January 2012

The Perception Of School Board Members And Their Role In Improving College And Career Readiness

Sara Elaine Farris
Eastern Kentucky University

THE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLE IN IMPROVING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

by

Elaine Farris

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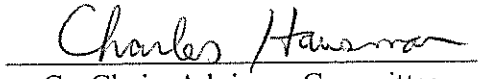

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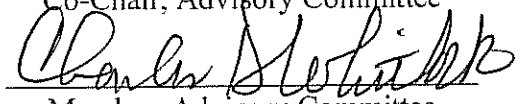

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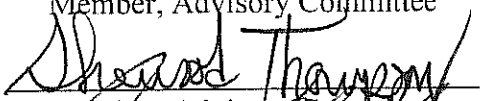

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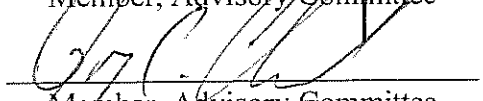

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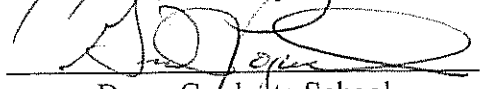

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Signature Sara Elaine Jones

Date April 5, 2012

THE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLE IN IMPROVING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

By
Elaine Farris

Master of Arts
Eastern Kentucky University
1981

Bachelor of Science
Eastern Kentucky University
1977

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctorate of Education
May, 2012

DEDICATION

First, I give thanks and praises to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! To my husband Alvin W. Farris who supported me throughout my professional career, you encouraged me when I was ready to give up and you provided the spiritual leadership that only you knew I needed and when I needed it. You have showered me with love and support for thirty five years. You have been instrumental in helping me to become the woman that I am today. I dedicate this work to my deceased father, Henry Smith, and to my sisters: Lucille, Shirley, Rita, Judy and Hattie. Thank you for your support, encouragement and nurturing. Without your presence and support I never would have made it. A special thank you to my son, Ryan, grandsons, Darian, Elijah and Jadan, nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews. Thank you for allowing me to be one of your role models. May you choose a path of academic excellence, lifelong learning and continue to challenge yourselves to be the very best that you can be and remember that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

I dedicate the completion of my doctoral program to the memory of my mother, Sarah Emma Mason, who taught me the value of an education, hard work, perseverance and self-confidence. She taught me the importance of speaking up for what is right and just and instilled in me to give to those in need. Thank you for leaving a legacy of family, love, strength, pride and hard work.

Finally, to all the educators and school board members who serve their communities, I challenge you to continue to strive every day to ensure that every child leaves our schools with a world class education and college and career ready. Thank you for your service and May God continue to bless you!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the professional expertise and academic and personal support of my co-chairpersons, Dr. Aaron Thompson and Dr. Charles Hausman. My goal would not have been achievable without their dedication, commitment and passion to and for the field of education. Many thanks for your persistent and continuous assistance and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey. Your professional and wise counsel motivated and inspired me to continue on when life happened during this journey.

I also appreciate the support, perspective and educational expertise provided by my other committee members, Dr. Doug Whitlock, Dr. Roger Cleveland, and Dr. Sherwood Thompson. Thank you for providing the unique experiences that gave my doctoral experience a practical perspective. Last and not least, thank you to my editor Mrs. Rhonda Goode. You are good!

ABSTRACT

The national focus of graduating America's students ready for college and a career has heightened the importance of and the need for school board members to rethink their purpose on what and how they spend their time. Improving the college and career readiness of K-12 students will need school boards that are willing to receive the training to ensure that district leadership and schools are using the appropriate strategies that will impact college and career readiness.

School boards have always recognized student achievement as central to their role in governing public schools; however, the impact they actually have on promoting and improving student achievement has often been debated.

This study highlights the emerging framework of student achievement as college and career ready and provides critical evidence on local school boards' role in supporting student success through the lens of college and career readiness.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of school board members concerning their role in improving college and career readiness for their district's students, the extent to which they view college and career readiness as a priority, and their level of engagement in enhancing college and career readiness.

The following five research questions guided this study:

1. Is college and career readiness a priority of school boards?
2. What is the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students?
3. Are school boards engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students? If yes, how?

4. What gaps exist between board member's reports of the importance of indicators of career and college readiness and how much time they allocate toward these indicators?
5. What is the relationship between school board members training and the perceived importance of and allocation of time towards college and career readiness?

In addition to answering the aforementioned research questions, a single hypothesis is being tested. The more training a school board member has, the more likely he/she will believe that time should be spent focusing on college and career readiness.

Evidence from this study shows that improving college and career readiness is a priority for school board members. The findings from this study indicated that almost all of the school board members that responded to the survey offered or promoted specific strategies to improve college and career readiness in their district. Regardless of how important board members believed that curriculum and instruction and student support services strategies were to improving college and career readiness of the students in their districts, findings indicated that most of the board members responded that they discuss strategies that will improve college and career readiness of their students only two to four times a year.

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Introduction

College and Career Readiness

On March 13, 2010, the Obama administration released its blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The blueprint challenges the nation to embrace education standards that would put America on a path to global leadership.

The blueprint's goal for America's educational system is clear. Every student should graduate from high school ready to enter college or a career field. Every student should have meaningful opportunities to choose from upon graduation from high school. While all states have developed and implemented standards as required under the ESEA, in many cases, these standards do not reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success after high school, either in postsecondary education or in the job market (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Kentucky holds the belief that as the nature of work and the types of careers available change, all students will need higher-level skills to meet their career goals. The expected outcome of addressing readiness issues is that more students will reach higher levels of proficiency and more students will be college and career ready.

The Kentucky Department of Education, in collaboration with the Council for Postsecondary Education, has defined college and career readiness. Kentucky's operational definition of college readiness is the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to succeed in a credit bearing course at a postsecondary

institution. Success is defined as completing entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for subsequent courses. If Kentucky's system wide standards of readiness (ACT benchmarks in the areas of English, math, and reading) are met, they guarantee students access to credit bearing coursework without the need for remedial coursework or supplemental courses. Remedial education courses do not count as credit toward a degree.

Kentucky's operational definition of career readiness is the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to proceed to the next step in a chosen career, whether that is postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or entry into the workforce. The Association of Career and Technical Education (2010) identified three wide-ranging skill sets that students need to be career ready. Specifically, ACTE states "career readiness includes core academic skills and the ability to apply those skills to concrete situations in order to function in the workplace and in routine daily activities; employability skills that are essential in any career area such as critical thinking and responsibility; and technical, job-specific skills related to a specific career pathway."

Four out of every ten new college students, including half of those at 2-year institutions, enroll in remedial courses; many employers comment on the inadequate preparation of high school graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). While states have developed assessments aligned with their standards, in many cases these assessments do not adequately measure student growth or knowledge and skills that students need in order to be college and career ready. In addition, they do not provide timely, useful information to teachers and administrators.

President Obama has set an ambitious goal that the United States will lead the world in college completion by the end of the decade. *The Condition of College and Career Readiness Class of 2010* report (ACT, 2010) indicates there is substantial room for improvement in college and career readiness. Among the 2010 ACT-tested graduates, a combined total of 43 percent met either none (28%) or only one (15%) of the four ACT college readiness benchmarks. These students are in all likelihood deficient in many of the skills needed to succeed in credit-bearing first-year college courses and in workforce training programs. While students in the United States have experienced a gradual increase in college readiness in recent years, it is not nearly high enough to put high school graduates in the U.S. on a path to meet the president's goal.

The education blueprint announced by President Obama indicates that today more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). America was once the best educated nation in the world. A generation ago, we led all nations in college completion, but today, ten countries have surpassed us. This is not as a result of their students being smarter than ours; it is as a result of the way in which these countries choose to educate their students. The same countries that educate their students in a smarter manner today will defeat us in competition tomorrow.

Failing to earn a postsecondary credential severely limits job and income prospects (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). All factors being equal, individuals with some postsecondary education courses completed beyond high school and without a degree can earn five to eleven percent more than high school graduates. An associate's degree generally increases workers' wages about 20 to

30 percent over a high school diploma while workers with a bachelor's degree earn approximately twice that of high school graduates. (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003).

The number of postsecondary school graduates will not be sufficient to fill the more than 14 million new jobs that will be added to the labor market during that same time frame. Data also indicates that students who took a core curriculum outperformed those who did not as a whole and in every category of ethnicity (ACT, 2009).

Greene (2000) estimates that leaving high school without being prepared for postsecondary training or entry into the workforce costs our nation more than $16 billion each year in remediation, lost productivity, and increased demands on the criminal justice and welfare systems. It is imperative that we raise the expectations for our students, schools, and ourselves. We must ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared for college or a career.

Ensuring that students graduate from high school ready to enter college and the workforce is the most important challenge facing local boards of education today. While the issue is clear, the depth and scope of the problem and resolving the challenge is complex. There is no one solution that works for all students or all schools. Understanding the intricacies of student success and failure is an important step in formulating a solution to the challenge of college and workplace readiness.

Rationale for the Study

The percent of students graduating from Kentucky's high schools who are not prepared to enter postsecondary education or the workforce is a significant challenge for high schools, institutions of higher education, and employers. Fifty three percent of first year students at Kentucky's public universities and community and technical colleges

must enroll in one or more remedial courses (Council on Postsecondary Education, 2009). This issue costs the state approximately $25 million annually; $14 million in state appropriations and $11 million in student tuition for non-credit courses in remedial education (Gaston, 2005). Institutions of higher learning must provide faculty to teach remedial courses and students are paying for courses for which they receive no college level credit.

Although not every high school graduate plans to attend college, many of the fastest growing careers that require a high school diploma and pay a salary above the poverty line for a family of four also provide opportunities for career advancement and require knowledge and skills comparable to those expected of the first year college student (ACT, 2006b). It is imperative that all high school students are educated based on a common set of academic expectations which prepare them for both postsecondary education and the workforce. Without a strong foundation of academic skills, high school graduates will not have the background needed to learn additional skills as required for future career evolvement. The emphasis on preparing all students to be college and career ready is in its infancy. State and national policies are being aligned to support this goal. However, the implementation of these policies occurs at the local level; school boards will play a crucial role in facilitating implementation of these policies and standards. This study will add empirical evidence on the role of school boards in supporting the development of college and career ready students, thus addressing a large gap in educational research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of school board members concerning their role in improving college and career readiness for their district's students, the extent to which they viewed college and career readiness as a priority, and their level of engagement in enhancing college and career readiness. School boards have always recognized student achievement as central to their role in governing public schools; however, the impact they actually have on promoting and improving student achievement has often been debated. This study highlighted the emerging framework of student achievement as college and career ready and provides critical evidence on local school boards' role in supporting student success through the lens of college and career readiness.

Research Questions

The study focused on board members and the perception of their role in student achievement as defined by college and career readiness. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. Is college and career readiness a priority of school boards?
2. What is the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students?
3. Are school boards engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students? If yes, how?
4. What gaps exist between board member's reports of the importance of indicators of career and college readiness and how much time they allocate toward these indicators?

5. What is the relationship between school board members training and the perceived importance of and allocation of time towards college and career readiness?

In addition to answering the aforementioned research questions, a single hypothesis is being tested.

Hypothesis

The more training a school board member has, the more likely he/she will believe that time should be spent focusing on college and career readiness.

Logic Model

Effective leadership adds value to the impact of classroom and teacher practices and ensures that lasting change flourishes. Effective school and teacher practices impact student achievement; leadership at every level must be aware of these practices and influence one other. The absence of effective leadership at any level results in schools and districts not addressing the most effective practices in a coherent and meaningful way.

When the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed in 1990, it changed how school governance was managed and introduced school-based decision making councils. The purpose of these councils is to promote leadership among those close to students and learning. Each council is comprised of parents, teachers, and an administrator of the school and is charged with setting policy and making decisions and providing an environment that enhances the achievement of students (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012).

The following logic model represents the influence each entity, governing body, or leader has on one another and college and career readiness for all students.

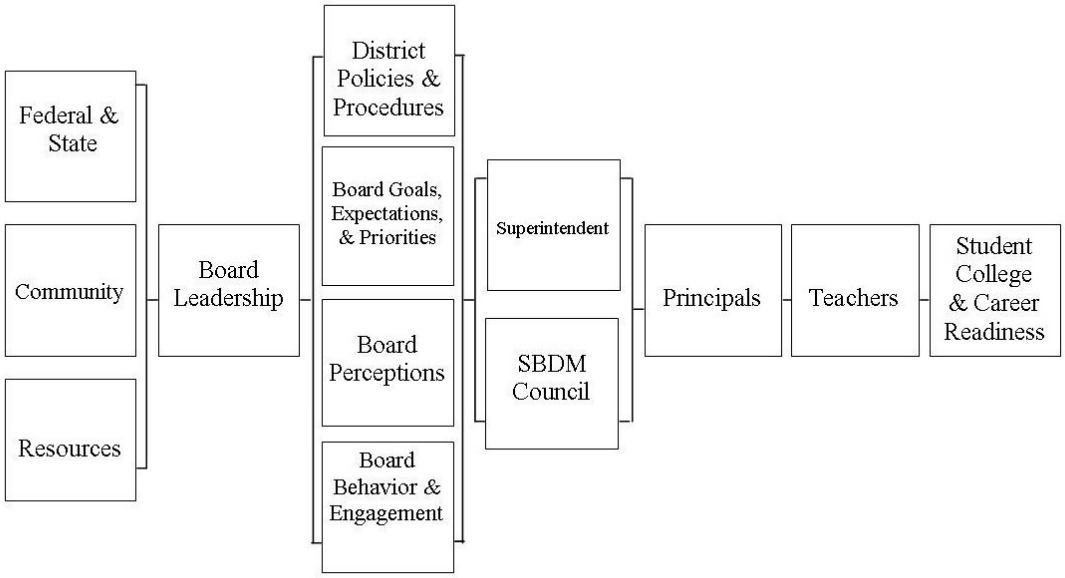

Figure 1: Logic Model on the Role of Local Boards in Preparing College and Career Ready Students

In the era of accountability, districts across the nation are faced with unprecedented reform mandates. Local boards of education and the nation's educators wait with cautious anticipation for the reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act and the sweeping changes that it may bring to the education landscape. A primary concern for many local boards of education concerning implementation of these mandates is that many are underfunded or unfunded leaving boards with the expectation of improving student achievement with fewer resources in an uncertain economy. Federal and state legislation constraints and few resources will impact how board leadership and their members approach increasing student achievement.

In order to implement the sweeping changes and mandates ordered by federal and state legislation, local boards of education will need to provide strong and focused leadership in the process. Boards must develop policies and procedures; set goals, priorities and expectations; focus on their district's mission; and engage in activities that have a positive impact on student achievement while maintaining an influence in the work conducted by the district's faculty and staff.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to examine and review the scholarly literature on the national and state implications of college and career readiness, the impact of leadership on student learning and the role of local boards of education in improving college and career readiness for students. The literature reviewed in this study was derived from various sources. The majority of the searches for descriptors and broad searches for references of studies were conducted through Academic Search Premier and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).

History of School Boards

Local school boards were first established during the colonial era in the United States. In New England, school matters were originally addressed in town meetings. Boston established its first school boards in 1721. School boards have been dominated by professionals and businessmen, with men being the primary representatives in most cases. Among the primary task of local boards during the nineteenth century was the hiring and firing of teachers. As local governance responsibilities increased consonant with population growth, educational governance was separated from general local governance, and a committee was appointed in each town to govern education (Land, 2002). Local school boards became comprised of lay individuals who were vested with the authority by their respective states to govern public education (Land, 2002). In 1891, Massachusetts enacted legislation that authorized each district to control the financial and administrative operations of its schools (Danzberger, 1992). The Massachusetts system of separate educational governance developed into the model for modern day governance

of public schools by local boards (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992). From the mid 1800s through the early 1900's, the number of local boards grew rapidly. The growth of boards brought with it many different governance structures, but the primary goal of boards was to oversee and manage public education (Carol et al., 1986; Johnson, 1988).

During the late 1800's, elections by local wards (or neighborhoods) determined the membership of school boards, thus the members became entangled in local politics (Danzberger, 1992; Urban & Wagoner, 1996). This led to a view that schools could be subjected to corruption. Additionally, schools were not seen as sufficiently educating an increasingly diverse student population. In response to these concerns, professionals, businessmen, and education reformers sought to reform local educational governance boards (Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Kirst, 1994).

During the early 1900's, local educational governance underwent widespread reform and became more centralized within smaller school boards comprised of lay citizens selected through city-wide elections. These changes occurred chiefly in response to perceptions that school boards were too large and school board members were to enmeshed in local politics and loyal to their respective neighborhood or ward (Danzberger, 1992).

As of the last major reform, local boards in the United States have typically authenticated the following characteristics: local control with the intention of meeting the needs and preferences of the local population; separation of educational governance from other forms of governance; large districts with small boards; general population oversight with a focus on policymaking that is dependent on a professional superintendent for management, modeled after corporate board of directors with a chief executive officer;

and democratic representation of its citizens through large elections rather than sub district elections or appointments (Land, 2002). The state of Hawaii has no local boards of education. The State Board of Education sets and oversees policy for local public education. In contrast to Hawaii, the state of Virginia made the appointment of school board members mandatory until the General Assembly passed legislation in 1992 permitting elections. Deliberately designed to offer flexibility in governance, school boards have differing styles of management, operation, and priorities in order to respond to local economic, political, social, and religious circumstances (Danzberger et al., 1987).

School boards are often perceived as obstacles to, rather than facilitators of, educational reforms (Danzberger, 1992, 1994). During the 1980s, the excellence movement joined together to improve student academic achievement to counter the "rising tide of mediocrity" that was described in the federally-commissioned report, A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The excellence movement sought reforms which took place mainly in state legislative bodies that required more demanding academic requirements for students and teachers, yet it was unsuccessful in making strides to improving academic achievement among students (Danzberger, 1992). Reports citing the major reforms that took place in the 1980s document the fact that school boards were expected to play a minor role in the reform efforts (Danzberger et al., 1987; Johnson, 1988). Nonetheless, research indicates that school boards were not resistant to the excellence reforms (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992; Firestone, Furhman, & Kirst, 1989; Nowakowski & First, 1989). The reform movement emanated after the excellence movements failed to achieve the expected outcomes (Danzberger, 1992). The state's increasing involvement in local

education governance has led to confusion among school board members and the general public as to who is in charge of education and the role of the school board (Carol et al., 1986; Kirst, 1994).

Legal Case for Local School Boards

The Constitution of the United States does not include any mention of education. Since the role of the federal government is limited to the powers given to it by the Constitution, the role of the government is secondary to the states. Every state, with the exception of Hawaii, has a two-tiered governance system that allows local school districts to be governed by an elected or appointed board. The duties and responsibilities of local school boards may be influenced by a variety of factors including state and federal constitutions, rules and regulations from the U.S. Department of Education and state boards of education, legislation, and interpretations by those in the legal system including judges, attorney generals, and administrative agencies. Although a school board is a local body that works within the limits of the state's designation of power and within the physical boundaries of its district, the board is considered a legal agency of the state. The power of the local school board comes from the laws and constitutions of its respective state. Essentially, local school boards serve three primary functions: they serve as the policymaking body for the local school district, they provide administrative oversight for the local school district and its operations, and they are democratically elected from the local community with the intention of providing leadership for the district's schools and representing the interests of the community (Beckham & Wills, n.d.)

Arguments for and Against School Boards

The list of responsibilities and expectations of school boards can be extensive, thus in spite of training and preparation, some boards are not effective in producing positive results (Sell, 2006). Critics of school boards often state that boards are comprised of inexperienced members of the general population interfering in a complex profession, hamper the efforts of capable and knowledgeable administrators, and are political in nature and often allow partisan demands to interfere in providing quality education (Sell, 2006). Supporters of school boards feel education is too important to be left only in the hands of educators and administrators. Advocates of the school board system also argue that they balance the needs of students and families with enthusiastic specialists (e.g., principals, teachers), provide partnerships with the community they serve that would be difficult to achieve if left only to educators, and are an establishment in the democratic tradition of America (Sell, 2006).

Challenges Facing School Boards

School boards are faced with many challenges including: power struggles, bad relationships with superintendents, communication deficiencies with internal and external constituents, low voter and candidate turnout, and persuading critics to believe that the general population belongs on the board (Sell, 2006). Policymaking power has been taken from school boards over the last 50 years and given to federal and state government. In addition, special interest groups such as teacher unions and textbook publishers have had an impact on the ability of school boards to hire and fire employees, manage the daily operations of schools and districts, and develop curricula appropriate for their district (Sell, 2006). Case study data has shown that additional traditional challenges faced by school boards include obtaining and allocating adequate financing,

recruiting and retaining qualified staff, intrusion of state and federal government, increased lack of interest from the public and decreased confidence in public schools and school boards, increased diversity in student populations, and controversial and persistent social issues, all of which making governing increasingly difficult and complex (Carol et al., 1986; Olson & Bradley, 1992).

Characteristics, Roles and Responsibilities of Effective School Boards

The education literature includes several studies that have identified different roles and responsibilities for boards of education. Smoley's (1999) work with school boards has identified the six following primary responsibilities for boards:

- It guides the accomplishments of the school district's purposes, particularly focused on the education of the district's children; it guides fundamental change in goals, programs, and structure.
- It screens and supports key projects identified to improve programs and operations, and it monitors progress to these ends; it also monitors the ongoing operation of the school district and its programs.
- It chooses, directs, and evaluates the superintendent of the district.
- It oversees the planning and deployment of resources, both material and human.
- It serves as a bridge between the district and the community, both in reflecting community desires and in promoting understanding and support; it leads the coalescing of disparate community views; it builds and maintains partnerships and collaborative relationships with other organizations.
- It ensures fiscal, legal, staff and programmatic accountability.

Most boards serve many roles, some more prominent than others. Three of the most important roles are hiring and evaluating the performance of the school district superintendent; distributing local, state, and federal funds to establish the district budget; and shaping district policies. A school board serves as the state's legal agent, allowing it to have considerable economic power. The board is the only entity with the ability to negotiate contracts, buy real estate, receive funding at the state and federal level, and levy taxes. Experts tend to agree that the most important task the board must accomplish is choosing a superintendent who can act as representative and CEO of the district (Brodinsky, 1977).

CTB/McGraw-Hill, the foremost publisher of standardized achievement tests in the United States, assembled a panel of educators to survey the role of school boards; five specific characteristics of effective school boards were determined by the panel. These effective boards concentrated on student achievement, distributed resources based on needs, monitored the effectiveness of the money invested in education, utilized data, and sought community involvement in the district (Carter & Griffin, 2005). The panel repeated the belief that school boards can best support education programs by having members who are instructed in exercising responsibility, have a vision, exhibit progressive leadership, and offer accountability (Carter & Griffin, 2005).

The Center for Public Education (2011) cites eight characteristics of effective school boards that have a positive impact on student achievement. They are as follows:

- Hold a vision of high expectations for student achievement and high quality instruction and outline clear, specific goals toward the vision

- Hold shared beliefs and values about the ability of all students to learn and of the system and its ability to instruct all children at high levels
- Are driven by accountability and focus more on policies that improve student achievement rather than operational issues
- Engage in collaborative partnerships with staff and community and a clear structure of communication to inform and engage internal and external stakeholders in establishing student achievement goals for the district
- Welcome data whether positive or negative and use it to drive continuous improvement
- Align and sustain resources (e.g., professional development) in order to me goals of the district, even in times of budgetary limitations
- Lead with the superintendent as a united team, each holding their own roles in the process with strong collaboration and a mutual trust
- Engage in team development and training, sometimes including superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments for improvement efforts

Land (2002) notes that the local board of educations' most essential role is policymaking and oversight of the district without micromanaging. Boards are responsible for setting the district vision, aligning resources to the vision, establishing long and short term district goals and monitoring student performance. Although still vested with financial oversight and policymaking authority, many of today's board members are far less responsive to community values than their predecessors. Ineffective

board members also lack sufficient information or are too divided politically to effectively set district policy or priorities that will impact student learning.

School Board Member Traits

The Idaho School Boards Association (2008) notes that effective board members have a passion for public education, are committed to involving the community, are able to make decisions, believe in the democratic process, and are eager to vote the time needed. Further, Charlotte Advocates for Education (2008) cites traits of effective school board members. They include basing decisions on improving student achievement, exhibit an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the board, foster community partnerships and support, demonstrates leadership by example and inspires teachers to achieve at higher levels, is an effective communicator, and develops a plan for continuous improvement. On the other hand, the Idaho School Boards Association (2008) cites the following traits of ineffective school board members: focusing on a single issue, not conducting themselves in a respectful manner, attending board meetings unprepared, micromanaging, and using their position to forward a political agenda.

Caruso (2011) characterized ten mistakes made by board members which are listed on the Pennsylvania School Boards Association website. They are as follows: lack of patience and poor behavior, challenging a vote made by the board, acting like the "Lone Ranger," lack of vision, the sharing of unexpected news at a board meeting and/or a superintendent or chair sharing such news, voting along party lines and putting politics first and ignoring policy, become a flag waver for those with hidden agendas or having their own hidden agenda, speaking of issues that are confidential in nature, viewing staff as the enemy, and placing the board above family and business.

School Board Impact on Student Achievement

School boards in high-achieving districts are significantly different in their knowledge and beliefs than school boards in low-achieving districts. These differences are present among administrators and teachers throughout the districts, according to results of a research study released in September 2000 by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB).

In the arena of educational research, the effect of school boards on student achievement is largely uncharted territory. The IASB study is one of only a few ever to study school boards based on quantifiable, reliable measures of student achievement. IASB researchers conducted nearly 160 interviews with board members and educators in three high- and three low-achieving districts over the course of nearly two years. Because Iowa does not have a reliable statewide student achievement database, the interviews were conducted in Georgia, where a comprehensive database exists. IASB used reliable data to ensure that the schools were not only comparable to each other but to districts in Iowa in terms of enrollment, percent of children living in poverty, spending per student, household income and other factors. The results show that school boards in districts with high student achievement:

- Consistently expressed the belief that all students can learn and that the school could teach all students. This "no excuses" belief system resulted in high standards for students and an on-going dedication to improvement. In low-achieving districts, board members had limited expectations and often focused on factors that they believed kept students from learning such as poverty, lack of parental support or societal factors.

- Were far more knowledgeable about issues of teaching and learning, including school improvement goals, curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff development. They were able to clearly describe the purposes and processes of school improvement efforts and identify the board's role in supporting those efforts. They could give specific examples of how district goals were being carried out by administrators and teachers.
- Used data and other information on student needs and results to make decisions. The high-achieving boards regularly monitored progress on improvement efforts and modified direction as a result.
- Created a supportive workplace for staff. Boards in high-achieving districts supported regular staff development to help teachers be more effective, supported shared leadership and decision making among staff, and regularly expressed appreciation for staff members.
- Involved their communities. Board members identified how they connect with and listen to their communities and focused on involving parents in education.

Researcher Jay Marino (2011) conducted a study in conjunction with a doctoral dissertation program and measured the extent to which school board presidents in Illinois perceived their utilization of continuous improvement practices in their boardsmanship. The research summary remarks stated that effective school boards can influence student achievement positively – the mission of all schools. The findings of the study indicate that board members must lead the parade in continuous improvement rather than standing on the sidewalk watching the continuous improvement parade pass them by.

The Impact of Professional Development

Roberts and Sampson (2011) conducted a study concerning the effect of professional development by school board members and the effect it had on student achievement. They note that although most states do not require professional development, some states have determined the need and benefit of requiring such training (Roberts & Sampson, 2011). In Arkansas, school board members who serve more than one year are required to receive a minimum of six hours of professional development training. New board members who have served less than a year are required to receive nine hours of in-service training (Roberts & Sampson, 2011). Topics that are covered in this training include school law, school operations, and the powers, duties and responsibilities of school board members (Minnesota School Boards Association, 2010). In Texas, school board members are required to undergo 18 hours of in-service training within the first year of service. After the first year, board members must receive eight hours of professional development. Topics covered in Texas include local district orientation, Texas Education Code, team building, Open Meeting Act, Public Information Act, and updates to the Texas Education Code following each legislative session (Texas Association of School Boards, 2010).

Through the survey utilized in the study, Roberts and Sampson (2011) found eight states who responded to the study required professional development. These states include Arkansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Texas. These states that require professional development were ranked by Education Week (2009) and received a grade of C or B while those not requiring professional development received a C or D. There was no impact on student

achievement with the exception of Massachusetts which received a B. Roberts and Sampson (2011) conclude that professional development is needed and essential for student learning, yet the effect of it is inconclusive. Further, Roberts & Sampson (2011) state that if the focus of education is student learning, board members need to know what they are doing in order to make the best decisions regarding student education.

Education Reform at the National Level

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed into law on March 31, 1994 with the purpose of supplying states and local communities with resources to allow all students to reach their full potential. The Act had eight goals that were to be reached by the year 2000. They are as follows:

1. Every child in America will begin school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will reach at least 90 percent.
3. Students leaving grade levels 4, 8, and 12 will be proficient in rigorous subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography. In addition, every school in America will ensure students have the ability to think at a higher level to prepare them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and useful employment in a modern economic environment.
4. Students in the United States will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

5. Every adult in America will be literate and have skills and knowledge needed to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Drugs, violence, and the unlawful presence of guns and alcohol will be absent from every American school, resulting in an environment that is conducive to student learning.
7. Teachers will have access to professional development to improve their teaching skills and the opportunity to obtain skills and knowledge necessary to instruct and prepare American students for the next century.
8. Each school will promote partnerships with the goal of increasing parental involvement and participation in promoting the academic, social, and emotional growth of students (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, nd).

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), enacted in 2002, aimed to set national standards to equal the playing field among students. However, states determined how their own success would be measured by establishing targets for achievement. The established targets are the determinants as to whether a state makes adequate yearly progress (AYP) as measured by state standardized tests. The NCLB law applies to every school that receives Title I funds from the federal government. Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified as "in need of improvement." Each student in the affected school has the option to transfer to a school in the district that did make AYP. NCLB requires priority be given to students from low-income families or students who are low-achievers. If a school finds itself not meeting AYP for three consecutive

years, they must also provide "supplemental education services" (SES) to students who remain enrolled in the school. These supplemental services may include tutoring, remedial classes, and after school and summer programming. If a school is unsuccessful in meeting AYP for four consecutive years, the district must initiate changes such as replacing staff or implementing new curriculum. If a school is unsuccessful in meeting AYP for five consecutive years, the school is required to restructure itself which can consist of a takeover by the state, the hiring of a private contractor, substantial staff changes or restructuring, or converting to a charter school (Great Schools, n.d.).

Several agencies have evaluated the effectiveness of NCLB and determined its successes and failures. The Center on Education Policy released the following findings in 2006 concerning NCLB:

- Districts are improving the alignment of classroom instruction with state academic standards.
- Principals and teachers are using test results to improve the quality of teaching.
- State test scores have increased in a large majority of states and districts.
- Teachers convey a high level of stress and poor morale among staff due to the pressure to improve test scores.
- The majority of school districts are reducing subjects that are not tested such as social studies, art, and science to allow for more focused time on reading and math, subjects that are tested.
- Achievement gaps, although stated as closing by states between groups of students of different races and ethnicities, were not found to be narrowing by the center's case studies.

A separate report by the Civil Rights Project (2006) concluded that NCLB failed to close the achievement gap, would not meet the goals established for 2014 (100% of elementary and secondary students will be proficient in math and reading), and had no significant impact on improving reading or math achievement.

In 2011, President Obama and members of Congress agreed that NCLB was not effective in reforming the education system in the U.S. More than half of the public schools in America are at risk of being classified as failing in 2011. As a result, the Obama administration allowed states to opt out of rigorous testing standards required by the law (Bingham, 2011). In order to be granted a waiver from NCLB, states must meet three requirements: the creation of college and career readiness standards, the development of a system of accountability that identifies the lowest performing 5 percent of schools and the 10 percent of schools with the largest achievement gaps, and the construction of an evaluation instrument for teachers and principals that includes student performance (Cox, 2011). Kentucky was one of the first states to request a waiver to NCLB even before criteria for the waiver was announced (Bingham, 2011).

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

The Perkins Act most recently received reauthorization in August 2006. The legislation's purpose is to provide individuals with academic and technical skills essential to achieving success in an economy based on knowledge and skills. The Perkins Act aids career and technical education that prepares students for postsecondary education and the workforce (ACTE, 2011).

Resources from the federal government are utilized to ensure career and technical education programs are current with needs of business and industry and academically

rigorous. The Perkins Act provides approximately $1.3 billion on an annual basis to support innovation and increase access to quality programs (ACTE, 2011). Perkins Basic State Grant funds are provided to states that provide funding by formula to secondary school districts and postsecondary education institutions. States have jurisdiction over how the funds will be split between secondary and postsecondary education. Once funding is determined, states must use at least 85 percent of the Basic State Grant funds toward local programs using the needs-based formula within the law or an alternative formula that focuses on disadvantaged schools and students (ACTE, 2011).

Several types of activities are supported by state and local funds including driving program improvement by serving as a change agent, the development of an effective system of accountability that ensures quality and results, the strengthening of incorporating academic and career and technical education, making career and technical education available to special populations (including disabled students), developing and improving curricula, purchasing of the latest equipment to bring classrooms up to date in technology, providing career and academic counseling, providing professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators, and supporting the student organizations of career and technical education fields (ACTE, 2011).

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

On February 13, 2009, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 as a means of responding to the economic crisis the country faced in 2008. The goals of the Act include the creation of new jobs and salvaging existing jobs, stimulate economic activity and invest in long-term growth, and to promote

extraordinary accountability and transparency in government spending (U.S. Government, n.d.).

Originally slated for $787 billion in expenditures, the amount was increased to $840 billion in 2011. To achieve transparency, recipients of Recovery funds report how the money is being spent every January, April, July, and October. The Recovery Act provides tax cuts and benefits for millions of working families and businesses, funds entitlement programs including unemployment, and provides funding for federal contracts, grants, and loans. The Recovery Act provides funding to local school districts, expands the Child Tax Credit, underwriting computerization of health records, and infrastructure development and enhancement (U.S. Government, n.d.).

Race to the Top

On July 24, 2009, President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the Race to the Top competitive grants program. States who are leaders in school reform were eligible to complete for $4.35 billion in federal funds to support education reform and classroom innovation. Combined funding with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Race to the Top means states are eligible for more than $10 billion in grant funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The Race to the Top Fund is the foundation of education reform in the United States. The competition will highlight and replicate education reform strategies deemed effective in four areas:

- The adoption of international benchmark standards and assessments that prepare students for success in postsecondary education and the workforce

- The recruitment, development, retaining and rewarding of effective teachers and principals
- The development of data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their instructional practices
- Reversing the tide of low-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

Education Reform in the State of Kentucky

Kentucky Education Reform Act

The landmark ruling in the 1989 court case of *Rose v. Council for Better Education* led to significant education reform in the state of Kentucky. Both the Franklin County Circuit Court and the Kentucky Supreme Court determined the funding system used by public schools in the state violated equal protection and the efficient system requirement. In his conclusion, Chief Justice Robert Stephens argued that students in Kentucky were considerably behind the nation and were the beneficiaries of an education that was far weaker than the expectations in Section 183 of the state's Constitution at that time (Weston & Sexton, 2009).

In 1990, Governor Wallace Wilkinson signed the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA). Education spending increased by 32 percent from fiscal year 1990 to fiscal year 1992. In addition, to close the financial equity gap the state adopted an equalization formula called Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK). The base of the program required each district to collect local taxes at a rate of 30 cents per every $100 of taxable property, with a guarantee by the state that additional funding would be provided if needed in order to offer a base amount per student that encompassed additional funding

for exceptional children, free lunch participants, and transportation needs. Tier I of the SEEK program allowed all districts in the state to establish higher tax rates and claim additional state equalization funding. Tier II of the SEEK program allowed districts that claimed the maximum amount under Tier I to raise additional unequalized monies (Weston & Sexton, 2009).

KERA also mandated changes in the way public schools were governed. Local school boards were required to defer major decisions to school councils comprised of the principal and elected parents and teachers. Superintendents were allowed to be the sole decision makers in the hiring process and were not permitted to hire close relatives or the relatives of school board members (Weston & Sexton, 2009).

KERA established learning standards for all students based on six goals and expectations: 1) Students can use basic communication and math skills needed for situations they will encounter as a part of life; 2) Students will be able to apply core concepts from the subjects of math, sciences, arts, humanities, social studies, practical living studies, and vocational studies to situations they will encounter as a part of life; 3) Students will acquire the abilities needed to become self-sufficient; 4) Students will acquire the abilities needed to become responsible members of society in family, work, and community, demonstrating effectiveness in service to the community; 5) Students will develop their critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems in the school environment and those they will encounter as a part of life; 6) Students will be able to connect and integrate new knowledge with material previously learned and build on those learning experiences to acquire new information through a variety of media services (University of Kentucky, n.d.).

Under KERA, the average spending per student increased 44.5 percent from 1990 to 2001 with the poorest districts realizing an increase of 65.9 percent and the wealthiest realizing an increase of 24.8 percent. Even with this increase, per student funding still only reached 79 percent of the national average (Weston & Sexton, 2009).

As part of KERA, a required assessment and accountability system was established in 1992. The testing is completed at the elementary, middle, and high school level in a variety of subjects. The accountability portion of the system expected schools in the state of Kentucky to reach improvement goals every two years (Weston & Sexton, 2009).

KERA also resulted in increased funding for professional development of teachers to assist them with the implementation of the new mandates, a preschool program designed to benefit children who were four years old and from low socioeconomic backgrounds and children with disabilities, an extended school services program to assist students who needed additional learning time before or after school or during the summer, and family resource youth service centers to connect students and families to needed resources such as health care and social services (University of Kentucky, n.d.).

Postsecondary Education Improvement Act

In 1997, the Kentucky General Assembly approved the landmark Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, commonly referred to as House Bill 1. The legislation was designed to reshape the commonwealth's system of postsecondary education as a means to advance the state's economy. The need for the reform was relatively straightforward; postsecondary education was not linked statewide to strategic goals and by national measures, Kentucky residents were undereducated and trailed the nation in income and

healthiness. In addition, the act sought to address the changing needs of the commonwealth's workforce, as a relative lack of education became a major disadvantage with the growth of a knowledge-based economy. The overhaul of the higher education system was an effort to increase college enrollment, improve academic performance and focus on the needs of Kentucky's citizens.

Senate Bill 1

In 2009, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1. With the passage of this legislation, the Commonwealth of Kentucky began a new era of assessment and accountability for public schools. The bill also required Kentucky to revise its standards of student knowledge and skills in the areas of English and mathematics. Senate Bill 1 states the standards must be more concise, clearer and have an increased focused on students being prepared for college, career and global competition. The college and career focus of Senate Bill 1 indicates that public schools must administer a college readiness examination that will assess English, reading, mathematics and science in grade ten (10) and administer the ACT college admission and placement examination to assess English, reading, mathematics and science in grade eleven (11).

Kentucky has embraced the importance of every student graduating from high school both college and career ready and is committed to providing strategies that support that objective. Senate Bill 1 states that a student whose score on the high school readiness examination administered in grade eight (8) or as determined by the Kentucky Department of Education indicates a high degree of readiness for high school shall be counseled to enroll in accelerated courses. The bill also states that any student whose score on the ACT college admissions and placement exam administered in grade eleven

(11) demonstrates a high degree of readiness for college shall be counseled to enroll in accelerated courses, with an emphasis on AP classes.

With the passage of Senate Bill 1, Kentucky became the first state in the U.S. to adopt common standards in mathematics and English. Numerous agencies within the state were engaged in the process of the development of the legislation and will ensure that the revised content standards meet the requirements of Senate Bill 1. These include: knowledge and skills needed for success in a global economy; more in-depth standards to facilitate mastery of the subject matter; communication of academic expectations to parents, teachers, students, and community members; standards based on evidence-based research, international benchmarks considered and standards are aligned between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education to prepare students for success at each level (Council on Postsecondary Education, 2009).

College and Career Readiness

After years of complaints concerning the lack of college preparation provided by high schools and realizing that a high school diploma is no longer enough, the nation's governors and chief state officers announced a plan to adopt common standards for American high schools consisting of fewer standards, higher expectations and promote college readiness (Haycock, 2010). As the standards movement has evolved, one of the key questions has changed. Rather than asking what students should know and the skills needed to complete high school, the focus has shifted to the skills needed to be prepared for the level of demands required for entry into college and career opportunities (Gewertz, 2011).

Today's high school students must be lifelong learners who are prepared for the changing and flattening global economy regardless of their career and educational goals. The current economic environment requires highly skilled and adaptable workers who are prepared to continuously learn and innovate in the international marketplace. All students will need to demonstrate proficiency in reading, comprehension, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal skills to be ready for a postsecondary education or training environment, as well as entry into a workforce that requires high-level skills. Readiness will require standards to be aligned to the demands of college and career readiness, and all students should be challenged to enroll in a rigorous college and career readiness curriculum (Hyslop, 2006).

The issues facing the nation's high schools are at the top of the national education policy agenda. Data indicates that schools are not adequately preparing students, particularly poor and minority students, for college and careers in the 21st century. An awareness of the long term social and economic implications of an inadequate education for individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole has heightened. These consequences have influenced and enhanced educational research, innovation and best practices that have drawn attention to more effective approaches in improving the quality of education offered by high schools. The focus of the conversation by educators and policy makers has shifted from the crisis to finding solutions with a growing consensus that there should be a stronger federal role in supporting solutions at the state and local levels (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

Since 1959, ACT has collected and reported data on students' academic readiness for college. Because college and career readiness occurs over time (elementary and

secondary education), measuring academic performance during this time frame provides meaningful and compelling information about the readiness of students. ACT's college and career readiness system, which measures students' academic readiness in making successful transitions to college and work after high school, consists of the ACT test, EXPLORE and PLAN.

There is disagreement among high school teachers and college professors regarding which skills and content are important. ACT's 2005-2006 national curriculum survey found that in all content areas, high school teachers tend to rate more content topics and skills as "important" or "very important" than college professors who are far more selective (ACT, 2009). As an example, high school teachers state a priority it to expose a greater number of students to higher level math courses such as calculus (ACT, 2007a; College Board, 2007a). However, college instructors prefer students learn basic fundamental math skills and focus on learning advanced math skills later (ACT, 2007a). Sixty-five percent of college professors think that the standards taught in high school do not prepare students for college, perhaps because they feel too many topics are being covered without gaining a breadth of essential skills and knowledge required for college readiness (ACT, 2007a). Currently, the disconnect between high school and college requirements result in high school courses not being aligned with the expectations to be successful in college, thus it is common for high school graduates to never complete the appropriate courses needed to enter a postsecondary environment (Barth, 2003; Wagner, 2006). ACT (2007a) found that a large majority of high school students completed core courses in math and science (60%), yet they did not acquire college-ready skills from the

coursework (74%). This suggests that a course title may not be equivalent to the content and instruction required for successful entry into college (ACT, 2007a).

ACT (2008) refers to college and career readiness as the "invisible crisis" affecting more than one million high school students annually who believe that they are on target to graduate ready for entry into college and career when in reality, they are not. ACT (2009) further states "College and career readiness is the new measure of educational excellence at the K-12 level." The increased focus on not only obtaining a high school diploma but being prepared to enter a postsecondary education environment or begin a career will be the focus of school boards, superintendents, administrators, and teachers now and in the future. In the report titled *Making the Dream a Reality: Action Steps for States to Prepare All Students for College and Career*, ACT (2008) offers six recommendations for all states to follow in order for students to be prepared for college and career success.

They are as follows:

- Implement fewer but crucial standards in high school that are valued by colleges and employers.
- Employ common academic expectations understanding a comparable level of knowledge and skills are needed regardless of whether students choose to enter college or the workforce.
- Offer clear and consistent messages regarding the level of performance considered "good enough" to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- Execute a rigorous curriculum with the appropriate number and types of courses taught by qualified teachers.

- Implement an early monitoring and intervention system that ensures students are meeting targets necessary to be on track for college and career readiness.
- Put into practice a longitudinal data system that assists students in staying on track by monitoring their performance from early years through college.

College and Career Readiness in the State of Kentucky

If every student in the state of Kentucky completed high school ready for entry into college coursework or the workforce, the state would save almost 52.3 million dollars annually in community college remediation costs and lost earnings (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). In 2009, 45,419 graduates took the ACT in the state of Kentucky (ACT, 2009). ACT has established minimum benchmarks for each subject area of the ACT test that indicate students are ready for college entry-level coursework. They are as follows: English, 18; mathematics, 22; reading, 21; science, 24. Only 15 percent of Kentucky's graduates in 2009 met all four benchmarks compared to 23 percent nationally. The percentage of students in the state of Kentucky that met one of the benchmarks is as follows: English, 55 percent; mathematics, 26 percent; reading, 41 percent; and science, 20 percent. According to *The Condition of College and Career Readiness Class of 2010* report (ACT, 2010), twenty-four percent of ACT-tested 2010 high school graduates met or surpassed all four of the ACT college readiness benchmarks. In 2009, twenty-three percent of graduates met all four benchmarks. In 2006, only twenty-one percent of high school graduates met all four benchmarks. The percentage of graduates ready to succeed in college coursework remains highest in English (66%), followed by reading (52%), mathematics (43%) and science (29%). Average ACT scores for Kentucky's 2010 public high school graduates were mostly

unchanged from those in 2009. However, the number of Kentucky public high school graduates taking the ACT increased slightly, from 40,906 in 2009 to 45,763 in 2010 (ACT, 2010).

The percentage of Kentucky's students meeting the ACT benchmarks changed slightly in mathematics, reading and science. The percentage of Kentucky graduates ready to succeed in college coursework appears to be in line with the national trend with the highest readiness percentages in English and the lowest in science. The percent of Kentucky graduates ready to succeed in college coursework in English is 55 percent, followed by reading (40%), mathematics (28%) and science (21%). Only 16 percent of Kentucky's 2010 graduates met all four of the ACT college readiness benchmarks (ACT, 2010).

Purposeful Leadership and District Reform

Purposeful leadership is viewed as a core element in the process of improving schools and sustaining that improvement (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Literature on school improvement finds effective leaders apply indirect influence on the capacity of schools to improve on student achievement, yet the influence does not inevitably come from senior managers but can also be provided by middle managers and teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Although quality instruction is the primary force in motivating students to succeed academically, it has been shown that quality leadership affects the motivation of teachers and the quality of instruction they provide (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1999).

The Role of the District in Improving Student Achievement

Research on district-wide reform efforts occurred in two phases: 1988-1996 and 1997-2004 (Fullan, 2005). Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) identified ten lessons about district-wide reform called "Phase Two Learnings" (1997-2004). These lessons suggested districts were successful in reform efforts when combining the following "drivers:"

- A convincing view by district leaders – visualizes substance of reform and includes an extraordinary commitment to capacity-building strategies;
- A collective moral purpose – includes the entire district and not a small number of individuals;
- The right bus – appropriate structures, roles, and role relationship that embody the ideal set up for enhancing the entire district;
- Capacity building – training and support for crucial leaders;
- Lateral capacity building – connecting schools to provide the ability for them to learn from each other and develop a collective identity rather than viewing themselves in isolation;
- Ongoing learning – districts use a continual cycle of learning by including learning assessments and utilizing student data to improve schools and the district;
- Productive conflict – a level of conflict is expected when changes are implemented and conflict is viewed as an opportunity to explore diversity of thought;

- A demanding culture – high expectations and attention are combined to tackle challenging goals;
- External partners – external groups are carefully chosen that can be used to improve internal capacity building; and
- Focused financial investment – new funding is appropriated initially to concentrate on capacity building and is based on future accountability.

The Role of the Principal in Improving Student Achievement

Over the years, the role of the principal has changed and the notion of instructional leadership has become a way to classify the role and responsibilities of principals as it relates to classroom instruction (Deal & Peterson, 1990). Research has defined instructional leadership in a variety of ways. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defined instructional leadership as "leading learning communities." Effective principals have been found to exhibit eight common traits: 1) viewing teaching and learning as the primary concern of the school, 2) effectively conveying the mission of the school to all stakeholders, 3) cultivating high standards of teaching and learning that are achievable, 4) offering clearly stated goals and tracking the progress students make toward reaching them, 5) being present in the classroom and listening to teachers, 6) encouraging a culture of trust and sharing, 7) assembling an effective staff and making professional development a priority, and 8) not putting up with ineffective teachers (Keller, 1998).

In the area of student performance, research has shown that a principal who communicates high expectations for all students positively affects school and student achievement (Cheng, 1994; Gullatt & Lofton, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Waters,

Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) found successful principals ensured expectations in the classroom matched the expectations of the school. In addition, these principles: 1) expect new hires to understand the school and its issues before beginning the position, 2) demand involvement in professional development, 3) expect first-rate instructional practices, 4) expect staff to consider student achievement the most important goal, and 5) expect staff to manage time based on instructional priorities. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) "leadership is only second to classroom instruction among school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p.7).

Fullan (2002) states that the goal is for all schools within a district to see improvement; thus, although the primary concern of any principal is their own school, they should be just as concerned about other schools in the district. As Fullan (2002) states, "sustained improvement of schools is not possible unless the whole system is moving forward."

Leaders must grasp the process of change which means more than having original ideas (Fullan, 2002). In order to understand this process, leaders should follow six guidelines: 1) the goal is not to be the most innovative but to carefully innovate by using logic; 2) it is not good enough to have the best ideas; one must utilize a process that allows others to assess the ideas and discover united values and an obligation to do things in new ways; 3) realize that it will be difficult to try new things; 4) consider resistance constructive and look for ways to address concerns of the cynics; 5) redefine the culture by changing the values of people and expecting them to work as a team to accomplish

goals; and 6) resist relying on a check-list; rather understand that change requires changing culture one day at a time (Fullan, 2002).

The Role of the Teacher in Improving Student Achievement

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) suggests strategies to align teaching with college readiness. They suggest high school teachers must believe that all students have the ability to learn high standards so that they can master curriculum needed to enter postsecondary education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). Research shows that high school teachers who teach in schools with a large number of minorities tend to have lower expectations of these students unless they have engaged in advanced preparation for teaching in the environment (Ladson-Billings, 1999; MetLife, 2001). In order for teachers to not only engage in maintaining high expectations of all students, they need skills that allow them to make content available to a diverse body of learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Wenglinsky, 2002).

A study by the Education Trust (2005) found that among high-achieving and low-achieving schools, a gap existed in the rigor of assignments given to students by their teachers. In high-achieving schools, teachers were more likely to assign work considered to be college-preparatory such as daily reading, reading books, completing reading-heavy assignments, and participating in classroom discussion (Education Trust, 2005).

In order to increase the rigor of coursework, teachers need to know their content at the college level and update it on a regular basis. Teachers also need to instruct students in thinking skills relevant to each content area (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). Research has shown that students learn more when teachers use instructional

methods that require students to apply applicable disciplinary processes to the subject matter being taught (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995; Newman, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996).

The Role of the School Board in Improving Student Achievement

The traditional role of school boards has led them to be focused on items such as financial, legal, and constituent issues, while the responsibility for student academic achievement has been left to administrators and teachers (Resnick, 1999). However, in today's educational climate, school boards that do not develop policies and programs that are specifically designed to promote student success, provide oversight and evaluation of the implementation and performance of the policies and programs, and show that they have improved academic achievement are at risk of being deemed ineffective (Carol et al., 1986; NSBF, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Speer, 1998).

During the 1990's, school boards made a conscious effort to focus their work on student achievement. The National Association of School Boards conducted a survey of board members in 2,000 school districts with approximately 41 percent of targeted districts completing the survey. Their findings showed that the majority of respondents reported the percentage of time focused on student achievement by the board had increased during their tenure on the board. Specifically, the percentages of respondents who stated board time spent on student achievement had increased were as follows: 74.7 percent of those from large districts (25,000+), 80.8 percent of those from medium districts (5,000-24,999), 66.8 percent of those from small districts (less than 5,000), and 73 percent of all districts (Hess, 2002).

Despite the long standing presence of local boards of education in public education and the most recent concerns about the effectiveness of locally elected governing boards, there are very few data driven studies on the role and engagement of school boards in improving student performance. Numerous studies have examined the focus of student performance improvement through the lens of the relationship between the superintendent and the school board. Delagardelle (2006) examined the study completed by Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000). The researchers surveyed more than 2,000 randomly selected superintendents and indicated that an overwhelming majority of school board evaluations of their superintendents rated their performance as excellent to good; whereas superintendents gave the board members a much lower grade related to their performance. A recent study of school board member and superintendent beliefs about the role of the local board also found that board members had higher expectations of themselves in relation to their roles and responsibilities than the superintendents had for their board members (Delagardelle & Maxson, 2004).

In 2006, Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano, researchers with McREL, the Colorado based educational laboratory, investigated the relationship between superintendent leadership and student achievement. After examining 27 studies that involved 2,714 districts, 4,434 superintendents' evaluations, and 3.4 million student achievement scores, Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded that there was a significant correlation between effective superintendent leadership and student performance. The five superintendent actions that Waters and Marzano (2006) uncovered are also superintendent and board relational. The five actions that are strongly associated with improved district-wide achievement are:

- Setting goals to improve district-wide achievement,
- Establishing non-negotiable objectives for improving instruction,
- Obtaining school board support for improvement goals,
- Monitoring progress on improvement goals, and
- Using resources to support the improvement agenda.

National School Board Association (NSBA) executive director Anne Bryant and American Association of School Administrator (AASA) executive director Paul Houston declare that superintendents can't raise student achievement alone. Bryant and Houston state, "It takes a team to raise student achievement. Superintendents and school boards should form a leadership team to work collaboratively on reform" (2002, p.40). Consistent with this theme, a text titled *Team Leadership for Student Achievement* published by NSBA and AASA (Henderson, Henry, Saks, & Wright, 2001) describes a successful leadership team in Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District where the superintendent and school board collaborated to build a culture and system of change.

A study conducted by Webber (1995) surveyed 136 school board members in Canada regarding their perceptions of the educational issues that would be of highest priority in the future. The top priorities identified were: finance student behavior, quality assurance, and employment preparation for students. A second analysis of the surveys identified nine themes form the predicted concerns of the school board members; educational governance, accountability to the public, program delivery models, societal change, school security, educational welfare, educational finance, teacher development, and curriculum content. The identified priorities and the nine themes were generalized to form a basis for future board decisions. Webber's (1995) findings concluded that board

members acting on these beliefs would be ill prepared to deal with the demands being placed on school board members and education (Delagardelle, 2006).

An ethnographic study conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) known as the Light House Study examined school districts with a history of exceptionally high and low student achievement (IASB, 2000). The theme that emerged from the study was that even though the districts were similar in socioeconomic level of students, educational level of the staff, regionality of the staff, and board/superintendent relationships, they were profoundly different in student outcomes, the belief and attitudes of the school board and staff, and the presence of seven conditions (shared leadership, continuous improvement and shared decision making, ability to create and sustain initiatives, supportive workplace for staff, staff development, support for school sites through data and information, and community development) for productive change. In addition, there were a number of major differences between high performing and low performing school districts. In high achieving districts, school board members, superintendents, and school staff held the belief that they could positively influence student academic achievement. In contrast, those in low achieving districts felt that there were significant obstacles that prevented them from improving student academic achievement. School board members in high achieving districts were able to offer an increased understanding of the previously mentioned seven conditions for school improvement and could offer initiatives that supported these conditions as well as explaining the school board's role in supporting the conditions. High achieving districts also shared information with school staff and linked the initiatives to building and classroom level actions (Land, 2002).

Successful Reform Initiatives Involving School Board Members

Douglas Reeves (2010) suggests that school boards should follow certain principles to redesign public education from the bottom to the top. Reeves (2010) recommends board members review initiatives discussed in board minutes five years ago and determine how many of them have been successfully implemented. He states that typically, new initiatives replace old ones and no one initiative tends to receive the amount of attention it needs. As a result, a "merry-go-round" of initiatives typically occurs where the new replaces the old, even if the new is hard to recognize from the old. Reeves (2010) suggests using a tool called the implementation audit, which asks three essential questions: What is our initiative inventory? What is the range of implementation for each initiative? What is the relationship between implementation and student results?

By developing partnerships with communities, school boards can build lasting support that assists them in facilitating student achievement (Resnick, 2000). The involvement of parents, teachers, business members, and other community members in the process of establishing goals and progress standards can have a powerful influence on improving student achievement. Parents who understand and support the educational standards expected of students will assist their children in meeting the standards (Cunningham, 2002). Community engagement efforts also allow the public to have the opportunity to learn about trends affecting students that may have an impact on educational outcomes and success (Resnick, 2000). Suggested ways that school boards can engage the public include focus groups, telephone surveys, public meetings, email, and study circles (Resnick, 2000). The Kentucky School Board Association (2011) stated

that school boards should provide district leadership by reviewing the values and interests of the community and utilizing them in a vision to guide policy and strategic planning.

Although learning should be the primary focus of any school board, many times members come to the table motivated by outside factors such as political ambition, a desire for recognition, ideology, or to advocate for a specific cause or constituent (Mizell, 2010). In order to focus on learning for all students, school boards must engage everyone involved. Mizell (2010) further suggests that human resources should be the primary focus of school boards noting, "The people who teach children, lead schools, and administer school systems will ultimately determine how effectively all children learn" (p. 21). Similarly, Mizell (2010) adds that school boards should ensure these staff members are not simply qualified but also committed, talented, and motivating.

As one example of a school board leading a successful initiative via the strategies outlined above, Crittenden County, Kentucky developed a plan entitled the "2020 Vision" after undertaking a number of actions that involved internal and external stakeholders in the process. An important part of the process was the development of six goals for the district. These included: reducing the dropout rate, improving attendance, increasing student achievement, developing resource effectiveness, establishing connectivity, and building a rockin' climate. The district held a summer retreat in 2009 that included leadership and board members. The retreat resulted in a list of essential learning skills students needed to possess to compete in a global economy, be successful in the workplace, and pursue postsecondary education. The 2020 Vision relies on communication internally and externally. The Crittenden County school district holds biannual Council on Council meetings that include internal and external stakeholders

including school and student councils, school board, PTO groups, and school and district administration. The result of this effort is a top ten list of commitments by the Crittenden County Board of Education: clear vision for excellence, strong foundation between schools and community, collaboration with partners to increase educational opportunities for students, whatever it takes, teamwork with an emphasis on relationship-building, listen to constituents and address their needs, think "outside the box" to solve problems, focus on student graduation and postsecondary readiness, focus on positive improvement of educational services, and lifelong learning (Coldiron, 2009). This plan provides an example of how a school board can serve as an important role player in improving student achievement, including college and career readiness.

Summary

School boards have the ability to influence the academic achievement of students in a positive manner; however they face obstacles at the local, state, and federal level. Complacency and ulterior motives among members can also affect the way in which the board operates and the amount of success it has in implementing policies and practices. An increased focus on the education system in the U.S. means that everyone involved in the process (school boards, administrators, teachers, students, parents) will need to work together to improve the success of all students. In order to be successful in a global economy, students must successfully complete high school and be ready for entry in a postsecondary education environment or the workforce.

A school board is typically comprised of five to seven members, each elected individually within a precinct or division by the public, who meet weekly to discuss a variety of school related issues (Sell, 2006). Currently, 14,890 school districts exist in the

Unites States with approximately 100, 000 school board members serving in the role (Hess, 2002). Kentucky, similar to other states, holds elections to elect its school board members. This takes place each November in even-numbered years and no more than three members can be up for election during any given year (Kentucky School Board Association, 2011). The state of Kentucky has 175 school districts and just fewer than 900 board members. The majority of the nations' districts (80%) are comprised of fewer than 3,000 students; the remaining 20 percent consist of students who attend schools located in city districts (Land, 2002). The same proportion holds true for Kentucky. Therefore, most of the research studies on school boards focus on urban districts. However, this study will focus on districts with more rural characteristics.

In the world of school reform and improvement, attention is seldom paid to the role of the school board. However, most of the nation's school districts are governed by an elected school board whose members are the ultimate architects of the district's plan for increasing student achievement. Thus, school board members should have a clear understanding of the purpose, role and appropriate functions of school board, particularly as these pertain to supporting the college and career readiness of all students.

Chapter III

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to add to the literature through an exploration of the perception of local school board members' roles in improving the college and career readiness of the students in their school districts.

The following questions were investigated:

1. Is college and career readiness a priority of school boards?
2. What is the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students?
3. Are school boards engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students? If yes, how?
4. What gaps exist between board member's reports of the importance of indicators of career and college readiness and how much time they allocate toward these indicators?
5. What is the relationship between school board members training and the perceived importance of and allocation of time towards college and career readiness?

Through examination of the knowledge of specific college and career readiness indicators, the time spent on specific college and career readiness indicators and the training that board members receive regarding college and career readiness, a timely and rich understanding of the impact for the need of additional time spent on intentional and focused engagement and additional training for board members on improving the college

and career readiness of the students in their school districts is expected. The intent of the analysis was to determine the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students and to add current literature that guides local, state and national policies intended to address the role and functions of local school boards to address issues related to school boards' impact on college and career readiness. Most specifically, the researcher wanted other board members in this sample to be enlightened as to what their fellow board members are experiencing in their districts.

Most of the research regarding local school boards offers considerations about the purposes, characteristics and problems of school boards and advice related to the effectiveness of boardsmanship. Previous researchers have examined extensively relationships between boards and superintendents.

There has been an increase in school boards' influence on student academic achievement; however limited research exists to substantiate the importance of this role and provide guidance to school boards regarding how to perform this function more effectively. Two studies constitute significant steps in the study of school board effects on students' academic achievement, one by Goodman, Fulbright and Zimmerman (1997) and one by the Iowa Association of School Boards (2000). The study by Goodman et al. (1997) of 10 districts in five states found districts with quality governance tended to have greater student achievement as measured by dropout rates, the percentage of students entering college, and aptitude test scores. The IASB study (2000) examined school board and superintendent functioning in Georgia school districts and compared low-achieving districts in which students had performed low in three consecutive years on standardized

achievement tests and a variety of other unspecified indicators and high-achieving districts within the state. The study concluded that several similarities existed between low-achieving and high-achieving districts. These included a genuine concern for students, harmonious relationships between boards and superintendents, expressed satisfaction with the superintendent by board members, tension in establishing a balance between the need to build autonomy in site-based management with the need to have equitable schools, being unsuccessful in closing the achievement gap for students with special needs (e.g., special education, bilingual programs, Title I), and the composition of school boards including 75 to 80 percent of members and professional staff who either grew up in the district they served or in close proximity to the district (IASB, 2000). The IASB or Lighthouse study (2000) also found differences among high-achieving and low-achieving differences. In high-achieving districts, board members and superintendents viewed schools as having the ability to increase the potential of students by viewing their districts through a critical lens and seeking to improve when needed. In contrast, low-achieving districts board members and superintendents seemed to accept that some students were limited in their ability to achieve academically and viewed the school environment as a place to manage and maintain an even keel rather than seeking to change or improve it (IASB, 2000). Another difference noted was the ability of board members and superintendents to understand how to influence productive change within the district based on their knowledge of improvement goals, instruction, assessment, and professional development in high-achieving districts whereas in low-achieving districts, school board members and superintendents were less likely to be knowledgeable about such areas (IASB, 2000). As a result of the differences in knowledge base among high-

achieving and low-achieving districts, the study found that staff within schools noted the presence of established goals that impacted schools at the classroom level were visible in high-achieving districts, however these connections were not clearly visible to staff in low-achieving districts (IASB, 2000).

The aforementioned comparative case studies examined student data, policies and their influence on student outcomes. However, there are no studies available that examine the perception of local school board members' roles in improving the college and career readiness of the students in their schools. Therefore, the literature on the impact of boards on student achievement as defined by college and career readiness is limited and needs to be expanded since the national agenda is focused not only on high stakes accountability and student outcomes but more recently on the college and career readiness of America's students. The training and expectations that state school board associations develop and implement for board members on how to impact student achievement should be studied and grounded in research. To ensure the expected impact, researchers in the field of education must study, analyze, and supply this literature.

Research Design

After conducting the literature review and defining the problem to be studied, the researcher resolved that a mixed methods research approach was the most appropriate to complete the study. By using a mixed methods approach, the researcher was able to capitalize on the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). A major advantage of mixed methods research is that it enables the researcher to use multiple techniques to "derive knowledge about the problem" (Creswell, 2003, p. 11). Moreover, implementing a mixed methods design

enables triangulation of both types of data. However, the major risk of using this design is that it takes considerable knowledge and keen expertise of analyzing and interpreting both methodologies.

Question one on the survey used a quantitative method to address board members knowledge of college and career strategies. Survey question two allowed the researcher to collect data on three variables: Items 1-4 and 15 were labeled curriculum and instruction; items 5-9 were coded student support services and items 10-14 were labeled board policy. Data collection and analysis assisted in determining board members' perception of college and career strategies that are most important to college and career readiness. Question three examined the amount of time boards spent conducting work related to college and career readiness. The responses were analyzed to understand the board members perceptions of their roles regarding their impact on college and career readiness.

A sequential mixed method design was employed to examine the perceptions of board member and to understand the contextual factors and indicators that impact college and career readiness. The advantages of the quantitative component of this study were that it enabled the researcher to collect descriptive statistics on the importance of and time allocated to college and career readiness by board members. These results were disaggregated by years of service, training in the area of college and career, and demographics of the board members as well as the size and type of district in which they serve. Finally, inferential statistics could be calculated to identify differences between the variables assessed and enabled generalizations to similar populations.

The researcher used an open-ended question on the board survey to gain insight as to what board members perceived as specific strategies that impact college and career readiness. One primary advantage of this method is that the open-ended nature of the question is free of cues that would influence board members' responses. Second, as noted by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding behavior from the informant's own frame of reference. The data collected takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Qualitative researchers approach the world with a critical eye. Qualitative research describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). In this study, the researcher is ultimately looking for patterns and behaviors about board members perceptions of their roles in impacting college and career readiness. The qualitative data provided a richer description of these patterns.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, two terms need operational definitions in order to determine and understand the goals and methods of the research. Specifically, the following terms are defined: (1) college readiness and (2) career readiness

Operational Definition of College Readiness

ACT (2010) defines college and career readiness as the attainment of knowledge and skills necessary for a student to enroll and be successful in credit-bearing, first-year courses at a postsecondary institution. Kentucky has adopted the same definition for college readiness (Council on Postsecondary Education, 2009; Kentucky Department of Education, 2009). The state of Kentucky defines success as the completion of entry-level

courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for subsequent courses. If met, Kentucky's system-wide standards of readiness guarantee students access to credit-bearing coursework without the need for remedial or supplemental coursework.

Operational Definition of Career Readiness

Kentucky's definition of career readiness is the level of preparation needed by a high school graduate to advance to the next phase in a career of their choosing, whether that consists of postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or workplace entry. These include core academic, critical thinking, and technical skills required in the workplace (Council on Postsecondary Education, 2009; Kentucky Department of Education, 2009).

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in the state of Kentucky. According to the 2010 Census, Kentucky has a population of 4,339,357. While 24 percent of the population is under 18 years of age, only 13 percent is over 65 years of age. The 2000 Census indicates that 27 percent of Kentuckians between the ages of 18-34 have a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the 2010 census, the reported majority ethnic background of the population is white (87.8%). Minority populations include: African American (7.8%), American Indian and Alaska Native (0.2%), Asian (1.1%), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (0.1%), and Hispanic (3.1%), with some groups reporting two or more races.

Kentucky is home to 174 public school districts and 644,963 students. Fifty-four of Kentucky's 174 school districts are independent school districts. Kentucky has 684 elementary schools, 217 middle schools, 57 middle/high schools, 202 high schools, two

6th grade schools and two 9th grade schools. The majority ethnic background of Kentucky's public school children's population is white (82.5 %). Minority populations include: African American (10.6%), Hispanic (3.1%), Asian (1%), less than 1 percent Native American, and 2.2 percent reported other. Kentucky has 44,023 public school teachers (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011).

A total of 873 school board members govern the 174 school districts in the state of Kentucky; 173 of the districts have five board members. Jefferson County has seven board members because of its size. Of the 873 members, 95 percent are white, 4 percent are non-white and 1 percent did not report ethnicity. Sixty percent of the board members are male, and 40 percent are female. All of Kentucky's school board members are elected. The local boards of education are charged with ensuring that their local communities provide a quality education for all of the students within their district (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011).

Sample and Data Collection

The researcher met with the director of the Kentucky School Board Association in February 2011 to explain the study and to share the survey that would be used in the study. The email addresses for all current board members was requested. The email addresses of the KSBA membership was electronically sent to the researcher two weeks after the request. The sample targeted for this study included the Kentucky School Board Association's 2011 school board membership that had viable email addresses.

A cover letter was emailed to board members in the KSBA data base on March 14, 2011 requesting their participation in the study. The letter included an explanation of the study and the ethical standards of research as reviewed by the Institutional Review

Board of Eastern Kentucky University. The letter also included the approximate amount of time that it would take to complete the survey and a link to the web-based survey that was used for this study was included in the cover letter. The researcher requested response to and submission of the survey no later than April 4, 2011. Board members were given a twenty-nine day window to complete the survey. An email reminder was sent on April 13, 2011 encouraging participation from board members who had not responded. The emailed stated: You received an email from me several weeks ago requesting that you assist me with my dissertation research by completing a survey. If you did not get a chance to complete the survey, I would appreciate it if you would take the time to complete it. You may assess the survey by opening the attachment and the link to the survey is included in the letter. Thank you in advance for assisting me with my research. An additional thirteen board members responded after the reminder.

Surveys were completed and submitted by 101 board members. This resulted in a final response rate of 11.6 percent.

- Frequencies: 101 board members responded to the survey
- 12 did not answer background questions
- 79.5 percent of board members that completed all survey items

Survey

The survey completed by the local board members was titled Board Member College and Career Readiness Questionnaire (Appendix C). The survey used in this study examined the perception of local school board members' roles in improving the college and career readiness of the students in their school districts. Surveys are information collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and

societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behavior. Surveys in general are very popular for three reasons: versatility, efficiency and generalizability (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). The web based surveys developed and used by the researcher were submitted via Survey Monkey to a large population in a very short period of time, and the participants answered the questions at their convenience and in their own environment.

The researcher used a web based survey to collect data for this study because it was cost effective, easy to complete and allowed for quick responses. The survey was a two phase format which utilized a mixed methods approach. It was composed of one opened ended question that asked what specific strategies they would promote to improve college and career readiness.

Responses to this open-ended question were typed directly into a text box with no space limitations. This yielded the data for the qualitative component of the mixed methods design. A likert scale was used for questions two and three. The researcher used a likert scale because it allowed the researcher to simplify, quantify and compare the behaviors and perceptions of the participants. The use of the likert scale survey also allowed the researcher to evaluate board member responses to the questions on a continuum. Questions two and three asked board members about the importance of specific college and career strategies and the time spent conducting work related to college and career readiness strategies. The anchors for question two which focused on importance were 1 = not important, 2 = moderately important, 3 = important, and 4 = very important. The anchors for question three, which assessed time spent on specific college and career readiness strategies were 1 = never, 2 = once a year, 3 = 2 – 4 times per year, 4 = 5 – 10 times per year, and 5 = once per month.

The remaining six questions were labeled background information and asked board members to indicate how many students enrolled in the district (1 = less than 300, 2 = 300 – 1,000, 3 = 1,001 – 3,000, 4 = 3,001 – 5,000, 5 = 5,001 – 10,000, 6 = 10,001 – 15,000, 7 = 20,001 – 25,000, 8 = 25,001 – 40,000, 9 = 40,001 – 80,000, 10 = 80,000 or more) type of district (1 = urban, 2 = rural, 3 = independent), board members' role on the board (1 = chair, 2 = vice chair), number of years as a board member, training pertaining to college and career readiness (1 = 0-3 hours, 2 = 4-6 hours, 3 = more than 6 hours), gender (1 = male, 2 = female) and racial background (1 = Caucasian/White, 2 = Black/African American, 3 = American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4 = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 5 = Asian, 6 = Hispanic).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Each individual response to question one was open-ended. The data were analyzed inductively to identify themes within and across respondents. After initial themes were formed, the data were reviewed deductively to determine if the themes were supported by the data as a whole. During this process, the author sought disconfirming evidence. The process was repeated until final categories representing the data as a whole were formed (Glesne, 1999).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Responses to questions two and three, as well as board member and district characteristics, were imported into SPSS 19.0 for analyses which included descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the guidelines put forth by the IRB at Eastern Kentucky University. Several steps were taken to ensure the privacy of study participants (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000). The informed consent protocol was followed to protect the participants. This included obtaining permission from the IRB to collect data. It is believed that no more than ordinary minimal risks were posed to any of the participants during this particular research study and various safeguards were in place to ensure protection of the participants' rights. The researcher was committed to keeping the names and other identifying characteristics of the sample confidential. The use of a web based survey protected the confidentiality of the respondents as the researcher was not able to identify them. All data were maintained on a password protected computer.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The direct involvement of the researcher in the data collection and analysis is a key challenge for qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). Steps were taken to limit the impact of potential bias and influence. These included searching for disconfirming evidence during data analyses and reliability checks by a second researcher.

Limitations of the Study

The most glaring limitation of the study was the low response rate, which raises concerns with the population validity of the sample. Therefore, generalizations from these data should be made with caution.

The use of the web based survey proposed a few limitations. Some board members were not able to participate in the study because they were not connected. The web based survey also denied participation for board members who may not have been

computer literate. The researcher believed that the use of the web based survey impacted the participation response rate because screen configurations were significantly different from one respondent to another. Lastly, the decision not to respond is likely to be made more quickly.

Additional limitations that need to be acknowledged regarding this study concern the congruency of best practices for ensuring college and career readiness for high school graduates across the state and nation. There are many strategies that have been researched as the most effective in preparing students for life after high school but the study was only able to provide a limited list for consideration. Similarly, a limitation to note in this study is that it is limited in research pertaining to board members and their role in improving college and career readiness, specifically those who serve Kentucky districts. Another limitation is that the educational attainment, training and experience of board members vary across the state, thereby making it difficult to generalize the knowledge of board members regarding college and career readiness. A final limitation is that board members' self-reports may not reflect actual practices and attitudes.

Summary

This chapter described the context of the study and the operational definitions of college and career readiness. The researcher also described the research design, the sample and the procedures that were used to collect the data. An explanation of the research findings that resulted from the analysis of the data will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from school board members' responses to a survey with open-ended and likert scale items. This chapter begins with descriptive statistics on personal and district characteristics. That is followed by results from an open-ended question on strategies they can utilized to promote college and career readiness. Next, results are presented from questions using a likert scale to assess the perceived importance of and time allocated to college and career readiness strategies. Gaps in alignment between perceived importance and actual time allocated are discussed. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the correlations of board member training with perceived importance of and time committed to college and career readiness strategies.

Board Member Demographic Information

Of the 101 respondents to the questionnaire, 89 individuals responded to the background questions (see Appendix A). The number of males and females were fairly evenly divided (see Table 1), however there was little racial diversity among the board members with the majority (94.4%) being Caucasian/White (see Table 2). The number of years of service as board members varied greatly from one to 27 years of service; 65 percent of respondents served ten years or less (see Table 3). The number of respondents who served as chair or vice chair of the board was slightly larger (51.6%) than the number of respondents who indicated they were board members not in a formal leadership role (48.3%) (see Table 4). Slightly more than half of respondents (53.9%)

indicated they had received between zero and six hours of training concerning college and career readiness, while slightly less than half (46.1%) received six or more hours of training (see Table 5). Data gleaned from these questions are indicated in tables 1 – 5.

Table 1

Gender of Board Members

	Gender (n)	%
Male	43	48.3
Female	46	51.7

Table 2

Racial Background of Board Members

Ethnicity	Number (n)	%
Caucasian/White	84	94.4
African-American/ Black	4	4.5
Hispanic/Latino	1	1.1

Table 3

Board Member Years of Service

Years of Service	Number (n)	%
1	8	9
2	2	2.2
3	12	13.5

Table 3 (continued)

Years of Service	Number (n)	%
4	8	9
5	11	12.4
6	4	4.5
7	3	3.4
8	1	1.1
9	3	3.4
10	6	6.7
11	3	3.4
12	4	4.5
13	4	4.5
14	3	3.4
15	2	2.2
16	1	1.1
17	2	2.2
18	1	1.1
19	2	2.2
20	2	2.2
21	2	2.2
22	3	3.4
25	1	1.1
27	1	1.1

Table 4

Role of Board Members

Role	Number (n)	%
Chair	27	30.3
Vice Chair	19	21.3
Member	43	48.3

Table 5

College and Career Readiness Training of Board Members

Hours of Training	Number (n)	%
0-3 hours	28	31.5
4-6 hours	20	22.5
6 or more hours	41	46.1

District Demographic Information

The majority of board members (75.3%) indicated they served rural districts in the state of Kentucky (see Table 6). Respondents could select more than one option for this question (see Appendix A). The majority of board members served in districts with fewer than 3,000 students (58.4%) (see Table 7) while only 16.9 percent served districts with greater than 10,000 students. Tables 6 and 7 show the district data.

Table 6

District Type and Geography

District Type	Number (n)	%
Rural	67	75.3
Urban	17	19.1
Independent	22	24.7

Table 7

District Enrollment

Number of Students	Number (n)	%
Less than 3,000	52	58.4
3,000 – 10,000	22	24.7
More than 10,000	15	16.9

Strategies to Promote College and Career Readiness

Question one of the survey (see Appendix A) asked board members to identify specific strategies they could promote to improve college and career readiness within their districts. The number of respondents to this question totaled 91; however, three respondents (3.3%) did not offer specific strategies in their responses. The responses were coded into the broader categories: curriculum and instruction, board policies, and student support services. The specific strategies falling into these three categories are presented in the following sections.

Curriculum and Instruction

Several respondents offered strategies they could promote related to curriculum and instruction that could improve college and career readiness of students in their district. Strategies that were mentioned by at least two board members are included in the findings; many respondents offered multiple strategies in their responses. The top four strategies mentioned most frequently in the curriculum and instruction domain were the offering and accessibility of dual credit course (21.3%), vocational courses (19.1%) and AP courses (16.9%); in addition, specific teacher/staff training and instructional practices were offered as a strategy by 17 (19.1%) of respondents (see Table 8). Findings from the strategies mentioned in the area of curriculum and instruction are listed in Table 8 in alphabetical order by strategy:

Table 8

College and Career Readiness Strategies Related to Curriculum and Instruction

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	%
Alignment of Curriculum	13	14.6
AP Courses	15	16.9
ACT Classes/Preparation	4	4.5
Assessment	13	14.6
Co-Curricular Activities (e.g., clubs, co-op)	2	2.2
Dual Credit Courses	19	21.3
Emphasis on Early Childhood Education	2	2.2
Graduation Requirement	4	4.5
Rigor (Sufficient or Increased)	9	10

Table 8 (continued)

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	%
Teacher/Staff Training and Instructional Practices	17	19.1
Vocational Classes/Vocational Center	17	19.1

Participants who mentioned alignment of curriculum as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to alignment to core standards, national standards, and university standards. Examples of responses from board members are below:

Respondent Eight: "Vertical alignment of curriculum from pre-school to high school to make sure students are being taught and mastering the appropriate goals at each grade level"

Respondent Thirty-Eight: "Curriculum must be aligned with national standards so that students can be both college and career ready."

Respondent Seventy-Nine: "Another strategy that I promote would be alignment of our high school curricula with university standards. The alignment of staff and courses at the high school level would, in my opinion, reduce the number of students who need remedial type work and make our students more successful at life."

Board members who identified co-curricular activities as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to profession specific clubs (e.g., FBLA, FFA) and co-op experiences. Respondents who reported an emphasis on early childhood education as a strategy they could promote college and career readiness in their district stated the following concerning this strategy:

Respondent Seventy-Nine: "…with my experience on the board of education I feel an area that is overlooked when discussing college and career readiness is early childhood education. For example, when districts begin to build a new building one of the first things discussed will be the foundation. The same should be discussed when discussing college and career readiness. I firmly believe and statistics say that if students aren't prepared early they will almost certainly not be successful."

Respondent Eighty-Nine: "We need to start focusing early (preschool and elementary) on providing strong fundamental foundations for our children to make sure they have the basic skills on which to build all content. We need to build on critical thinking and memory skills early on. We need to look at mastery learning as the measure so children are not passed on without having that basic foundation."

Respondents who listed a graduation requirement as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to making career readiness and learned skills a diploma requirement, a senior exit project, and preparation of a job resume and conduction of a mock interview. Examples of responses from board members follow:

Respondent Thirteen: "As a former Human Resources manager for a large manufacturing facility, career readiness includes life skills (e.g., work ethic, attendance, personal finance, conflict resolution) as well as learned skills such as computer basics (technology) and other core competencies relative to career

goals and objectives. These subjects should be diploma requirements for graduating seniors!"

Respondent Sixty-Eight: "Definitely require each graduate to prepare a job resume and have at least one mock interview before graduation."

Board members who cited teacher/staff training and instructional practices as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to several items including professional development, team-teaching, a clearer understanding of college requirements by teachers, and providing quality teachers who are certified in their content areas. Examples of responses from board members include:

Respondent Six: "Our teachers are sharing instructional responsibilities depending on where their strengths are in a subject matter. This creative approach is having an impact by bringing a stronger instructor in on a course subject matter that is his/her specialty."

Respondent Twelve: "As a board member, I believe my role is to promote college and career readiness by providing staff members (and students) access to and opportunity for professional development through training/seminars that are relevant to what they need in order to implement the educational goals for our district."

Respondent Twenty-Two: "Teachers teach to the level that they have always done and this may not be to the level of college. A school board cannot tell teachers how to teach or at what level of instruction they should be teaching. The school site based councils need to better understand the college requirements and insure that the teachers are teaching to that level."

Respondent Eighty: "Students at an early age and throughout their school career need to be kept engaged and interested in learning. This can only happen if the staff is engaged and interested in teaching and doing it with the best training available. The school board should provide every opportunity possible for existing district teachers to become trained in excellence."

Student Support Services

Board members also offered strategies related to student support services that they could promote to improve college and career readiness of students in their district. Strategies mentioned by at least two board members are included in the findings; many respondents offered multiple strategies in their responses. The strategies related to student support services cited most frequently were career planning (7.9%) and spending time with a counselor or advisor (6.7%) (see Table 9). Findings from the strategies mentioned in the area of student support services are listed in Table 9 in alphabetical order by strategy.

Table 9

College and Career Readiness Strategies Related to Student Support Services

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	%
Advisor/Counselor (one on one time)	6	6.7
Career Planning	7	7.9
Individual Learning Plans	2	2.2
Intervention	4	4.5

Board members who cited an individual learning plan offered specifics regarding how they should be implemented. Examples of responses include:

Respondent Seven: "Developing a student's individual learning plan early on is essential. The ILP does not hold a student to a specific plan because they should be able to update it as their interests change through their learning years. The point is that students stay on track to attend college and will be better prepared."

Respondent Sixty-Four: "Promote individual improvement plans."

Board members who cited counseling and advising offered the following responses:

Respondent Twenty-Nine: "Each student needs one on one time with their counselor."

Board members who cited career planning offered the following responses:

Respondent Thirty-Nine: "The student needs to know or choose a field that they are very interested in and work toward the development or enhancement of the job specific skills involved in their career pathway."

Respondent Fifty-One: "Incoming freshmen need to have an advisor to help them make class choices and career decisions."

Respondent Seventy-One: "Provide counselors that are knowledgeable of skill sets required for postsecondary coursework as well as the varied career fields. Provide counselors that know the students and their interests and will start early enough in the student's career to advise them as to courses they need and encourage them to get extra help if necessary."

Board Policy

Several respondents offered strategies they could promote related to board policy that could improve college and career readiness of students in their district. Strategies that were mentioned by at least two board members are listed in Table 10; many respondents offered multiple strategies in their responses. The three strategies mentioned most frequently were the promoting an atmosphere of high expectations for all students (15.7%); encouraging partnerships and communication with parents, community members and industry (12.4%); and working with postsecondary education institutions (6.7%) (see Table 10). Findings from the strategies mentioned in the area of board policy are listed in Table 10 in alphabetical order by strategy:

Table 10

College and Career Readiness Strategies Related to Board Policy

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	%
Establish Measurable Skills/Outcomes	3	3.4
Financial Support/Resource Allocation	6	6.7
High Expectations	14	15.7
Parent/Community Involvement	11	12.4
Partnerships with Postsecondary Institutions	6	6.7

Respondents who noted the establishment of skills and outcomes as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district offered the following responses:

Respondent One: "Establish specific skills and concepts that are measurable to determine rate of progress toward successful completion of these goals."

Respondent Thirty: "Promote to the administration and SBDM committees the need to create a course curriculum that will challenge students and prepare them for what is ahead."

Respondent Fifty-Seven: "Set high goals for scores for students taking AP classes. Set high goals for ACT scores for district."

Study participants who offered supporting the district through finance and resource allocation as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to creating an atmosphere of expectancy and backing it up with support and resources, fiscally supporting staff and administration who design and implement curriculum, providing financial and human resource support for work to succeed, and insuring each SBDM applies their staffing allotment appropriately. Examples of responses from board members are as follows:

Respondent Six: "From top to bottom, creating an atmosphere of expectancy and backing that up with support and resources needed to be assured our students are learning and staying on track to proficiency."

Respondent Thirty-Three: "Provide support for the work to succeed – financial and human resources (i.e., provide time and money for professional development)."

Respondent Fifty-Six: "Make sure each SBDM is on target and applying their staffing allotment to appropriately provide opportunities to each student."

Respondent Ninety-One: "Work with superintendent to ensure resources can be available to support teachers' work."

Board members who emphasized the communication of high expectations for all students as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness in their district referred to clear communication to faculty, staff, and students, a culture of high expectations, and expecting the superintendent to communicate achievement goals to stakeholders. Examples of responses from board members follow:

Respondent One: "Establish specific skills and concepts that are measurable to determine the rate of progress toward successful completion of these goals. Clear communication of these expectations should be made to all staff, students, and parents."

Respondent Fifteen: "Ensure there is a culture of high achievement for ALL."

Respondent Thirty-Three: "Develop clear and high expectations for all students."

Respondent Fifty-Seven: "Expect superintendent to communicate all achievement goals to all stakeholders."

Respondents who mentioned involving parents, community members, and industry as a strategy they could use to promote college and career readiness in their district referred to innovative strategies to increase parental/community involvement, actively promoting the school in the community, working to change the culture in the community to value education, and developing relationships with local business/industry to provide quality experiences for students. Examples of respondent from board members are below:

Respondent Twenty-Eight: "Community engagement would be my primary strategy. A linkage between members of the community and students has proven to be a great source of mentoring and inspiration."

Respondent Thirty-Three: "Engage the community in the process of improving student achievement for all students."

Respondent Thirty-Four: "Work to change the culture in the community to value education in high school and beyond."

Respondent Thirty-Six: "Use community members as in-house experts and job shadowing/mentors.

Respondent Fifty-Three: "It is important to support diverse and challenging academic opportunities for our students that provide them with the necessary skills to continue their learning long after graduation, but also opportunities for career explorations beyond the school building walls are of great importance as well. The development of a good working relationship with local business and industry is essential to providing the quality experiences our students need. Working with the local Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Board, Industrial Board, United Human Services Group, and Workforce Development has proven to be valuable resources for our schools."

Respondents who cited partnerships with postsecondary institutions as a strategy they could use to promote college and career readiness in their district referred to a concentrated effort between postsecondary institutions to define level of high school courses, college representatives meeting with students, and partnering with institutions to include PLCs. Examples of respondent from board members follow:

Respondent Twenty-Two: "I don't think there is a concentrated effort between the colleges/universities to define their level of a given course to the high schools. This could be done thru the KY Department of Education or directly communicated to the high school level. A school board cannot tell teachers how to teach or at what level of instruction they should be teaching. The school Site Base Councils need to better understand college requirements and insure that the teachers are teaching to that level."

Respondent Twenty-Nine: "Reps from surrounding colleges to meet with all students in the gym to tell them about their college. Provide help with college admission paperwork and/or FASFA, loans, etc."

Respondent Sixty-Nine: "articulation agreements with postsecondary tech schools"

Respondent Eighty-One: "Partnership with a college or university to include PLCs with involvement by both"

Importance of Strategies for Preparing College and Career Ready Students

The items within question two were divided into the areas of curriculum and instruction, student support services, and board policies. Tables 11 – 16 represent the findings indicated in these three areas. Board members were asked to select the importance of a list of strategies in preparing students to be college and career ready in question two of the survey (see Appendix A). Although 101 total responses were received for one board policy item (allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness), other items in question two varied in terms of the numbers of respondents from 94 to 97.

Curriculum and Instruction

Items 1 – 4 and item 14 in question two of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) demonstrated a reliability of .720 using Cronbach's Alpha (see Table 11). Of the five items related to curriculum and instruction, high quality teaching was rated as very important by the greatest percentage of respondents (87.5%) (see Table 14) while dual credit opportunities was rated very important by the fewest respondents (47.4%) (see Table 15). Tables 12 – 15 represent the findings based on responses to items 1 – 4 and item 14 in question two of the questionnaire.

Table 11

Curriculum and Instruction (Cronbach's α =.720)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	**Scale Variance if Item Deleted**	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Alignment of curriculum with college and career standards	14.74	2.085	.577	.629
Access to rigorous and relevant courses	14.60	2.394	.606	.632
High quality teaching	14.48	2.790	.431	.697
Dual credit opportunities	15.01	2.011	.419	.732
Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students	14.53	2.617	.497	.673

Table 12

Alignment of Curriculum with College and Career Standards

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	2	2.1
Moderately Important	3	3.1
Important	29	29.9
Very Important	63	64.9

Table 13

Access to Rigorous and Relevant Courses

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	1	1.0
Important	22	22.9
Very Important	73	76.0

Table 14

High Quality Teaching

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	1	1.0
Important	11	11.5
Very Important	84	87.5

Table 15

Dual Credit Opportunities

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	3	3.2
Moderately Important	7	7.4
Important	40	42.1
Very Important	45	47.4

Table 16

Creating and Supporting a Culture of High Expectations for All Students

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	1	1.1
Important	16	17.0
Very Important	77	81.9

Student Support Services

Items 5 – 9 in question two of the questionnaire demonstrated a reliability of .719 using Cronbach's Alpha (see Table 17). Of the five items related to student support services, providing interventions to support struggling students was rated as very important by the largest percentage of respondents (80%) (see Table 18) while a balance of academic and social support for students was rated as very important by the fewest

respondents (47.4%) (see Table 20). Tables 18 – 22 represent the findings based on responses to items 5 – 9 in question two of the questionnaire.

Table 17

Student Support Services (Cronbach's α = .719)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Providing interventions to support struggling students	14.36	2.998	.285	.734
Advising and guidance in college career and planning	14.49	2.146	.636	.601
A balance of academic and social support for students	14.77	2.073	.590	.621
A meaningful and challenging senior year	14.58	2.374	.459	.681
Monitoring student outcomes	14.39	2.794	.443	.689

Table 18

Providing Interventions to Support Struggling Students

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	1	1.1
Important	18	18.9
Very Important	76	80.0

Table 19

Advising and Guidance in College and Career Planning

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	1	1.1
Moderately Important	3	3.2
Important	24	25.3
Very Important	67	70.5

Table 20

A Balance of Academic and Social Support for Students

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	9	9.5
Important	41	43.2
Very Important	45	47.4

Table 21

A Meaningful and Challenging Senior Year

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	1	1.0
Moderately Important	3	3.1
Important	32	33.3
Very Important	60	62.5

Table 22

Monitoring Student Outcomes

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	0	0
Important	23	24.2
Very Important	72	75.8

Board Policy

Items 10 – 14 in question two of the questionnaire demonstrated a reliability of .759 using Cronbach's Alpha (see Table 23). Of the four items related to board policy, developing policies and procedures that impact student learning was rated as very important by the greatest percentage of respondents (77.7%) (see Table 26) while allocating resources to support the goal of college and career readiness was rated very important by the fewest respondents (70.5%) (see Table 25). Tables 24 – 27 represent the findings based on responses to items 10 – 14 in question two of the questionnaire.

Table 23

Board Policy (Cronbach's α = .759)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Creating board alignment with and support of district student achievement goals	11.13	1.489	.565	.700
Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness	11.17	1.562	.389	.795
Developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students	11.16	1.275	.677	.632
Developing policies and procedures that impact student learning	11.10	1.421	.625	.668

Table 24

Creating Board Alignment with and Support of District Student Achievement Goals

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	1	1.1
Important	24	25.3
Very Important	70	73.7

Table 25

Allocating Resources to Support the Goal of Improving College and Career Readiness

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	1	1.1
Moderately Important	0	0
Important	27	28.4
Very Important	67	70.5

Table 26

Developing Policies and Procedures that Remove Learning Barriers for Students

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	3	3.2
Important	24	25.3
Very Important	68	71.6

Table 27

Developing Policies and Procedures that Impact Student Learning

Rating	Number (n)	%
Not Important	0	0
Moderately Important	2	2.1
Important	19	20.2
Very Important	73	77.7

Table 28 demonstrates the number of respondents for each item in question two and the mean average of their responses where one equals least important and four equals very important. High quality teaching was the highest rated strategy with a mean of 3.86 while dual credit opportunities was rated the lowest rated strategy with a mean of 3.34 (see Table 28).

Table 28

Means of Importance of CCR Strategies in Descending Order

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
High quality teaching	96	3.86	.373
Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students	94	3.81	.422
Proving interventions to support struggling students	95	3.79	.435
Monitoring student outcomes	95	3.76	.431
Developing policies and procedures that impact student learning	94	3.76	.479
Access to rigorous and relevant courses	96	3.75	.459
Creating board alignment with and support of district student achievement goals	95	3.73	.471
Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness	95	3.68	.531
Developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students	95	3.68	.531
Advising and guidance in college and career planning	95	3.65	.597
Alignment of curriculum with college and career standards	97	3.58	.659

Table 28 (continued)

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
A meaningful and challenging senior year	96	3.57	.611
A balance of academic and social support for students	95	3.38	.655
Dual credit opportunities	95	3.34	.752

Frequency of Board Members' Work Concerning College and Career Readiness

In question three of the survey (See Appendix A), board members were asked how often they conducted work related to the strategies listed in question two that could assist in preparing students for college and career. The items have been separated into categories of curriculum and instruction, student support services, and board policy.

Curriculum and Instruction

The number of board members who responded to the frequency of meetings related to items of curriculum and instruction ranged from 93 to 95. The largest number of respondents (44.7%) (see Table 33) who indicated they met on a monthly basis for a particular item met to discuss creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students. In a distant second, 28.7 percent of respondents (see Table 31) indicated they met monthly to discuss high quality teaching. The number of respondents who stated they never met regarding items of curriculum and instruction ranged from three to seven (see Tables 29 – 33). Findings related to how often school boards met to discuss items related to curriculum and instruction are demonstrated in Tables 29 – 33.

Table 29

Alignment of Curriculum with College and Career Standards

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	7	7.4
Once Per Year	30	31.6
2 – 4 Times Per Year	36	37.9
5 – 10 Times Per Year	11	11.6
Once Per Month	11	11.6

Table 30

Access to Rigorous and Relevant Courses

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	7	7.4
Once Per Year	23	24.5
2 – 4 Times Per Year	35	37.2
5 – 10 Times Per Year	16	17
Once Per Month	13	13.8

Table 31

High Quality Teaching

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	7	7.4
Once Per Year	15	16
2 – 4 Times Per Year	25	26.6
5 – 10 Times Per Year	20	21.3
Once Per Month	27	28.7

Table 32

Dual Credit Opportunities

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	6	6.5
Once Per Year	25	26.9
2 – 4 Times Per Year	40	43
5 – 10 Times Per Year	13	14
Once Per Month	9	9.7

Table 33

Creating and Supporting a Culture of High Expectations for All Students

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	3	3.2
Once Per Year	11	11.7
2 – 4 Times Per Year	21	22.3
5 – 10 Times Per Year	17	18.1
Once Per Month	42	44.7

Student Support Services

The number of board members who responded to the frequency of meetings related to items of curriculum and instruction ranged from 93 to 95. The largest number of respondents (33%) (see Table 38) who indicated they met on a monthly basis for a particular item met to discuss monitoring student outcomes. In a close second, 26.3 percent of respondents (see Table 34) indicated they met monthly to discuss providing interventions to support struggling students. The number of respondents who stated they never met regarding items of student support services ranged from three (see Table 34) to twenty-seven (see Table 37). Findings related to how often school boards met to discuss items related to curriculum and instruction are demonstrated in Tables 34 – 38.

Table 34

Providing Interventions to Support Struggling Students

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	3	3.2
Once Per Year	13	13.7
2 – 4 Times Per Year	28	29.5
5 – 10 Times Per Year	26	27.4
Once Per Month	25	26.3

Table 35

Advising and Guidance in College and Career Planning

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	13	13.7
Once Per Year	25	26.3
2 – 4 Times Per Year	32	33.7
5 – 10 Times Per Year	15	15.8
Once Per Month	10	10.5

Table 36

A Balance of Academic and Social Support for Students

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	8	8.6
Once Per Year	19	20.4
2 – 4 Times Per Year	33	35.5
5 – 10 Times Per Year	23	24.7
Once Per Month	10	10.8

Table 37

A Meaningful and Challenging Senior Year

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	27	28.7
Once Per Year	24	25.5
2 – 4 Times Per Year	27	28.7
5 – 10 Times Per Year	11	11.7
Once Per Month	5	5.3

Table 38

Monitoring Student Outcomes

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	5	5.3
Once Per Year	11	11.7
2 – 4 Times Per Year	24	25.5
5 – 10 Times Per Year	23	24.5
Once Per Month	31	33

Board Policy

The number of board members who responded to the frequency of meetings related to items of board policy ranged from 93 to 95. The largest number of respondents (26.6%) (see Table 42) who indicated they met on a monthly basis for a particular item met to discuss monitoring student outcomes. Rounding out the top three, the second and third responses where 23.7 percent of respondents (see Table 39) indicated they met monthly to discuss creating board alignment with support of district student achievement goals and 23.4 percent of respondents (see Table 41) indicated they met monthly to discuss developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students. The number of respondents who stated they never met regarding items of student support services ranged from one (see Table 42) to three (see Tables 39 – 41). Findings related to how often school boards met to discuss items related to board policy are demonstrated in Tables 39 – 42.

Table 39

Creating Board Alignment with and Support of District Student Achievement Goals

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	3	3.2
Once Per Year	21	22.6
2 – 4 Times Per Year	31	33.3
5 – 10 Times Per Year	16	17.2
Once Per Month	22	23.7

Table 40

Allocating Resources to Support the Goal of Improving College and Career Readiness

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	3	3.2
Once Per Year	25	26.9
2 – 4 Times Per Year	33	35.5
5 – 10 Times Per Year	17	18.3
Once Per Month	15	16.1

Table 41

Developing Policies and Procedures that Remove Learning Barriers for Students

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	3	3.2
Once Per Year	23	24.5
2 – 4 Times Per Year	23	24.5
5 – 10 Times Per Year	23	24.5
Once Per Month	22	23.4

Table 42

Developing Policies and Procedures that Impact Student Learning

Frequency of Meetings	Number (n)	%
Never	1	1.1
Once Per Year	24	25.5
2 – 4 Times Per Year	30	31.9
5 – 10 Times Per Year	14	14.9
Once Per Month	25	26.6

Table 43 demonstrates the number of respondents for each item in question three and the mean average of their responses where one equals never and five equals once per month. Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students was the strategy discussed most often among school boards with a mean of 3.89 while a

meaningful and challenging senior year was the strategy discussed least often among school boards with a mean of 3.34 (see Table 43).

Table 43

Frequency of Work Related to CCR Strategies in Descending Order

College and Career Readiness Strategy	Number (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students	94	3.89	1.196
Monitoring student outcomes	94	3.68	1.202
Providing interventions to support struggling students	95	3.60	1.115
High quality teaching	94	3.48	1.268
Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness	94	3.40	1.185
Developing policies and procedures that impact student learning	94	3.40	1.167
Creating board alignment with and support of district student achievement goals	93	3.35	1.167
Developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students	93	3.17	1.100
A balance of academic and social support for students	93	3.09	1.110
Access to rigorous and relevant courses	94	3.05	1.130
Dual credit opportunities	93	2.94	1.030
Alignment of curriculum with college and career standards	95	2.88	1.090
Advising and guidance in college and career planning	95	2.83	1.173
A meaningful and challenging senior year	94	2.39	1.175
Valid N (listwise)	88		

Tables 44, 45, and 46 demonstrate that board members already know what is important related to college and career readiness and that training has no effect on this. For example, the perceived importance of curriculum and instruction based on hours of training are similar: 3.67 for 0 – 3 hours of training, 3.66 for 4 – 6 hours of training, and 3.75 for six or more hours of training (see Table 44). However, there are positive gains on the amount of time allocated to curriculum and instruction (see Table 44) and student support (see Table 45) as board members receive more training. Correlations for hours of training with time spent on each area are statistically significant: curriculum and instruction (r=.241, p=.025); student support (r=.358, p=.001). Ironically, the correlation between hours of training and time allocated (r=.05, p=.06) is not significant in the area of board policy (see Table 46).

Table 44

Relationship Between Importance of Strategies and Amount of Training Received/C&I

What amount of training have you received pertaining to college and career readiness?		**Curriculum and Instruction Perceived Importance**	**Curriculum and Instruction Allocated Time**
0-3 hours	Mean	3.67	2.95
	N	27	26
	Std. Deviation	.381	1.054
4-6 hours	Mean	3.66	3.37
	N	19	20
	Std. Deviation	.347	.766
6 or more hours	Mean	3.75	3.49
	N	41	40
	Std. Deviation	.303	.906
Total	Mean	3.71	3.30
	N	87	86
	Std. Deviation	.337	.943

Table 45

Relationship Between Importance of Strategies and Amount of Training Received/SS

What amount of training have you received pertaining to college and career readiness?		Student Support Perceived Importance	Student Support Allocated Time
0-3 hours	Mean	3.62	2.78
	N	28	27
	Std. Deviation	.409	.895
4-6 hours	Mean	3.60	2.98
	N	19	19
	Std. Deviation	.389	.816
6 or more hours	Mean	3.70	3.50
	N	41	40
	Std. Deviation	.329	.831
Total	Mean	3.65	3.16
	N	88	86
	Std. Deviation	.367	.901

Table 46

Relationship Between Importance of Strategies and Amount of Training Received/BP

What amount of training have you received pertaining to college and career readiness?		Board Policy Perceived Importance	Board Policy Allocated Time
0-3 hours	Mean	3.66	3.07
	N	28	25
	Std. Deviation	.3987	1.077
4-6 hours	Mean	3.62	3.53
	N	19	19
	Std. Deviation	.474	.878
6 or more hours	Mean	3.84	3.57
	N	40	41
	Std. Deviation	.275	.980
Total	Mean	3.73	3.41
	N	87	85
	Std. Deviation	.375	1.001

Table 47 demonstrates the gaps between the amount of time spent on each college and career readiness strategy and how important board members stated these strategies were. Board members stated they spent the most time on creating and supporting a culture of high expectations (see Table 43); the gap demonstrated in Table 47 indicates they are spending slightly more time on creating a culture of high expectations compared to its importance. The second lowest gap is monitoring student outcomes which demonstrate that board members believe they are spending the appropriate amount of time on this strategy (see Table 47). For those strategies with the lowest gaps, board members consider what they are doing related to these items to be at a sufficient level and therefore do not see a need to do anything more. As a result, changing the way in which board members work and think about college and career readiness strategies is a difficult process. This could allow board members to become stagnant in their work rather than trying to affect change in the area of college and career readiness for all students.

Table 47

Gaps Between Importance of Strategies and How Much Time is Spent in Descending Order

	Number (n)	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Senior Year Gap	93	1.17	1.282
Guidance CCR Gap	94	.80	1.223
Rigor Relevance Gap	93	.74	1.062
Curriculum Alignment Gap	94	.73	1.184
Policies to Remove Barriers Gap	92	.49	1.181
Quality Teaching Gap	94	.40	1.273

Table 47 continued

Dual Credit Gap	92	.39	1.167
Board Alignment Gap	92	.38	1.230
Resource Allocation Gap	92	.33	1.205
Student Learning Policies Gap	92	.32	1.176
Balance of Student Support Services Gap	92	.25	1.173
Student Interventions Gap	94	.17	1.142
Monitoring Outcomes Gap	92	.07	1.184
Culture of High Expectations Gap	92	.07	1.165
Valid N (listwise)	85		

Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the findings and interpretation of the data collected for the research study. Of the 101 board members who were a part of this study, most felt that providing specific college and career ready strategies were important to improving the college and career readiness of students.

The data analysis was coded into three categories: curriculum and instruction, student support services and board policies.

The data analysis indicated that of the five items related to curriculum and instruction, high quality teaching was rated as very important by the greatest percentage of respondents while dual credit opportunities was rated very important by the fewest respondents.

Several respondents offered strategies they could promote that could improve college and career readiness of students in their district including providing students an opportunity to enroll in dual credit, vocational and AP classes, increasing instructional rigor, advising, career planning, maintaining a culture of high expectations, parent/community involvement and partnerships with postsecondary institutions, and professional development for teachers.

The data analysis revealed that of the five items related to student support services, providing interventions to support struggling students was rated as very important by the largest percentage of respondents while a balance of academic and social support for students was rated as very important by the fewest respondents.

Data analysis indicated that some board members believe that spending time career planning with a counselor or an advisor is a very important college and career strategy. One board member suggested that developing a student's individual learning plan early on is essential.

Data analysis also indicated that the greatest percentage of board members rated items related to board policy, developing policies and procedures that impact student learning as very important. Consequently, allocating resources to support the goal of college and career readiness was rated very important by the fewest respondents.

Also included in this chapter was an analysis of the findings and interpretation of the data collected regarding how often board members conducted work related to the strategies that could assist in preparing students for college and career. The items have also been separated into categories of curriculum and instruction, student support services, and board policy.

Data analysis regarding the category curriculum and instruction indicated that the largest number of board members indicated they met on a monthly basis to discuss creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students. A much smaller number of board members indicated they met monthly to discuss high quality teaching.

A small number of board members indicated they never met regarding items of student support services while a large number of board members indicated they met on a monthly basis to discuss monitoring student outcomes.

Data analysis indicated that a large number of board members responded to the frequency of meetings related to items of board policy. The largest number of respondents indicated they met on a monthly basis to discuss monitoring student outcomes. The data analysis also revealed that many board members indicated that they met once a month to discuss creating board alignment with support of district student achievement goals and to discuss developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students. The data analysis indicated that the greatest percentage of board members spent most of their time on creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students.

The top three strategies mentioned most frequently in the curriculum and instruction domain were the offering and accessibility of dual credit course, vocational courses and AP courses.

While most board members seem to understand the importance of the curriculum and instruction strategies in promoting college and career readiness others indicated that providing interventions to support struggling students and advising and guidance in

college and career planning as student support services strategies as very important in improving college and career readiness of students in their district.

Regardless of how important board members believed that specific curriculum and instruction, student support services and board policy strategies were to improving college and career readiness of the students in their districts the data analysis indicated that most of the board members responded that they discuss strategies that will improve college and career readiness of their students only two to four times a year.

Chapter V

Recommendations and Discussion

Introduction

KRS 160.180 requires that school board members in the state of Kentucky participate in training on an annual basis based on the years of service. For board members with zero to three years of experience, 12 hours of training is required. For those with four to seven years of experience, eight hours of training is required. Finally, for those with more than eight years of experience, four hours of training is required.

School board members have the option of completing the annual training requirement in a number of ways. These include the KSBA annual conference, summer leadership institute, fall regional meetings, winter symposium, training by KSBA for local board/superintendent team training, Kentucky Center for School Safety trainings and conferences, and other locally approved trainings (KSBA, n.d.). In addition, board members may complete self-study programs to complete the annual training requirement. The following curricula are options under the self-study programs: KSBA school board leadership guide, advancing student achievement to proficiency, parliamentary procedures for school boards, superintendent and their boards, Kentucky STEM imperative, school safety and risk control, an introduction to budget and personnel, relationships on the school board, communicating with school stakeholders, the basics of lobbying, leadership at the school board meeting, the role of the board in pre-kindergarten, teaching and learning in the twenty-first century, alternative education (Kentucky's customized solution), and what works in high performing, high poverty schools (KSBA, n.d.).

The law does not require school board members to diversify the annual requirements, thus it is possible for an individual to repeat subject matter annually or never engage in instructional opportunities for specific curricula including college and career readiness. The state of Kentucky should consider requiring school board members to engage in at least one learning opportunity on an annual basis concerning college and career readiness. Given that Kentucky has received a waiver for the No Child Left Behind Act and a renewed focus on college and career readiness, action needs to be taken at every level to ensure success in educational system within the state.

The study by Roberts and Sampson (2011) concluded that professional development was needed and essential for student learning, yet the effect of such training is inconclusive. If the state of Kentucky focused its efforts on specific strategies to prepare students for college or careers within its training requirements, perhaps it could provide a blueprint of success based on its training and end results.

The study focused on board members and their perception of college and career readiness. The research questions that were studied are:

1. Is college and career readiness a priority of school boards?
2. What is the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students?
3. Are school boards engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students? If yes, how?
4. What gaps exist between board member's reports of the importance of indicators of career and college readiness and how much time they allocate toward these indicators?

5. What is the relationship between school board members training and the perceived importance of and allocation of time towards college and career readiness?

In addition the hypothesis of "the more training a school board member has, the more likely he/she will believe that time should be spent focusing on college and career readiness" was tested with answers of the aforementioned research questions.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results confirmed the hypothesis and provided substantive knowledge to each of the questions and hypothesis. As stated in chapter four and concluded in this chapter, there was clear evidence that board members spent time on initiatives to improve college and career readiness. It was also clear that most of the board members knew which strategies were important in improving college and career readiness. Thus, analysis of how board members prioritize their work, what they thought was important in their work and how often they met or time devoted to their work created a conclusion that my hypothesis was confirmed.

Discussion of Findings

School board members listed high quality teaching as the most important strategy in improving college and career readiness; however the strategy they discussed most often in school board meetings was creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students. High quality teaching was fourth on the list of time devoted to the strategy in school board meetings. That being said, the first four strategies deemed most important by board members are also the first four (in differing order) that the most time is being devoted to in school board meetings.

As noted by the Lighthouse Study conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards (2000), specific characteristics of board members in high-achieving districts that were identified in the study correlate with the characteristics of many board members who responded to the questionnaire in this research study. These include creating a culture of high expectations for all students where every individual has the potential to reach the same level of academic success and a knowledge of district goals related to curriculum, instruction, and professional development for teachers and staff (IASB, 2000). Thus, the districts in which these school board members serve contain characteristics of board members who served in high-achieving districts in the Lighthouse study. This has the potential to result in improving the college and career readiness of students within districts in the state of Kentucky as the foundation for improvement has been laid in many ways.

Conclusions of Findings Related to Research Questions

Question One: Is college and career readiness a priority of school boards?

Although the direct question concerning priorities of school board members was not asked on the survey, the time spent on initiatives to improve college and career readiness is one indicator of how board members prioritize it in their work. Based on responses to question three which asked school board members how often they addressed specific strategies to assist students in being college and career ready, it is clear that this is a priority for school board members. Almost seventy percent (69.5%) of school board members stated they met at least once annually for the purpose of curriculum alignment while a smaller percentage (11.6%) met on a monthly basis concerning curriculum alignment. In question one of the survey, 14.6 percent of school board members offered

curriculum alignment as a strategy they could promote to improve college and career readiness of students. Although the researcher was unable to draw a definitive conclusion, it seems feasible that the individuals who suggested curriculum alignment as an important strategy may have been among the group of board members who met on a monthly basis, thus bringing this strategy to the forefront in their minds.

Dual credit opportunities were offered as a strategy in question one of the survey by 21.3 percent of board members and was the most popular strategy suggested. Based on the responses in question three of the survey, 66.7 percent of board members met a minimum of two to four times annually to discuss dual credit opportunities.

Question Two: What is the perception of school board members concerning their roles in improving the college and career readiness of students?

Based on responses to question one which asked board members specific strategies they could promote to improve college and career readiness, several board members elaborated on their role in improving college and career readiness in their responses.

> Respondent two offered the following in their response: "*We must encourage students from day one to think in terms of higher education whether it be college or technical school. I knew before I started school that I was going to college. This came from the mindset of my parents but it quickly became mine. Unfortunately, a lot of parents do not create this atmosphere for their children. The schools must do it. We must start from day one "indoctrinating" our students, so to speak, that dropping out of school is not acceptable."*

Respondent eighty stated the following concerning the role of school boards: *"The single most important strategy is to make sure that proper English is taught and followed in all disciplines and should be stressed in all reading and writing material so that excellent communication skills are learned from the very first elementary grade. There should never be a slack period in this discipline. The second most important strategy that should be stressed is teaching in mathematics as nothing happens in this world that is not influenced or decided by mathematics skills and reasoning. School boards unfortunately have been cut out of the direct involvement in making sure these things occur but with the ability to direct policy at the school level, there is some influence that can be leveraged to help this cause by providing the funding needed for extended services and professional development opportunities for teachers that promote these values."*

Lastly, respondent eighty nine clearly voiced frustrations in the role of the school board in their district stating: *"....Our board listens to reports but it does not take an active role. We are generally told what is being done. SBDM makes most curricular and school based decisions but the superintendent indirectly guides some of these decisions through his principals. When it comes to the board it's already been designed and it's basically an informational piece. Our role is to vote yes when the superintendent makes a recommendation to spend money. It is hard to answer the question of how often our board "works" on specific issues. It might be addressed briefly in a report but the board does not work on it. We're just told that teachers are being trained but not how and why. We are told that RTI is being implemented but there's no RTI data. The PAS, Explore, Plan and*

ACT scores are presented. This is occasionally accompanied by discussion. When a board member asked at Monday's board meeting why the social studies scores are so low, we were told that it could be because we don't test every year or it could be because the subject is too broad."

Question Three: Are school boards engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students? If yes, how?

School boards are engaged in improving the college and career readiness of students based on the responses to question three which asked how often the boards met to discuss specific college and career readiness strategies. With the exception of the strategy of a meaningful and challenging senior year which resulted in 28.7 percent of board members stating they never met to discuss the issue, the majority of the college and career readiness strategies were addressed at least on an annual basis with many addressed more often. There was a small minority of board members who stated they never discussed each strategy ranging from 3.2 percent to 13.7 percent; however 3.2 percent was the percentage most often represented in those who responded "never" in question three of the survey.

Question Four: What gaps exist between board members' reports of the importance of indicators of college and career readiness and how much time they allocate toward these indicators?

The alignment of curriculum with college and career standards was deemed very important by 64.9 percent and important by 29.9 percent of board members in question two. However, 31.6 percent of board members responded in question three that they met once annually to discuss this strategy. Although the majority of board members met at

least 2 times per year (or more often), the fact that almost one third of them only discuss this strategy on an annual basis that 94.8 percent of them rate as important or very important shows a gap between ideas and action.

Access to rigorous and relevant courses had similar results with 98.9 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 24.5 percent of board members stated they met once annually to discuss this strategy in question three.

Advising and guidance in college and career planning had similar results with 95.8 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 26.3 percent of board members stated they met once annually to discuss this strategy in question three.

Creating board alignment with support of district student achievement goals had similar results with 99 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 22.6 percent of board members stated they met once annually to discuss the strategy in question three.

Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness also displayed similar results with 98.9 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 26.9 percent of board members stated they met only once on an annual basis to discuss this strategy in question three.

Developing policies and procedures that remove learning barriers for students demonstrated similar results with 96.9 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 24.5 percent of board members stated they met only once annually to discuss the strategy in question three.

Finally, developing policies and procedures that impact student learning also displayed similar results with 97.9 percent of board members rating the item as important or very important in question two while 25.5 percent of board members stated they met once on an annual basis to discuss the strategy in question three.

Board members (21.3%) offered dual credit opportunities as a strategy they could promote in question one more than any other strategy; 89.5 percent of them rated the item as important or very important in question two and 26.9 percent of them stated they met once annually to discuss this strategy. In this case, 14 percent of board members met five to ten times per year to discuss dual credit opportunities while 43 percent of them met two to four times per year. Thus, a small percentage of board members are spending a lot of time on this strategy which again begs the question whether the intense focus on this strategy is resulting in them offering it as a strategy they can promote in question one.

The largest discrepancy was for the strategy of a meaningful and challenging senior year. Although 95.8 percent of board members stated this strategy was important or very important, 28.7 percent of them stated they never met to discuss the strategy in question three. In addition, 25.5 percent of board members stated they met only once annually to discuss this strategy in question three. Thus, an item that is rated important by almost 96 percent of board members is being addressed seldom or not at all by 54.2 percent of board members.

Question Five: What is the relationship between school board members training and the perceived importance of and allocation of time towards college and career readiness?

Although the questionnaire found that almost half of the board members who responded (46.1%) had six or more hours of training in the area of college and career

readiness and 22.5 percent of board members had between four and six hours of training, it is not possible to determine how this training affected how important they perceive college and career readiness or the time spent on such strategies given the anonymity of the survey. However, considering that 68.6 percent of board members had a minimum of four hours of training and more than 90 percent of board members rated the college and career readiness strategies within the survey as important or very important, it is clear that regardless of the number of hours of training they have received (or haven't received), almost all of them consider strategies as important in the goal of developing students who are college and career ready.

Implications for Educational Leaders

Even if professional development and training is not required, school board members should engage in professional development and trainings that specifically addresses practices and strategies to enhance their understanding of college and career readiness and what leads to student success, whether students choose the path of postsecondary education or entry into the workforce.

Superintendents should ensure that board members are intentionally engaged in the educational process and discussion of assessment results resulting in board members not only being given the data but offered explanations regarding the results. As a result, recommendations could be made concerning what the board can do to improve student success and how the district can improve its practices and outcomes. The timing couldn't be better. After decades of sorting and selecting students for college and or non-college tracks, political and educational leaders have decided to focus on college and career readiness for all students.

Implications for Policy and Further Research

National Level

At the national level the Obama administration has presented states with an unprecedented challenge of preparing America's students to graduate from high school as college and career ready and to enable them to out-compete any worker in the world. The increased emphasis on accountability and education reform will demand educators to think differently about how they do their work.

The goal of having 100 percent of students proficient in reading and math by 2014 should be expanded to include students graduating from high school college and career ready. Federal policy should focus on removing inequities that serve as barriers to learning regarding the allocation of funding by a fixed formula. More money does not equate to improved success.

The reauthorization of The Elementary Secondary Education Reform Act (ESEA) needs to be designed to address the low performance of the nations' middle and high schools. Federal policy has been revised to focus on college and career readiness, however more needs to be done to challenge students who are underperforming in our public schools.

Federal policy needs to be less prescriptive to how SEAs support their struggling schools and districts. Federal policymakers have allowed states to request flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements. The waiver of AYP is a much needed permanent change to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The focus on meeting AYP does not reflect the goal of all students graduating college and career ready, nor does it provide a good measure of student progress. The reauthorization of the Elementary

Secondary Education Reform Act (ESEA) must establish guidelines that will align with the common core standards initiative while allocating funds to states and districts to support the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers. New funding should be targeted to address adolescent literacy and the continually growing achievement gap among minority students and their counterparts.

State Level

The General Assembly passed Senate Bill (SB1) in 2009. This legislation propelled the implementation of several cutting edge education initiatives. One of the key pieces of SB1 was the mandate to adopt standards that were deeper, fewer and clearer. This mandate led Kentucky to be the first state to adopt the common core standards. Kentucky was one of forty five states to embrace the common core initiative. Kentucky began implementing standards in math and reading; students will be assessed on these standards beginning in May 2012.

Senate Bill 1 mandated collaboration among Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and Educational Professional Standards Board (EPSB). KDE and CPE partnered to develop a unified strategic plan that includes the following key strategies: accelerated learning opportunities (focusing on the expansion of AP/IB access and dual credit opportunities), secondary intervention programs (focusing on the development of transitional coursework), college and career readiness advising (focusing on the full implementation of the individual learning plan and comprehensive advising programs), and postsecondary college persistence and degree completion (focusing on bridge programming, accelerated learning opportunities, and student support and intervention

systems). To mitigate the political inequities among state grants, they should be awarded based on need rather than competition to support the four key strategies and brought to scale so that all of Kentucky's students are supported in achieving proficiency and graduating college and career ready. To promote the importance of and to provide a systemic support system to improving college and career readiness, state policy needs to address the alignment and collaboration of P-12 education and the council of postsecondary education and its institutions of higher education.

Senate Bill 1 requires Kentucky to begin a new assessment and accountability system in 2011-2012 school year. The assessment and accountability model is a more balanced approach than the previous assessment and accountability model known as the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The Unbridled Learning Accountability Model incorporates all aspects of school and district work around the Kentucky Board of Education's four strategic priorities: next generation learners, next generation professionals, next generation support services and next generation schools/districts.

With the focus and goal of increasing the percent of college graduates 50 percent by 2015, state policy is needed to ensure the alignment of the common core standards with quality core curriculum that is assessed at the end of course work in Algebra II, English II and U.S History. State funding is needed for professional development for teachers in year two of the implementation of the common core standards. State lawmakers need to reassess the student growth measures to ensure that students within the five year measurement of growth are not left behind.

The state currently has legislation (Senate Bill 168) that addresses the achievement gap but state legislation needs to target funding to provide support for research into best practices and strategies for closing the achievement gap and increasing the college and career readiness of minority students.

Policy makers need to mandate that local school board members be required to receive training that will enhance their skills and understanding of the issue of college and career readiness and how they may best utilize their own skills and authority in increasing this probability for all students.

Local Level

The focus on graduating all students college and career ready should impact the way school boards operate and their need to re-prioritize their goals and time spent on student outcomes and how to support improving the college and career readiness of students.

Question one of the survey (see Appendix A) asked board members to identify specific strategies they could promote to improve college and career readiness within their districts. Board members suggested developing partnerships with communities; school boards can build lasting support that assists them in facilitating student achievement (Resnick, 2000). The involvement of parents, teachers, businesses, and other community members in the process of establishing goals and progress standards can have a powerful influence on improving student achievement. Parents who understand and support the educational standards expected of students will assist their children in meeting the standards (Cunningham, 2002). Community engagement efforts also allow the public to have the opportunity to learn about trends affecting students that may have

an impact on educational outcomes and success (Resnick, 2000). Suggested ways that school boards can engage the public include focus groups, telephone surveys, public meetings, email, and study circles (Resnick, 2000). Local boards should articulate policy that addresses the district's expectations for schools and district performance and invite community stakeholders to collaborate with the district to provide recommendations and strategies to focus on supporting the college and career readiness of all students. The development of a college and career advisory council is another strategy that boards can use to engage the community in the priority of graduating students to be college and career ready.

Board members offered strategies they could promote related to curriculum and instruction that could improve college and career readiness of students in their district. Board members indicated that they could improve the college and career readiness of the students in their district by offering and providing accessibility to dual credit courses, AP courses and vocational courses. These strategies are aligned with the strategies included the four key strategies referenced in the Council on Postsecondary Education's unified plan.

Board policy needs to target the allocation of resources to middle and high schools to support innovative strategies that will improve the college and career readiness of students. Although the law does not require school board members to diversify their annual training requirements, policymakers must address the types of training that boards need to engage in so that intentional engagement with student outcomes is a priority.

Policy makers must also address the amount of time that board members are required to address important board items such as strategies that will improve college and

career readiness of students. It is recommended that joint training be provided for school boards and school based decision making councils to improve their focus based on four questions: 1) What do we want students to learn and be able to do?; 2) How will we know if they have successfully learned these skills?; 3) What do we do if they are unsuccessful in learning these skills?; and 4) What plan of action should be taken if they learned the desirable skills?

The research conducted by this study was limited to the school board members who responded to the survey within one state in the nation. Given that the literature on the impact of school boards on student achievement is very limited, further research needs to be done in this area to determine how successful school boards are in improving academic success of students. However, this study concluded that board members prioritized and devoted their time to strategies that they thought were important to improving the college and career readiness of the students in their districts.

In addition, the role of training and professional development by school board members warrants further exploration and research. The current literature is inconclusive in this regard and this study did not allow for such determinations.

Additional research is recommended to investigate the relationship of schools boards and school based decision making councils and how they can best work together to improve student outcomes. Further research should be conducted on professional learning communities and boards of education. Do professional learning communities improve the college and career ready focus and priorities of school boards?

Summary

This study determined that individual school board members prioritize college and career readiness for their students. The analysis of how board members prioritize their work, what they thought was important in their work, and how often they met or the amount of time devoted to their work led to the conclusion that the hypothesis was confirmed.

Because the survey was set up in such a way that respondents could only view one question at a time, it is clear that they are keenly aware of strategies that promote college and career readiness. In many cases, the responses provided in question one was similar to the strategies listed within the questionnaire in questions two and three. A small number of respondents offered strategies in question one that explained initiatives within their own districts that assist in promoting college and career readiness. A small number of board members also expressed frustrations within their responses which ranged from elementary education, students being unprepared to go to the next level based on reading proficiency yet allowed to proceed, students entering school unprepared for education and their future as a result of their home environment, and the role of the board itself.

It is clear that in most cases of the strategies listed in question two that promote college and career readiness, a full 90 percent or greater of board members rated the strategies as important or very important while approximately one quarter of them only discuss these strategies once a year. Almost half of the school board members who responded in this study (48.3%) are members of school boards but are not in positions of

authority such as chair or vice chair. One can assume that this limits the influence they have in determining the agenda of meetings and the time spent on specific items.

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APPENDIX A

BOARD MEMBER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

BOARD MEMBER CONSENT TO PARTCIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

The Perception of School Board Members of their Role in Improving College and Career Readiness

Why are you being invited to take part in this research?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about the role board members play in supporting the development of students who are college and or career ready. You are being invited to take part in this research study because your experience as a school board member in Kentucky will contribute significantly toward identifying best practices and professional development needed for board members as they fulfill their role in the state. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of approximately eight hundred people to do so.

Who is doing the study?
The person in charge of this study is Elaine Farris, a student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Development Program at Eastern Kentucky University. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Aaron Thompson and Dr. Charles Hausman her co-advisors.

What is the purpose of this study?
By doing this study, we hope to learn what strategies and or best practices that board members support or cause to be implemented that impact the college and career readiness of the students in their school districts.

Are there reasons why you should not take part in this study?
There are no reasons that I am aware of that would affect you in any way if you choose to participate in this study.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?
You will be completing and submitting the survey online. The research procedures will take approximately 15 minutes. The collection of data will be done within a two month timeframe.

What will you be asked to do?
You will be asked to answer questions about the importance of college and career strategies, how often board members deal with these strategies and the demographics of your district.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?
The tasks that you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

Will you benefit from taking part in this study?
You will not get any personal gain from taking part in this study.

Do you have to take part in the study?
If you decide to take part in this study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

If you don't want to take part in the study, are there other choices?
If you do not want to participate in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

What will it cost you to participate?
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

Will you receive any rewards for taking part in this study?
You will not receive any rewards for taking part in this study.

Who will see the information that you give?
Your information will be combined with information from the other participants taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information and data we have gathered. You or your district will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of the study; however, we will keep your name and the name of your district and other identifying information confidential.
We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what the information is. We will keep private all research records that identify you or your district to the extent of the law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to a court. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as Eastern Kentucky University.

Can your taking part in the study end early?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

Are you participating or can you participate in another research study at the same time as participating in this one?
You may take part in this study if you are currently involved in another research study. You should also discuss with the investigator before you agree to participate in another research study while you are enrolled in this study.

What if you have questions, suggestions, concerns or complaints?
Please feel free to ask any questions that may come to mind before you accept this invitation to take part in the study. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns or complaints about this study, you can contact the investigator, Elaine Farris at 859 744 4545 or Elaine.farris@clark.kyschools.us. If you have any questions about your rights as

a volunteer in this research, contact the Office of Research Integrity at Eastern Kentucky University at 859 622 3636. The investigator will give you a signed copy of this consent for you to take with you.

What if new information is learned during the study that might affect my decision to participate?

If the researcher learns of new information in regards to this study, and it might change your willingness to stay in this study, the information will be provided to you. You may be asked to sign a new informed consent form if the information is provided to you after you have joined the study.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Signature of authorized person obtaining informed consent Date

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS FROM RESEARCHER

March 14, 2011

Dear School Board Member:

I am currently a student in the Doctoral Program at Eastern Kentucky University, as well as Superintendent of the Clark County Public Schools. I am doing my dissertation research under the direction of my co-chairs-Dr. Aaron Thompson and Dr. Charles Hausman. For my dissertation, I am conducting a survey to learn about the role school boards play in supporting the development of students who are career and/or college ready. Your feedback is important to me because your experience as a school board member in Kentucky will contribute significantly toward identifying best practices and professional development needed for board members as they fulfill this role in the state. I am inviting you to participate in the study by completing the electronic survey which will take about 15 minutes. You may access the survey at the following link http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/elainefarris. Please respond to the survey and submit no later than April 4, 2011. All information collected will be **confidential**. No information will be reported in a way that any individual is identifiable.

I hope you will be willing to assist me with this study. The study will adhere to all ethical standards of research and has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Kentucky University to ensure privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the data collected to the extent prescribed by law. If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You may take part in this study if you are currently involved in another research study. If you have questions, suggestions, concerns or complaints about this study, you can contact the investigator, Elaine Farris at 859 744 4545 (work), 859 749 0467 (cell) or elaine.farris@clark.kyschools.us. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Office of Research Integrity at Eastern Kentucky University at 859 622 3636.

Completing the survey acknowledges that you read the consent and agree to participate. a

Sincerely,

Elaine Farris
Superintendent, Clark County Schools

APPENDIX C

BOARD MEMBER COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Board Member College and Career Readiness Questionnaire

Kentucky definitions of College and Career Readiness:

College Readiness is the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to succeed in a credit bearing course at a postsecondary institution. Succeed is defined as completing entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for subsequent courses.

Career Readiness is the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to proceed to the next step in a chosen career, whether that is postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or entry into the workforce. According to the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE), career readiness includes core academic skills and the ability to apply those skills to concrete situations in order to function in the workplace and in routine daily activities; employability skills that are essential in any career area such as critical thinking and responsibility; and technical, job-specific skills related to a specific career pathway.

1. **Given the definitions of college and career readiness; what specific strategies can you promote to improve college and career readiness in your district?**

2. **How important are each of the following strategies for preparing students that are college and/or career ready? Check only one response for each strategy.**

	Not Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Alignment of curriculum with college and career standards				
Access to rigorous and relevant courses				
High quality teaching				
Dual credit opportunities				
Providing interventions to supports struggling students				

Advising and guidance in college and career planning				
A balance of academic and social support for students				
A meaningful and challenging senior year				
Monitoring student outcomes				
Creating board alignment with and support of district student achievement goals				
Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness				
Developing policies and procedures to remove learning barriers for students				
Developing policies and procedures that impact student learning				
Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students				

3. Approximately how often does your board conduct work related to the following strategies to prepare students that are college and/or career ready?

	Never	**Once a Year**	**2-4 Times a Year**	**5-10 Times a Year**	**Once a Month**
Alignment of curriculum with college and career standards					
Access to rigorous and relevant courses					
High quality teaching					
Dual credit opportunities					

Providing interventions to supports struggling students					
Advising and guidance in college and career planning					
A balance of academic and social support for students					
A meaningful and challenging senior year					
Monitoring student outcomes					
Creating board alignment with and support of district student achievement goals					
Allocating resources to support the goal of improving college and career readiness					
Developing policies and procedures to remove learning barriers for students					
Developing policies and procedures that impact student learning					
Creating and supporting a culture of high expectations for all students					

Please complete the following background information:

1. **How many students are enrolled in your district?**

less than 300	□5001-10,000	25,001-40,000
300-1000	10,001-15,000	40,001-80,000
1001-3000	15,001-20,000	80,000 or more
3001-5000	□20,001-25,000	

2. **Is your district? (Check all that apply).**

   □Urban

   □Rural

   □Independent

3. **What is your role on the board?**

   □Chair

   □Vice Chair

   □ Member

4. **How many years have you been a board member?**

5. **What amount of training have you received pertaining to College and Career Readiness? (Check One).**

   □0-3 hours

   □4-6 hours

   □6 or more hours

6. **What is your gender?**

   □Male

   □Female

7. What is your racial background?

□Caucasian or White

□Black or African –American

□American Indian or Alaska Native

□Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

□Asian

□Hispanic

□ Other (please specify)

VITA

Elaine Farris received her Bachelor of Arts in Secondary and Physical Education and her Master of Arts in Health Education in 1977 and 1981 from Eastern Kentucky University, respectively. She has also earned an elementary education endorsement in 1982 and a Rank I in instructional leadership (principal) in 1992 from Eastern Kentucky University. Elaine also received a superintendent certificate in instructional leadership from the University of Kentucky in 1998. She has been employed in the field of education since 1982 and has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, elementary director and superintendent. Her current position is superintendent of Clark County schools in Winchester, Kentucky. In addition, Elaine served as the Interim Commissioner of Education for the state of Kentucky in 2009. She is a member of several professional organizations including the American Association of School Administrators, the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the National School Boards Association, Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky School Boards Association, and the Bluegrass Alliance of Black School Educators. Elaine has served on the councils of Commissioner of Education Raising Achievement Closing Gap Council and the Legislative Superintendent Advisory Council. She serves on the executive boards of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents and the Kentucky Educational Development Cooperative and the advisory board of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Principal Institute. Elaine is a member of the Kentucky Leadership Academy, Winchester Chamber of Commerce, Winchester Rotary Club, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.