwide educational developments and trends.

Statement of the problem. The purposes of this study are (1) to determine to what extent school board members in New Hampshire possess some of the qualifications considered essential for good board members as established in professional literature; (2) to gain definite ideas as to what board members in New Hampshire consider good and bad practices and procedures in our

educational program; and (3) to learn of the New Hampshire board member's personal opinions relative to the elementary educational program in his own community.

Importance of the problem. In any American community, the ultimate responsibility for public education rests upon all of its citizens. It is therefore clear that the laymen of any community--those citizens not actively engaged in administrative, supervisory, or teaching capacities in the public schools--have the inescapable responsibility of seeing to it that the most effective educational opportunities are made available to the children of its population. The lay citizens chosen to serve on school boards are the official designates of the people, chosen to exercise legal control over the public schools and give expression to community needs and desires.

In 1956 the National School Boards Association directed a nationwide project study to identify the responsibilities of leadership in American public education.¹ The findings indicate that in their basic

¹National School Boards Association, Inc., Paths of Action, A Report Based Upon Issues and Problems of School Board Leadership (Chicago: National School Boards Association, Inc., 1956), pp. 18-20.

misunderstandings of the nature, extent, and significance of their responsibilities, most school board members are not fulfilling the obligation which American democratic principle has placed upon them.

In general, the lack of information and understanding on the part of school board members of their central responsibilities stems basically from the widespread ignorance of the fundamentals of public education on the part of the American public itself. It is therefore expected, to a certain extent, that board members would reflect whatever misunderstandings and preconceived ideas exist among the general public.

Most school board members, according to the Project findings, have a narrow and confined view of their responsibilities.² They seem to believe that they have been selected principally to render approval or disapproval of school business management functions, and that by watchdogging the administrative housekeeping and book-keeping chores of the superintendent, they are fulfilling their major role in American public education.

The vast majority of board members consider the definition of a philosophy of public education, and helping

²National School Boards Association, Inc., ibid.

to determine the goals which public education should try to attain, as either among the least important responsibilities of the school board member, or as not his responsibility at all.

School board members have a difficult dual role to play. They must both be interpreters of the public's aspirations concerning its schools, and leaders in pointing out to the public what it wants in a good school. The difficulty lies in maintaining a proper balance between representation and leadership.

In expressing the will of the people, the board member discovers that there is no single, popular "will." Rather than one public there are many publics. Board members themselves travel in certain social circles which are usually far from representative of the community as a whole.

Within recent years great advances have been made toward the improvement of education in America. These advances were approved by local boards of education. It is apparent, then, that many board members are well on their way toward fulfilling their basic responsibilities.

However, the tremendous need for further improvement in a great many areas points out the fact that too many school board members have not developed educational

philosophies and goals. Too many board members, along with the communities they represent, hold that education is a luxury--and an expensive one at that. Many still feel that the money spent is largely wasted. Accordingly, say those who hold this view, "Cut out the frills, keep school expenditures down, and stop trying to make silk purses out of sows' ears."³

It is felt that through a survey and analysis, some insight into the existing local situations in New Hampshire may be given.

³Daniel R. Davis, and Fred W. Hosler, The Challenge of School Board Membership (New York: Chartwell House, Inc., 1954), p. 82.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, boards of education evolved out of the special school committees set up by early New England town meetings. These committees were created because school matters became too complex and too demanding to be handled by the town meeting itself. As the country expanded and the school population increased, the function of school administration became a highly complex problem. Adding more members to the school boards did not solve this problem. The problem required much investigation and study. During these changing times educators in executive capacities were becoming well trained in administrative duties, and school personnel was being more highly trained professionally. As a result, the advances made in having highly trained experts in the administrative field were often offset by meddling or lack of cooperation on the part of the board. There is still evidence of a lack of understanding of the scope of a board member's duties, which is responsible for much misunderstanding among board members and superintendents.

Because of these misunderstandings and lack of cooperation, the progress of improved education in many

areas has remained gradual. This is a time of great challenge to the school board members of America. Within the last twenty-five years several books and articles have been written which help to show that the task of the school board today is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.

Qualifications of School Board Members. It is interesting to note that in the majority of the books which have been written and in the studies that have been made regarding essential qualifications for good school board members, certain qualities and characteristics keep reappearing.

Almack lists the conclusions of a study made by George D. Struble at the University of Kansas, in which school superintendents were asked to rate board members as to the ways in which each gave the best service to the schools:¹

1. Members of the professions rank high as board members--much higher than merchants or businessmen.
2. Farmers, bankers and manufacturers show most ability in handling school finances.

¹John C. Almack, The School Board Member (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), pp. 18-19.

3. Housekeepers, doctors, and ex-teachers are of most service in helping to plan educational policies.

4. Men and women who have children make better school board members than those who do not.

5. The age of greatest efficiency seems to be from forty to fifty. Neither young men nor old men make the best members.

6. Retired businessmen are not good board members.

7. Ministers are less efficient than men in other professions.

8. Members tend to become more conservative and less useful the longer they serve.

9. Housekeepers tend to give more time to school interests than others.

Nations Schools conducted a poll among administrators in an effort to determine what makes a good board member. The following results were published:²

1. Parents, especially those with children in school, were rated very high.

2. Merchants rated high as good board members, with doctors and lawyers coming next.

²"What Kind of School Board Members?" Nations Schools, XXXIV (December, 1944), 27.

3. Fifty-four per cent of the superintendents felt that board members should have at least a high school education, while twenty-two per cent felt that college was necessary.

4. Women, many superintendents felt, are too prone to emotional judgment. A few supported women.

It is noted that item No. 2 is in direct contrast to item No. 1 of the previous study made over 10 years earlier.

Reeder admits that it is easier to state what school board members should not be than to state what they should be:³

Although it will probably never be possible to find a perfect candidate for any position, the following types of persons should be regarded with more or less skepticism when school board members are being chosen: Those who have not made a success in any vocation; those who are dishonest; those who are associated with a textbook company or some other enterprise now doing business with the schools; those who have low moral standards; those who are "politically" minded; those who have little education whether formal or informal; those who are more friendly to private schools than to public schools; those who despise all private schools; those who cannot, or will not, work with other people; those who are controlled by a certain church, political party, or some other group and will not represent the interests of the whole community; those who are "penny-pinchers," and also those who spend public money like "drunken sailors."

³Ward G. Reeder, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), pp. 75-76.

Harlan Hagman has written a handbook for school board members to help them in becoming better members.⁴ In his book he says:

1. A good member makes a study of his job so as to serve well.
2. Tolerance, good humor, honesty, intelligence, and interest in children are all essential qualities.
3. A good member subscribes to professional educational magazines, and attends educational conferences.
4. Parenthood helps, but does not necessarily make the best members.
5. Membership in the Parent Teacher Association or attendance at their meetings is very desirable.
6. A good board member recognizes his legal authority as a member of the board, not as an individual.

Item No. 4 differs from item No. 1 in the previous study where administrators rated parents among the best board members.

The essential qualities of a good school board member as listed by Selmer H. Berg are:⁵

⁴Harlan L. Hagman, A Handbook for the School Board Member (Topeka, Kansas: School Activities Publishing Company, 1941), pp. 3-15.

⁵Selmer H. Berg, "School Boards as a City Superintendent Would Like to Have Them," American School Board Journal, CXIII (October, 1946), pp. 25-26.

1. Respect for human personality.
2. Keen sense of social responsibility.
3. Ability to think critically and render sound judgment regardless of personal bias or public pressure.
4. Alert to social trends.
5. Background of experience.
6. Capacity for confidence in self and employees.
7. Courage of conviction.
8. Typical human being embodying the desirable qualities of the morally strong, well-adjuster person.

From an article in the American School Board Journal W.A. Shannon relates:⁶

1. A good school board member must be a leader.
2. He must never make decisions without facts.
3. He must be a student--read, study, and correspond.
4. He must attend local, state and national meetings.
5. He must constantly evaluate the schools.

An Opinion Poll conducted by Nations Schools in 1956 showed that seventy-eight per cent of the administrators felt that there should be laws setting up certain qualifications for candidates for the board of education.⁷ A large number

⁶W.A. Shannon, "Let's Look at Our Schools," American School Board Journal, CXXXIII (October, 1956), 5.

⁷"Opinion Poll," Nations Schools, LXIII (December, 1956), 75.

of the administrators who were questioned felt that a college education was very important for the effective board member. A New Englander, however, noted that "Some eighth grade graduates are better than those with college degrees. Educational requirements should vary." A New York administrator said, "I have worked with all kinds--education is not always a good criterion." Another put it more strongly: "I am not sure about legal requirements for qualification. My experience leads me to believe that the people presently do a pretty discriminating job in selection of their board members."

The average board of education is usually made up of citizens who rank high in the community in point of character and ability. William C. Bruce sums up the qualities of a good board member in the following ways:⁸

The well qualified school board member accepts membership because he is actuated by lofty motives and an ambition to serve his fellow man in a worthy manner. His objective is the rearing of the youth of the community for truly successful manhood and for honorable and useful citizenship. As a rule, no educational, economic, or social-class qualifications are exacted. Public opinion is the sole judge. He enjoys respect and confidence of his neighbors and friends, and is credited with intelligence, experience, and judgment.

⁸William C. Bruce, "The Unpopular School Board Member," American School Board Journal, CXXXIV (February, 1957), 66. -

The following list of qualifications is a composite of a recent poll among laymen, school administrators, teachers, and school board members in the state of Washington.⁹

The effective board member:

1. Has affection for, and interest in children--all children, everybody's children, coupled with a strong belief in democracy and in the importance of free public education.

2. Has vision, courage, and enthusiasm.

3. Has time to devote unstintingly to his job as a school director.

4. Must be able to listen to all sides of a question free from emotion and prejudice.

5. Is friendly, likes people, and is able to appreciate the points of all segments of society.

6. Should have interest enough in public schools to become thoroughly informed concerning the school program and school support.

7. Possesses the ability to work as a member of a team with other board members.

8. Is free from undue pressure from any group--has no "axe to grind."

⁹Mrs. Fred A. Radke, "The Effective School Board Member," American School Board Journal, CXXXI (October, 1955), 31.

9. Is a respected leader in his community.
10. Is a person with ability and common sense.
11. Distinguishes between policy making and administration and refrains from attempting to function in the area of policy execution.
12. Has complete integrity.
13. Recognizes the importance of good public relations.
14. Is willing and able to take criticism.

For purposes of this study those qualities and characteristics of a good board member which were mentioned more than once in the literature were listed and blended into a composite picture. From this list were extracted those traits which could be determined objectively by the member. These serve as criteria for comparing New Hampshire school board members with good members. The picture is as follows:

1. He has made an effort to acquaint himself with the duties of his position.
2. He was requested to become a candidate.
3. He is a professional or a businessman.
4. He is regular in attendance at meetings, and takes part in all discussions.
5. He has served more than one term of office on the board.

6. He is a man between thirty and sixty years of age, with several children attending or graduated from public schools.
7. He is an active member of a civic or community group.
8. He holds no other political office.
9. He has at least a high school education.
10. He is a regular reader of professional educational magazines.
11. He has endeavored to become well acquainted with his school system.

Board Member Opinions and Attitudes. Many studies made in recent years indicate that the local school board members provide several major obstacles in the path for improved elementary schools. Board members have been accused of being unconcerned with educational problems, and too concerned with details.

It cannot be denied then that board members, who are expected to perform their duties effectively, must have attitudes and opinions favorable to the objectives of those educators who are striving for better elementary schools.

Scott and Hill have compiled many of the more

vociferous attacks against the schools within recent years.¹⁰ The effectiveness of these writings upon the board members who read them is in direct proportion to the extent of knowledge they possess with reference to the school.

In addition to the above mentioned attacks against the schools, there are also many other factors which can help to mold or shape a board member's opinion of his schools. Board members are almost constantly exposed to pressures or demands for changes by parents, P.T.A.'s, teachers, taxpayers' associations, and many other groups. Many board members personally feel themselves that elementary schools should place more emphasis on the three R's, or that there is too much emphasis being placed on intramural sports.

Given a little thought and study it is easy to understand how demands, pressure from outside, and individual opinions, stemming from past school experiences and other factors, can be determining forces in shaping the attitudes of school board members toward the elementary schools. It is also evident that a better knowledge of the schools is the greatest single combatant against disaffection.

¹⁰C. Winfield Scott and Clyde M. Hill, Public Education Under Criticism (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1954), 414pp.

For the most part, New Hampshire has a majority of rural school boards. The level of the economy of the communities and their stability directly determine the attitudes of the members of a school board. Farming and small business would seem to dictate conservatism in the individual board member. Cunningham relates that this situation should not be interpreted to mean that the rural community does not want as high a level of education for its children as does the larger city.¹¹ But there is, in the rural area, a constant consciousness of tax rates. At the same time the incomes of farmers, and in turn the incomes of the businesses supported by the farms, may fall just as easily as they may rise. This instability in the rural economy most naturally affects the attitude of rural board members. Teachers' salaries, in order to be competitive, often place the teacher, and especially the administrator, among the higher income groups of the community, which in turn raises in the minds of some board members the question of the justice of these "high" salaries. Important expenditures for curriculum items that

¹¹William L. Cunningham, "Dilemmas of Rural School Boards," American School Board Journal, CXXXVI, (February, 1958), 33.

educators might consider necessary are considered frills by many board members.

How do these differences of opinions and attitudes between board members and educators arise? Just as a board member must know his community thoroughly and sense its needs, so should he become well informed about the school program in order to have an intelligent opinion about how it is meeting pupil and community needs. Davis and Hosler admit that the task of informing board members about their schools is indeed very difficult.¹² They advise that:

Good schools of today are different from the good schools of yesterday, and the farther away yesterday is the greater is the difference. Memories of what was tend to get confused with what is. And not only have schools changed, but they have become more complex. The three R's education of yesterday, limited in scope, objective, and method, was comparatively easy to comprehend in its entirety. This is not true of present-day education which undertakes to guide the growth and development of "the whole child," and which adjusts itself to "individual differences" among children.

¹²Davis and Hosler, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Purposes. The purposes of this study are (1) to determine to what extent school board members in New Hampshire possess the qualifications considered essential for good board members as established in professional literature; (2) to gain definite ideas as to what board members in New Hampshire consider good and bad practices and procedures in our educational program; and (3) to learn of the New Hampshire board member's personal opinions relative to the elementary educational program in his own community.

Preparing the questionnaire. Since a study such as this was to involve opinions and attitudes as well as qualifications of school board members, it was necessary to build a questionnaire which contained three main sections.

The first section is in the form of a checklist and comprises the first page of the four-page instrument. The fourteen items used in this objective type of inquiry form allowed each board member to answer objectively, for the purpose of obtaining factual data related to the eleven qualities and characteristics of a good board member as described in the preceding chapter.

Many of these questions were adapted from a checklist used by Donlan in 1950.¹

The second section of the questionnaire comprises pages two and three of the instrument. It provides an opportunity for each board member to agree or disagree with some statements which reflect credit on the elementary school and with some statements which would be unfavorable practices in the elementary school. This section of the questionnaire is adapted from a larger questionnaire used by James Capra in 1955.² It is sub-divided into three parts containing statements concerning discipline, individual differences, and teaching of fundamentals. It was agreed upon by forty Boston University graduate students, who were teachers and/or administrators, that these are the three areas in the modern school with which parents are least familiar from their own experiences in school, and with which they seem to appear most puzzled. The statements used for each area were chosen on the basis of the

¹Margaret M. Donlan, "A Study of the School Boards and School Board Members in One Hundred Massachusetts Communities" (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University School of Education, Boston, 1950), p. 122.

²James Capra, "A Study of the Attitudes of Parents Toward Current Educational Practices in the Elementary Schools and Some Influencing Factors" (unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, Boston University School of Education, Boston, 1955), pp. 255-266.

answers given by a criterion group of forty-five teachers and administrators attending a Boston University Summer Session. Only those statements were used in which the forty-five judges were nearly in complete agreement as being statements which definitely expressed favorable practices or unfavorable practices used in the elementary schools.

The third section, found on page four of the questionnaire, asks questions pertaining to the local situation only. The board members are reminded to think only in terms of the elementary schools. It deals with such important issues as teachers' salaries, experiments and changes in the elementary schools, and what, in the board member's opinion, is the most important function of the supervising elementary school principal. This section was primarily designed to give the board members a chance to air their complaints and grievances.

To help establish usability of the inquiry form, copies of the first draft were shown to three persons. Two of these are school board members and the third is the secretary of the New Hampshire School Boards Association. All comments and suggestions were carefully studied and then the form was somewhat revised.

Distribution. It was decided to try to obtain a truly representative sampling of school board members from

all of the cities and towns within the state. Therefore, a method of random sampling was chosen whereby every third board member in the total list was sent a questionnaire. For the purpose of making comparisons between board members of smaller towns and board members of larger towns, the towns and cities were divided into five population groups; (1) under 500; (2) 500-1000; (3) 1000-5000; (4) 5000-20,000; (5) over 20,000.

The names and addresses of all persons serving on the board of education in each town or city was obtained from the office of the New Hampshire Department of Education.

A letter was enclosed with each questionnaire (see Appendix A). The letter explained the purpose of the study and stressed its anonymity. It asked each member's cooperation by filling out and returning the form in the return envelope provided. The letter was signed by this investigator. Directly below it appeared another short letter from the President of the New Hampshire School Boards Association. This was to show his approval of the study, thereby possibly increasing the number of members who would cooperate.

Return of the Questionnaire. The questionnaires were directed personally to 290 school board members. There are only 226 towns and cities in New Hampshire, but the random

sampling process using every third member is the reason why the larger towns and cities with more than three board members received more than one questionnaire. There was a return of 163 questionnaires representing New Hampshire towns and cities, for a return of 56.20 per cent of the questionnaires and a 60.24 per cent representation of all the towns and cities.

Analysis of the Questionnaire. An analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires of 163 school board members is reported in Chapter IV.

INQUIRY FORM FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Population _____ PART I

Most of the questions in Part I can be answered with a checkmark; a few require the writing of a number or a word for completion.

Information about the respondent as an individual board member

1. Male Female
2. Age group by years 20-29 40-49 60-69
 30-39 50-59 70 or over
3. Educational background (check only highest completed)
 college graduate high school graduate
 attended college attended high school
 completed eighth grade
4. Vocational background (check on left, name vocation on right)
 Professional _____
 Business _____
 Farmer _____
 Skilled labor _____
 Unskilled labor _____
 Housewife _____
 Retired _____
5. Reason for becoming candidate
 asked to run by a civic group
 asked to run by individuals
 personal interest in public education
 other (name) _____
6. How many years have you been a board member? _____
7. Check any of the following professional magazines of which you are a regular reader
 American School Board Journal School Executive
 Nation's Schools School Management
 Others (name) _____

8. What help have you had to understand the duties of a board member?
- conferences with superintendent
 - information from experienced members
 - reading of the board's rules and regulations
 - other (name) _____
9. Attendance at meetings since election. Have you attended?
- all meetings?
 - majority of meetings?
 - about half of the meetings?
 - less than half of the meetings, because of circumstances beyond your control?
10. Are you a member of any of these community groups? (Check)
- Parent Teacher Association
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Service Club
 - Others (name) _____
11. Have you visited the schools
- frequently?
 - occasionally?
 - never, because of personal circumstances?
12. Have you visited the classrooms
- frequently?
 - occasionally?
 - never, because of personal circumstances?
13. Check any of these meetings which you have attended
- professional meetings held for school administrators
 - State School Board Association meetings
 - other educational conferences (name) _____
14. Children
- How many children have you above the age of five? _____
- How many of these are attending or have been graduated from public schools? _____

PART II

Draw a circle around the number to the left of each statement which corresponds to the answer that best expresses your personal opinion. Please think in terms of the elementary schools only.

A circle around 2 means you AGREE

A circle around 3 means you have NO OPINION

A circle around 4 means you DISAGREE

- (2 3 4) a. The solving of a child's problem should be a cooperative endeavor between the school and the home.
- (2 3 4) b. Matters of discipline are problems of the school and should be handled by the school alone.
- (2 3 4) c. Human relations (the art of getting along with one another) is as important as learning the three R's.
- (2 3 4) d. Modern school children tend to be irresponsible and disrespectful.
- (2 3 4) e. Children should be given every opportunity to tell their side of the story.
- (2 3 4) f. The school has no business snooping into the child's home life to discover the source of a discipline problem.
- (2 3 4) g. Ridicule or sarcasm is a poor form of discipline.
- (2 3 4) h. Trying to reason with discipline cases is a waste of time.
- (2 3 4) i. School work which is too difficult is one cause of misbehavior.
- (2 3 4) j. Children are not disciplined adequately in the elementary school.

PART III

- (2 3 4) a. Exceptionally bright children should be double promoted (skip a grade) regardless of their maturity.
- (2 3 4) b. Each child should be made to feel that he is important and part of the group in a good elementary school.
- (2 3 4) c. Most teachers do not really understand the slow learning child because they, themselves, were above average students.
- (2 3 4) d. Slow children should be given more homework than the average or superior children.
- (2 3 4) e. Praise from the teacher has been a help to deserving, slow learning children.
- (2 3 4) f. The modern school attempts to provide for children who are slow learning by adapting instruction to their particular level of ability.
- (2 3 4) g. The slow learning child should devote all his time to academic work until he is at the average grade level of his class before being permitted to participate in dramatics, physical education, and other phases of non-academic school work.
- (2 3 4) h. Schools should not concern themselves with individual problems.
- (2 3 4) i. Children should experience frustration and failure in school just as they will experience when they "get out into the world."
- (2 3 4) j. Schools are better equipped today to deal with varied levels of ability among children.

PART IV

- A circle around 2 means you AGREE
A circle around 3 means you have NO OPINION
A circle around 4 means you DISAGREE

Please think in terms of the elementary school only

- (2 3 4) a. Schools of 25 years ago did a more thorough job of teaching than schools of today are doing.
- (2 3 4) b. Not enough emphasis is being placed on the teaching of the three R's.
- (2 3 4) c. Children receive a poor background in the fundamentals (skills in reading, writing and arithmetic) in proportion to taxes levied for school use.
- (2 3 4) d. Nothing but the three R's should be taught in the elementary school.
- (2 3 4) e. Teachers should teach the facts in text books and not be concerned with the interests of the children.
- (2 3 4) f. The teaching of reading is considered of utmost importance by the modern school because it is the basis of most future learning.
- (2 3 4) g. Examinations should be the main basis upon which report card grades are determined.
- (2 3 4) h. A text book should be thoroughly and extensively "covered," page by page.
- (2 3 4) i. Children should not have a voice in what they would like to study.
- (2 3 4) j. The teaching of sounds of words in reading is being neglected.

PART V

1. Do you feel that the elementary school teachers' salaries in your town or city
 ___ are adequate? ___ need adjustment? ___ are too high?
 Comments: _____
2. Do you believe that your school district should provide funds to help cover some of the cost of professional courses for teachers during the school year?
 ___ Yes ___ No Comments: _____
3. Do you sometimes feel that the elementary schools in your town or city have so many activities that there is not enough time given to academic learning?
 ___ Yes ___ No Comments: _____
4. Do you think that too many new ideas, experiments, and changes are being made in the elementary schools?
 ___ Yes ___ No Comments: _____
5. Does your city or town have a supervising principal in any of the elementary schools?
 ___ Yes ___ No
6. Both of the following two duties of a supervising elementary school principal are very important. Please check the duty which you believe a principal should place first in importance.
 ___ instructional leadership, such as supervising instruction and evaluating teachers' efficiency.
 ___ attention to details, such as the keeping of records and efficient management.
 Comments: _____
7. Please list any educational control or policy making activities connected with the elementary schools in which the board is not now involved, but in which you feel the board should be expected to engage.
 a. _____ b. _____
 c. _____ Comments: _____

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study was based on a questionnaire distributed to 290 school board members in New Hampshire. An analysis of the returns shows that 163 questionnaires were received, which constitutes a return of 56.20 per cent.

These questionnaires provided the data to determine to what extent school board members in New Hampshire possess essential qualifications as established in professional literature.

Data were also obtained to define the opinions and attitudes held by New Hampshire school board members toward current practices and philosophies in our modern elementary schools within the three areas of discipline, individual differences, and teaching fundamentals.

The third section of this chapter analyzes Part V of the questionnaire dealing with New Hampshire school board members' personal opinions relative to the elementary school program in their own communities.

TABLE I
 DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNS OF 163 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS
 BY POPULATION GROUPS

Population	Towns Sent	Returned	Per Cent Returned	Per Cent of Total Returned
Under 500	64	39	60.9	23.4
500-1,000	57	34	57.9	20.3
1,000-5,000	91	63	69.2	38.8
5,000-20,000	29	24	82.7	14.8
over 20,000	3	3	100.0	1.8
Total	244	163	60.2	100.0

Table I shows that all five populations groups were represented in the study. The percentage of returns from each population group is rather close. It is significant to note that all three of the cities with populations over 20,000 were represented in the returns. However, a total of 16 board members from these three cities received questionnaires and only three of them responded, for an 18.7 per cent response.

All 10 New Hampshire counties were represented in the returns of the questionnaire.

TABLE II
 DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNS OF 163 SCHOOL BOARD
 MEMBERS BY SEX

Sex	Number	Per Cent
Male	100	61.7
Female	63	38.3
Total	163	100.0

Table II shows that 61.7 per cent of the total number of returns came from male members.

At the present time, the number of women board members in New Hampshire is approximately 35 per cent of the total membership. This table reveals that the number of women respondents compares very favorably with the state-wide percentage.

TABLE III
 DISTRIBUTION OF 136 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS
 BY AGE GROUPS

Age Group by Years	Number	Per Cent
20--29	3	1.8
30--39	46	28.4
40--49	75	45.8
50--59	29	17.9

TABLE III (continued)

Age Group by Years	Number	Per Cent
60--69	10	6.1
70 or over	--	---
Total	163	100.0

Table III shows that the largest group of respondents is in the 40--49 age group. It may also be seen that 93 per cent of all the respondents are between the ages of 30 and 59. Only three members are in the 20--29 age group. Some authorities rate very young members as the least effective.

TABLE IV

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF MEMBERS

Educational Level	Number	Per Cent
College graduate	77	47.2
Attended college	34	20.7
High school graduate	37	22.0
Attended high school	12	7.3
Completed eighth grade	3	1.8
Total	163	100.0

Table IV reveals that the respondents have an excellent educational background to serve as a basis for their work on the boards of education. Over two-thirds of them

have either attended college or have been graduated from college. Several listed higher degrees. Nearly 90 per cent have at least a high school education.

TABLE V

VOCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF 163 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Vocation	Number	Per Cent
Professional	53	32.5
Business	61	37.5
Farmer	9	5.5
Skilled Labor	16	9.8
Unskilled Labor	1	.6
Housewife	22	13.5
Retired	1	.6
Total	163	100.0

Table V reveals the vocational backgrounds of the board members. Seventy per cent of the respondents are found in the professional and business classifications. Authorities are not unanimous in the belief that all members should belong in these classifications, but the majority of the studies indicate that the best members do fall into these groups. Only one member in this study indicated that he was an unskilled laborer, and one member indicated that he was retired.

The specific vocations of members that were named more than once are as follows:

<u>Times mentioned</u>	<u>Vocations</u>
17	Teacher
6	Bookkeeper; farmer; nurse
5	Insurance salesman
4	Physician; retail grocer; postal service
3	Engineer
2	Forester; banker; salesman; veterinarian; college professor; quality control engineer

Mentioned once were such varied vocations as filling station operator, electrical contractor, assistant plant supervisor, legislator, milk distributor, civil, chemical, and electrical engineer, medical research chemist, office manager, ship fitter, legal secretary, carpenter, lawyer, automobile dealer, innkeeper, gagemaker, and minister. Over one-half of the respondents named their specific vocations.

As indicated above, teaching leads the list of vocations. Authorities show a difference of opinion regarding the value of teaching experience as an aid in enabling a board member to carry out his duties most efficiently. A few authorities say teaching experience is valuable to school board members; however, the majority of the educators do not mention it among the characteristics of a good board member.

TABLE VI

REASONS GIVEN BY RESPONDENTS FOR BECOMING CANDIDATES

Reason	Number of Times Listed
Asked to run by civic group	20
Asked to run by individuals	87
Personal interest in public education	100
Other reasons	7

Several of the members listed more than one reason and a few respondents mentioned all three reasons. The 7 members listed "other" reasons as follows:

Interested after being on school building committee
 Civic interest
 To fill a vacancy
 Three children in school
 A civic duty
 Could not refuse nomination
 To establish a school lunch program

The fact that 107 members, or 65.7 per cent, of the respondents were asked to become candidates shows that many New Hampshire communities are "planning their candidates." Heugh says that properly qualified persons should be persuaded to run for office for the best interests of the community.¹

¹William C. Heugh, "How to Get a Good School Board," Nation's Schools, Vol 40, pp. 26-27, November, 1947.

TABLE VII
LENGTH OF SERVICE OF MEMBERS BY YEARS

Years	Number	Per Cent	Years	Number	Per Cent
One	29	17.9	Ten	3	1.8
Two	23	14.1	Eleven	1	.6
Three	23	14.1	Twelve	3	1.8
Four	16	9.8	Thirteen	2	1.2
Five	20	12.6	Fourteen	1	.6
Six	12	7.3	Sixteen	2	1.2
Seven	7	4.2	Twenty-One	1	.6
Eight	8	4.8	Twenty-Three	1	.6
Nine	6	3.7			
Median Length of Service--4 years					

Table VII shows how long the respondents have been members of the school board. Length of service ranges from one year to twenty-three years, and the median is four years. Previous studies have indicated that superior members have served relatively long terms, averaging six years. However, it is interesting to note that only 28.4 per cent of the respondents have served six years or over.

TABLE VIII

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BOARD MEMBERS WHO REGULARLY
READ PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINES

Magazine	Number	Per Cent
American School Board Journal	35	21.4
School Executive	10	6.1
Nation's Schools	18	11.0
School Management	48	29.4
Magazines other than those recommended	17	10.3
No magazines	77	47.2

Table VIII reveals the number of members who read the recommended magazines regularly. It is highly significant that nearly half of the members did not indicate that they had done any professional reading at all to help them in their duties. Another 10.3 per cent indicated that they read magazines other than the recommended ones. Some of these were in addition to the recommended ones. Among other magazines mentioned were: New Hampshire School Board Association Bulletin, New Hampshire and National Education Association Magazine, Better Schools, Nation's Business, U.S. News and World Report, Schools are News, American School News, and School Bell. It would seem that many New Hampshire members are missing an opportunity to keep abreast of changes in modern educational practices.

TABLE IX

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERS WHO USED TYPES OF
HELP SUGGESTED BY PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

Type of Help	Number	Per Cent
Conferences with superintendent	132	80.9
Information from experienced members	106	65.0
Reading of the board's rules and regulations	107	65.6
Other types of help not suggested	39	23.4
No help	2	1.2

Table IX gives the types of help suggested by professional educators, and the number of respondents who made use of them. It is noted that nearly 20 per cent of the members did not check conferences with the superintendent, a help considered most important by the educators. Nearly one-fourth of the members checked help other than that suggested. This help is listed on the following page. It was interesting to note that the two members who indicated that they received no help had done no professional reading.

Other types of help mentioned by the respondents were:

<u>Times mentioned</u>	<u>Type of help</u>
8	New Hampshire School Board Association Bulletin
4	Study of New Hampshire state law
4	Experience

- 3 New Hampshire handbook for school board members
- 2 Former member of board in another state
- 2 Close association with teachers
- 1 Former representative and selectman, regular meetings, letters from the State Department of Education, member of planning board, study of town educational history, former superintendent, former school principal, public sentiment, former teacher, work shop, and P.T.A. Magazine

TABLE X

REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE AT BOARD MEETINGS
BY RESPONDENTS

Attendance	Number	Per Cent
All meetings	116	71.2
Majority of meetings	44	26.9
Less than half of meetings	3	1.9
Total	163	100.0

More than seven-tenths of the members have attended all the meetings of the board as shown by Table X. A few of the members indicated that they had missed just one meeting because of illness. These figures reveal a high degree of regularity of attendance on the part of the New Hampshire members.

TABLE XI
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERS BELONGING
TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community Group	Number	Per Cent
Parent-Teacher Association	103	63.1
Chamber of Commerce	14	8.8
Service Club	16	9.8
Others	23	14.1
None	7	4.2
Total	163	100.0

A strong community spirit, manifested by membership in community groups, is considered one of the characteristics of a good school board member. Table XI indicates that nearly two-thirds of the respondents belong to the Parent-Teacher Association. According to the literature, membership in this organization was deemed valuable to a school board member. It is interesting to note that nearly all of the 60 members who are not members of the Parent-Teacher Association have children in the public schools. It would seem that there should be nearly a hundred per cent membership in the Parent-Teacher Association and that these 60 members are missing an excellent opportunity to come into contact with one important element of the public.

Most frequently mentioned in other community groups were Grange, church organizations, women's clubs, and fraternal organizations.

TABLE XII

REPORT ON 163 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' VISITS
TO THE SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

	Visited Schools		Visited Classrooms	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Frequently	70	42.9	17	10.3
Occasionally	88	54.1	109	66.9
Never	5	3.0	30	18.5
No Answer	--	--	7	4.3
Total	163	100.0	163	100.0

Table XII shows that all respondents except five have visited the school buildings at least occasionally. Nearly one-fifth of the members indicated that they had never visited a classroom. Three reasons given by the members for never visiting classrooms are as follows: (1) no place for board member in the classroom; (2) never because of personal convictions; and (3) principal and superintendent would not like it. Educators agree that one important duty of every board member is to know his school system, and visiting the schools is one way he may learn something about the system. It appears that most of the New Hampshire members are endeavoring to learn about their school systems.

TABLE XIII

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF 163 BOARD MEMBERS WHO
HAVE ATTENDED EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS

Type of Meeting	Number	Per Cent
Professional meetings held for school administrators	27	16.8
State School Boards Association meetings	39	23.6
Other educational conferences	24	14.9
No meetings	73	44.7
Total	163	100.0

Table XIII shows that 44.7 per cent of the members did not indicate that they had attended any meetings. The first requirement of an effective school board member is that he have the information and knowledge on which to base his decisions. Lack of attendance to any professional educational meetings indicates a reluctance on the part of many New Hampshire board members to take the time to learn something of the current trends and practices of other school districts. Other educational conferences listed by the members are teachers' conventions, school union district meetings, and the annual educational conference sponsored by the State Department of Education in Concord, New Hampshire.

TABLE XIV
 REPORT ON NUMBER OF 163 BOARD MEMBERS' CHILDREN
 OVER THE AGE OF FIVE

Number of Children	Number of Members	Per Cent of Members
One	31	18.0
Two	44	26.9
Three	45	27.4
Four	16	9.8
Five	6	3.7
Six	6	3.7
Seven	3	1.8
Nine	2	1.2
No Children	10	6.1
Total	163	100.0

Table XIV shows that nearly 94 per cent of the New Hampshire respondents have children over the age of five. It was noted that only 13 of the 153 members with children over the age of five do not send their children to the public schools. Most of these 13 board members are members in the smaller towns. It can be concluded that a majority of the New Hampshire board members meet the qualification of having children in the public schools.

TABLE XV
ANALYSIS OF THE 163 RESPONSES TO THE TEN STATEMENTS
IN PART II (DISCIPLINE AREA)

Statement			No	No
	Agree	Disagree	Opinion	Answer
a. The solving of a child's problem should be a cooperative endeavor between the school and the home	161	1		1
b. Matters of discipline are problems of the school and should be handled by the school alone	21	141		1
c. Human relations (the art of getting along with one another) is as important as learning the three R's	140	13	4	6
d. Modern school children tend to be irresponsible and disrespectful	30	118	7	8
e. Children should be given every opportunity to tell their side of the story	152	4	2	5
f. The school has no business snooping into the child's home life to discover the source of a discipline problem	13	130	9	11
g. Ridicule or sarcasm is a poor form of discipline	152	7	1	3
h. Trying to reason with a discipline case is a waste of time	6	151	3	3
i. School work which is too difficult is one cause of misbehavior	70	65	20	8

TABLE XV (continued)

Statement	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	No Answer
j. Children are not disciplined adequately in the elementary school	38	96	18	11

Discipline. In Part II (discipline) there appears to be strong agreement on the part of the board members with the forty-five criterion group judged mentioned in Chapter III. This is indeed both a significant and an encouraging finding. School board opinion apparently is definitely in accord with modern school practices which reflect cultural change and progress. However, it is also important to find that never is agreement complete. Evidently there are some board members who do not hold to attitudes in regard to discipline that have been accepted by most educators.

In three of the statements there is an expression of disagreement with the educators. Statement "d" states:

"Modern school children tend to be irresponsible and disrespectful." Here, there were thirty board members, or 18.5 per cent, who agreed with the statement. Several members qualified the statement by inserting the word "some" or "many" at the beginning of the statement to change its meaning somewhat, and then indicated that they agreed with the statement.

Statement "i" reads:

"School work which is too difficult is one cause of misbehavior." There were seventy board members, or 42.9 per cent, who agreed with the statement. There were sixty-five, or 39.8 per cent of the members, who disagreed with the statement. The relatively large percentage of members who disagreed would indicate that many board members feel that difficult school work is not a factor in discipline, or that they feel that most children are not experiencing work which is too difficult. Several board members indicated by comments that school work which is too easy is one cause of misbehavior. This would indicate that perhaps several board members feel that some of the elementary school work is too easy. Statement "j" reads:

"Children are not disciplined adequately in the elementary school." There were thirty-eight board members, or 22.6 per cent, who agreed with this statement. Here again there is evidence that although most board members agree with current practices of discipline, there is a significant number who indicate that they are not satisfied with the end results.

TABLE XVI

ANALYSIS OF THE 163 RESPONSES TO THE TEN STATEMENTS
IN PART III (INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES)

Statement			No	No
	Agree	Disagree	Opinion	Answer
a. Exceptionally bright children should be double promoted (skip a grade) regardless of their maturity.	14	132	12	5
b. Each child should be made to feel that he is important and part of the group in a good elementary school.	161	--	--	2
c. Most teachers do not really understand the slow learning child because they, themselves, were above average students.	19	122	17	5
d. Slow learning children should be given more homework than the average or superior children.	17	132	10	4
e. Praise from the teacher has been a help to deserving, slow learning children.	158	2	2	1
f. The modern school attempts to provide for children who are slow learning by adapting instruction to their particular level of ability.	103	22	10	8
g. The slow learning child should devote all his time to academic work until he is at the average grade level of his class before being permitted to participate in dramatics, physical education, and other phases of non-academic school work.	115	139	5	4

TABLE XVI (continued)

Statement			No	No
	Agree	Disagree	Opinion	Answer
h. Schools should not concern themselves with individual problems.	5	149	6	3
i. Children should experience frustration and failure in school just as they will experience when they "get out into the world."	63	77	6	17
j. Schools are better equipped today to deal with varied levels of ability among children.	141	10	8	4

Individual Differences. In Part III (Individual Differences) there was only one statement to which the board members showed a high percentage of disagreement with the educators. The statement ("i") is:

"Children should experience frustration and failure in school just as they will when they "get out into the world." Sixty-three board members, or 38.3 per cent, agreed with this statement, while only seventy-seven board members, or 47.2 per cent, disagreed. This would perhaps indicate that many board members, although they agree in general with educators in the area of individual differences, have the feeling that there is a current practice of over-protecting children in our modern elementary schools.

It is also somewhat significant to note that twenty-two board members, or 13.5 per cent, indicated that they did not agree that the modern school "attempts to provide for children who are slow learning by adapting instruction to their particular level of ability."

In statement "d", "Slow children should be given more homework than the average or superior children," there was an attempt made by the investigator to draw conclusions regarding the educational background of the seventeen board members who agreed with this statement. It was felt that perhaps board members in the lower educational group would be the ones who believe this is a good practice, while the better educated members would be more sophisticated concerning the relationship between academic aptitude and scholastic achievement. No significant trend or conclusion could be established, because the study revealed that of the seventeen members who agreed with the statement, two graduated from the eighth grade, three attended high school, six were high school graduates, two attended college, four were college graduates, and one of the college graduates was a teacher.

TABLE XVII

ANALYSIS OF THE 163 RESPONSES TO THE TEN STATEMENTS
IN PART IV (TEACHING FUNDAMENTALS)

Statement			No	No
	Agree	Disagree	Opinion	Answer
a. Schools of 25 years ago did a more thorough job of teaching than schools of today are doing.	31	105	20	7
b. Not enough emphasis is being placed on the teaching of the three R's.	85	58	15	6
c. Children receive a poor background in the fundamentals (skills in reading, writing and arithmetic) in proportion to taxes levied for school use.	35	94	25	9
d. Nothing but the three R's should be taught in the elementary school.	10	150	2	1
e. Teachers should teach the facts in text books and not be concerned with the interests of the children.	17	138	4	4
f. The teaching of reading is considered of utmost importance by the modern school because it is the basis of most future learning.	149	5	3	6
g. Examinations should be the main basis upon which report cards are determined.	25	128	5	5
h. A text book should be thoroughly and extensively "covered," page by page.	41	93	20	9

TABLE XVII (continued)

Statement			No	No
	Agree	Disagree	Opinion	Answer
i. Children should not have a voice in what they would like to study.	44	97	14	8
j. The teaching of sounds in words is being neglected.	77	52	29	5

Teaching Fundamentals. In Part IV (Teaching Fundamentals) there were seven statements to which board members displayed definite attitudes of disagreement with the educators. It would appear that the high percentage of contradictory responses to these statements certainly reflects an attitude of dissatisfaction on the part of many board members. Statement "b" declares that, "Not enough emphasis is being placed on the teaching of the three R's." Eighty-five board members, or 52.1 per cent, agreed with this statement. However, many of these members who agreed added a further comment that schools are improving in this area instead of slipping, but that much more progress needs to be made.

Statement "i" reads, "Children should not have a voice in what they would like to study." Forty-four, or 26.9 per cent of the members, agreed with this statement. This could indicate that perhaps many board members feel that a "voice

in what they would like to study," would give the elementary school children too much control in this area. Perhaps also they fear that the teacher would allow too much of a choice without enough guidance and direction.

Statement "j" states: "The teaching of sounds of words in reading is being neglected." The fact that seventy-seven members, or 47.2 per cent, agreed with this statement indicates that there is a great need for a better understanding of the reading program in the modern school on the part of the board members. Undoubtedly, many current magazine articles have influenced the members' thinking in this area.

It was interesting to note that ten members agreed with the statement that "Nothing but the three R's should be taught in the elementary school."

REPORT ON PART V

In this part each board member was encouraged to make comments regarding his personal opinion of his own school system. The board members were reminded to think only in terms of the elementary schools.

1. Do you feel that the elementary school teachers' salaries in your town or city:

	<u>Are adequate</u>	<u>Need adjustment</u>	<u>Are too high</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Number	93	66	- -	4
Per Cent	57	40.4	- -	2.4

There were sixty-seven board members, or 40.5 per cent, who commented on this question. The largest number of comments suggested that the salaries were at a maximum because of the limited financial resources of that particular town or city. According to Gross this certainly is an unprofessional view.² In other words, it appears that many board members give greater consideration to the financial resources of their community than to the educational needs of the school system. Several board members suggested the desire of increasing the salaries of good new teachers while holding the line on "mediocre" long-time teachers.

A large number of the board members indicated that their salaries were adequate because they were equal to the state average. This comment could conceivably indicate that the practice of wide publication of state averages by the New Hampshire Department of Education has, in some cases, caused an adverse effect on the teacher salary levels in many communities.

Some of the board members indicated that they would favor a merit rating system for teachers because of the inequity of salary schedules within a school system.

²Neal Gross, Who Runs Our Schools? (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958), p. 67.

2. Do you believe that your school district should provide funds to help cover some of the cost of professional courses for teachers during the school year?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Number	63	93	7
Per Cent	38.3	57	4.2

There were fifty-two board members, or 31.9 per cent, who commented on this question. The largest group of comments indicated that the members felt that professional advancement was the responsibility of the individual.

Another large group felt that these funds should be provided in lieu of adequate salaries or until such time that adequate salaries were a reality.

A few members agreed that there should be financial help available with the stipulation that the town could retain the teachers who so benefited from the educational courses.

There were sixteen members who indicated that their school districts currently provide financial aid, and there were a few members who indicated that they could understand the possible advantages to the schools as a result of financial assistance to the teachers, but were still not in favor of the idea.

3. Do you sometimes feel that the elementary schools in your town or city have so many activities that there is

not enough time given to academic learning?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Number	28	130	5
Per Cent	17.1	79.7	3

Nineteen, or 11.6 per cent, of the members commented on this question. It is apparent that the majority of the members do not feel that this is a problem in their schools. In fact, four of the members stressed that at the present time there are not enough extra curricular activities in their elementary schools.

Some of the activities that were listed as being responsible for taking up too much school time are music, art, dancing, television, collections for milk, savings stamps, lunch, etc., and outside organizations such as garden clubs and P.T.A.

4. Do you think that too many new ideas, experiments, and changes are being made in the elementary schools?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Number	28	129	6
Per Cent	17.1	78.8	3.7

A study of the returns revealed that thirteen of the twenty-eight board members who answered "yes" to this question also answered "yes" to question number three. Nineteen of the board members, or 11.6 per cent, made comments on this question. Several indicated that new ideas, experiments, and changes were needed for the continuance of educational

progress. Changes that were listed as detrimental are television, foreign languages, and "too many practice teachers."

5. Does your city or town have a supervising principal in any of the elementary schools?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Number	95	63	5
Per Cent	58.8	38.3	3.0

This question was included in the study for the purpose of comparing the answers (in following item number six) of board members who worked with supervising elementary school principals and board members who did not have supervising elementary school principals in their school systems. However, the data are not valid because of the ambiguous question. The question was apparently not understood by the laymen. There are less than ninety supervising elementary school principals in New Hampshire--so the data would indicate that a clear distinction between supervising principal and teaching principal should have been made.

6. Both of the following two duties of a supervising elementary school principal are very important. Please check the duty which you believe a principal should place first in importance.

Instructional leadership, such as supervising instruction and evaluating teachers' efficiency.
(141, or 86.5 per cent)

Attention to details, such as the keeping of records and efficient management. (10, or 6.1 per cent)

It is apparent that the majority of school board members have a clear understanding of the important role of the supervising elementary school principal. A few board members, however, commented that instructional leadership was the duty of the superintendent and helping teacher, and not of the principal. Several board members indicated that they felt that the principals were spending too much time and attention to details and not displaying enough instructional leadership.

7. Please list any educational control or policy-making activities connected with the elementary schools in which the board is not now involved, but in which you feel the board should be expected to engage.

Only seventeen, or 10.4 per cent, of the board members responded to this item. One hundred forty-six, or 89.5 per cent of the board members, did not respond. This would indicate that most of the board members are satisfied with their educational control and policy-making activities.

However, several members commented on areas of education in which they would like to participate. A closer working relationship in the selection of textbooks was mentioned several times. Several members stressed the

desire to see a physical education program developed in their elementary schools. A few members complained that their superintendents were not helping them to understand the reasons and proposed advantages of recent changes in their school systems.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

One purpose of this study was to determine to what extent school board members in New Hampshire possess some of the qualifications considered essential for good board members as established in professional literature.

It may be concluded from the data collected in this study that New Hampshire school board members are a dedicated, intelligent group of professional and business men and women, possessing an excellent educational background. Their children attend or have been graduated from public schools.

The majority of them have become candidates because of their personal interest in public education and because they were asked to become candidates by civic groups and individuals. More than half of them have served longer than a three-year (one term) period.

Nearly half of the members have indicated that they are not regular readers of professional educational literature, and so it can be assumed that a definite weakness exists in respect to effort extended by the members to orient themselves for their tasks and duties as board members.

They help to acquaint themselves with their school systems by occasionally visiting schools and classrooms.

They are very faithful in attendance at all board meetings.

The composite picture of the qualities and characteristics of a good board member as they appear in Chapter III are listed below, and treated individually for the purpose of comparing New Hampshire members with each criterion. The comparisons are made on the basis of one hundred sixty-three respondents.

1. He has made an effort to acquaint himself with the duties of his position. Here, the comparison would be considered favorable. Over eighty per cent of the members have had conferences with their superintendents, and several other types of help were listed.

2. He was requested to become a candidate. Approximately two-thirds of the members indicated that they were requested to become candidates. However, the other third would have to be compared unfavorably with this criterion. Many members of this latter group indicated a personal interest in public education, which is naturally desirable, but not a completely reliable criterion upon which to pass judgment. In many instances members can be "interested in public education" for the purpose of gaining political experience or representing a particular group or faction of the community.

3. He is a professional or a businessman. A favorable comparison may be made here. Although a wide variety

of vocations was represented, seventy per cent of the members fall into this category.

4. He is regular in attendance at board meetings. New Hampshire board members should be rated high in this qualification. Over seventy per cent attended all board meetings and nearly all of the remaining group had attended the majority of the meetings.

5. He has served more than one term of office on the board. Generally, one term of office in New Hampshire is three years. More than half of the members indicated that they were in their second or third terms. Forty-six per cent were in their first term. Here, New Hampshire board members cannot be compared as favorably as would be desirable.

6. He is a man between thirty and sixty years of age, with several children attending or graduated from public schools. Since ninety-three per cent of the members are between the ages of thirty and sixty, and over seventy per cent have two or more children attending public schools, it can be concluded that New Hampshire board members rate very high in this criterion.

7. He is an active member of a civic or a community group. New Hampshire board members rate high in this qualification. Nearly ninety per cent are members of some community group. A general weakness exists in this area in reference

to the P.T.A. Over a third of the members are not associated with the P.T.A., even though most of them have children in the public schools.

8. He has at least a high school education. Members compare very favorably with this qualification. Nearly ninety per cent have at least a high school education, and nearly half of them are college graduates.

9. He is a regular reader of professional educational magazines. Here, an unfavorable comparison would have to be made. Nearly one half of the members did not indicate that they had done any professional reading at all.

10. He has endeavored to become well acquainted with his school system. Nearly all of the board members have visited schools and classrooms at least occasionally. The members would therefore compare very favorably with this criterion.

The conclusion which may be drawn from these comparisons is that, generally speaking, New Hampshire school board members possess most of the essential qualifications as suggested by professional literature.

Another purpose of this study was to gain definite ideas as to what board members in New Hampshire consider good and bad practices and procedures in our elementary educational program. The following conclusions can be made:

1. In general, the attitudes and opinions expressed by the New Hampshire school board members are in accord with those held by professional educators, especially within the areas of "Discipline" and "Individual Differences."

2. There seemed to be no indication in this limited study that board members who are college graduates are in greater accord with educators than high school and non-high school board members are, with references to practices used in the modern elementary schools.

3. It was noted in the study that the greatest disagreement between board members and educators seems to be in the area dealing with "Teaching of Fundamentals." There were two statements in this area in which the one hundred sixty-three board members were nearly equally divided in their opinions. Four of the remaining eight statements showed a very significant number of board members disagreeing with the educators. It could therefore be suggested that the practices or philosophies implied by the six statements in the area of "Teaching of Fundamentals" need further study in an effort to learn the exact nature and source of the wide differences in attitude toward these practices between board members and educators.

4. Nowhere in the study was it found that anything near complete unanimity existed among the board members on any of the issues in the questionnaire. There were minority

groups on every issue presented. This indicates that there is at least some misunderstanding of the school practices even among the people who should be most qualified, as laymen, to interpret the modern school objectives and practices.

The third purpose of this study was to learn of the New Hampshire board member's personal opinions relative to the elementary educational program in his own community. The following conclusions are submitted:

1. Over forty per cent of the board members in the study indicated that they feel the elementary school teachers' salaries in their communities need adjustment. Many of them defended the situation on the basis of "limited financial resources" in their towns, while several indicated that they favor some sort of merit system in connection with salary adjustments.

2. Nearly forty per cent of the board members feel that their school district should provide funds to help cover some of the cost of professional courses for teachers during the school year. Many of the board members who do not agree with this practice indicated that they feel that professional advancement is the responsibility of each individual teacher. Over nine per cent indicated that the practice of providing the funds is currently in effect in their communities.

3. A significant minority, over seventeen per cent of the board members, feel that too many activities

are resulting in insufficient time allotment to academic learning. Many in this same group think that too many new ideas, experiments, and changes are being made in the elementary schools. However, nearly eighty per cent of the members do not share these opinions.

4. The study points out that a large majority of the New Hampshire school board members possess a clear understanding of the role of the supervising elementary school principal. Most of them agreed that instructional leadership, such as supervising instruction and evaluating teachers' efficiency, come first in importance as a duty of the supervising elementary school principal. The six per cent of the members who thought that attention to details, such as the keeping of records and efficient management, should be first in importance, attempted to justify their thinking by commenting that instructional leadership and evaluation was the job of the superintendent and helping teacher.

5. Nearly all of the one hundred sixty-three board members appeared to be satisfied with their control and policy-making activities connected with the elementary schools. Over ten per cent commented on areas of elementary education in which they would like to participate. Two of these areas included selection of text books, and the initiating of a physical education program in their elementary schools.

An apparent limitation of this study is that only fifty-six per cent of the questionnaires were returned. Therefore, such a small number of respondents as one hundred sixty-three made comparisons of attitudes among the members quite insignificant in respect to educational and vocational background, age, and length of service on the board.

The writer would like to suggest as further study the following areas:

1. A comparison study using the ten statements in each area--"Discipline, Individual Differences, and Teaching of Fundamentals"--with a representative group of parents in New Hampshire.
2. A study of the attitudes of parents in one community whose children are doing well in school compared with the attitudes of parents in the same community whose children are doing poorly in school.
3. A study of board members' opinions and attitudes toward the role and the duties of the supervising and the teaching elementary school principal.
4. A comparison study of board members in two distinctly different groups or types of communities--one group of communities with overall above-average socio-economic status, and the other group with overall below-average socio-economic status.

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APPENDIX A

70

73 Turnpike Street
Suncook, N.H.
January 28, 1960

Dear School Board Member:

I am making a study of the school boards of many representative communities in New Hampshire. This is being done in connection with a research project at Boston University School of Education. I am a graduate of Plymouth State Teachers College and am now working in New Hampshire.

The enclosed inquiry form serves a three-fold purpose. First of all, it is an attempt to secure data about school board members. Secondly, it is an attempt to gain definite ideas as to what board members consider good and bad practices and procedures in our educational program. And thirdly, it seeks a board member's personal opinion relative to the educational program in his own community.

All answers on the inquiry form are to be in terms only of elementary schools. Your reply is intended to be completely anonymous. The item at the top of page one giving the population group is for classification purposes only. Would you please help me with this study by promptly completing the questionnaire and returning it in the self-addressed envelope? Your cooperation is especially appreciated.

Sincerely,

Harold H. Matava

By taking the few minutes required to answer these questions, you will be not only doing a very special personal favor to Mr. Matava, but you may also help to bring about a better understanding of the needs for future study and programs to be undertaken by your New Hampshire School Boards Association.

Sincerely yours,

John L. Saturley, President
N.H. School Boards Association

APPENDIX B

COOPERATING CITIES AND TOWNS

The one hundred forty-seven cities and towns in New Hampshire which were represented in the survey are as follows:

Acworth	Epsom
Albany	Errol
Alexandria	Exeter
Allenstown	
Alstead	Fitzwilliam
Andover	Fremont
Antrim	
Ashland	Gilford
Atkinson	Gilmanton
Auburn	Goffstown
	Gorham
Barrington	Grafton
Bartlett	Grantham
Bath	Greenland
Bedford	Groton
Bennington	
Berlin	Hampstead
Boscawen	Hancock
Brentwood	Hanover
Bristol	Harrisville
Brookfield	Haverhill
	Hebron
Campton	Henniker
Candia	Hill
Canterbury	Holderness
Chatham	Hollis
Chester	Hooksett
Chichester	Hopkinton
Claremont	
Colebrook	Jackson
Concord	Jaffrey
Cornish	Jefferson
Croydon	
	Keene
Danbury	Kensington
Deerfield	Kingston
Dorchester	
Dover	Laconia
	Lancaster
Eaton	Landaff
Enfield	Langdon

APPENDIX B (continued)

Lebanon
 Lincoln
 Lisbon
 Litchfield
 Littleton
 Loudon
 Lyndeboro

Madison
 Manchester
 Marlboro
 Mason
 Merrimack
 Milford
 Mont Vernon

Nashua
 New Boston
 New Durham
 New Ipswich
 New London
 Newfields
 Newington
 Newmarket
 Newport
 Newton

Pembroke
 Penacook
 Peterborough
 Plainfield
 Plymouth
 Portsmouth

Rindge
 Rochester
 Rumney
 Rye

Sandwich
 Seabrook
 Sharon
 Somersworth
 South Hampton
 Stewartstown
 Stoddard
 Strafford
 Stratford
 Stratham
 Sullivan
 Surry
 Swanzey

Tamworth
 Tilton
 Troy

Unity

Walpole
 Warner
 Warren
 Washington
 Weare
 Webster
 Wentworth
 Westmoreland
 Whitefield
 Wilmot
 Windham
 Windsor
 Wolfeboro

Goshen-Lempster (Cooperative)
 Hillsboro-Deering (Cooperative)
 Meredith (Cooperative)
 Durham (Cooperative)