

Appendix B

The Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this self-assessment of your school board. The following statements describe a variety of possible actions by boards. Some of the statements may represent your own experiences as a member of your board, while others may not. For each of the items, there are four possible choices. Please mark with a check (✓) the choice which most accurately describes your experience as a member of this board.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers; your personal views are what is important. In order to ensure the anonymity of all responses, please do not put your name anywhere on the form. After you have completed all the items, please fold the form, insert it into the envelope provided, and drop it in the mail. Thank you.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. This board works to reach consensus on important matters.				
2. I have participated in board discussions about what we should do differently as a result of a mistake the board made.				
3. There have been occasions where the board itself has acted in ways inconsistent with the district's deepest values.				
4. This board has formal structures and procedures for involving the community.				

Note: Adapted from material originally developed by the Center for Higher Education Governance and Leadership, University of Maryland, College Park, under funding by the Lilly Endowment. Used by permission of Tom Holland.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. I have been in board meetings where it seemed that the subtleties of the issues we dealt with escaped the awareness of a number of the members.				
6. Our board explicitly examines the "downside" or possible pitfalls of any important decision it is about to make.				
7. Usually the board and superintendent advocate the same actions.				
8. This board is more involved in trying to put out fires than in preparing for the future.				
9. The board sets clear organizational priorities for the year ahead.				
10. A written report including the board's activities is periodically prepared and distributed publicly.				
11. This board communicates its decisions to all those who are affected by them.				
12. At least once every two years, our board has a retreat or special session to examine our performance, how well we are doing as a board.				
13. Many of the issues that this board deals with seem to be separate tasks, unrelated to one another.				
14. The board will sharply question certain administrative proposals, requiring the superintendent to reconsider the recommendations.				
15. The board is always involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in our district.				
16. If our board thinks that an important group of constituents is likely to disagree with an action we are considering, we will make sure we learn how they feel before we actually make the decision.				
17. Board members don't say one thing in private and another thing in public.				
18. This board and its members maintain channels of communication with specific key community leaders.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. This board delays action until an issue becomes urgent or critical.				
20. This board periodically sets aside time to learn more about important issues facing school districts like the one we govern.				
21. This board relies on the natural emergence of leaders rather than trying explicitly to cultivate future leaders for the board.				
22. This board has formed ad hoc committees or task forces that include staff and community representatives as well as board members.				
23. This board is as attentive to how it reaches conclusions as it is to what is decided.				
24. The decisions of this board on one issue tend to influence what we do about other issues that come before us.				
25. Most people on this board tend to rely on observation and informal discussions to learn about their roles and responsibilities.				
26. This board's decisions usually result in a split vote.				
27. When faced with an important issue, the board often "brainstorms" and tries to generate a whole list of creative approaches or solutions to the problem.				
28. When a new member joins this board, we make sure that someone serves as a mentor to help this person learn the ropes.				
29. I have been in board meetings where explicit attention was given to the concerns of the community.				
30. I rarely disagree openly with other members in board meetings.				
31. I have participated in board discussions about the effectiveness of our performance.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32. At our board meetings, there is at least as much dialogue among members as there is between members and administrators.				
33. A certain group of board members will usually vote together for or against particular issues.				
34. I have participated in discussions with new members about the roles and responsibilities of a board member.				
35. The board will often persuade the superintendent to change his mind about recommendations.				
36. The leadership of this board typically goes out of its way to make sure that all members have the same information on important issues.				
37. The board has adopted some explicit goals for itself, distinct from goals it has for the total school district.				
38. The board often requests that a decision be postponed until further information can be obtained.				
39. The board periodically obtains information on the perspectives of staff and community.				
40. This board seeks outside assistance in considering its work.				
41. Our board meetings tend to focus more on current concerns than on preparing for the future.				
42. At least once a year, this board asks that the superintendent articulate his/her vision for the school district's future and strategies to realize that vision.				
43. The board often requests additional information before making a decision.				
44. I have never received feedback on my performance as a member of this board.				
45. The board often discusses its role in district management.				
46. This board has on occasion evaded responsibility for some important issue facing the school district.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
47. Before reaching a decision on important issues, this board usually requests input from persons likely to be affected by the decision.				
48. Recommendations from the administration are usually accepted with little questioning.				
49. Board members are consistently able to hold confidential items in confidence.				
50. This board often discusses where the school district should be headed five or more years into the future.				
51. The board president and superintendent confer so that differences of opinion are identified.				
52. This board does not allocate organizational funds for the purpose of board education and development.				
53. I have been present in board meetings where discussions of the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem.				
54. The board usually receives a full rationale for the recommendations it is asked to act upon.				
55. At times this board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have within our service community.				
56. Within the past year, this board has reviewed the school district's strategies for attaining its long-term goals.				
57. We are not a "rubber stamp" board.				
58. This board has conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities.				
59. I am able to speak my mind on key issues without fear that I will be ostracized by some members of this board.				
60. This board tries to avoid issues that are ambiguous and complicated.				
61. The administration rarely reports to the board on the concerns of those the school district serves.				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
62. I have been in board meetings where the discussion focused on identifying or overcoming the school district's weaknesses.				
63. This board often acts independent of the superintendent's recommendations.				
64. Values are seldom discussed explicitly at our board meetings.				
65. This board spends a lot of time listening to different points of view before it votes on an important matter.				
66. The board discusses events and trends in the larger environment that may present specific opportunities for this school district.				
67. The board is outspoken in its views about programs.				
68. Once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out.				
69. All board members support majority decisions.				
70. This board makes explicit use of the long-range priorities of this school district in dealing with current issues.				
71. The board will reverse its position based on pressure from the community.				
72. Members of this board are sometimes disrespectful in their comments to other board members.				
73. More than half of this board's time is spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district's long-range future.				

Appendix C

Scoring the Questionnaire

The seventy-three questions in the self-assessment questionnaire each address an activity related to one of the six elements of the Model for School Board Effectiveness. The questions can be grouped according to the following elements:

Making Decisions:	1, <u>5</u> , 6, <u>13</u> , 24, <u>26</u> , 27, <u>33</u> , 38, 54, <u>60</u> , 65, 69
Functioning as a Group:	3, 17, <u>30</u> , 32, 36, 37, 49, 53, 59, <u>64</u> , 68, <u>72</u>
Exercising Authority:	7, 14, 15, <u>35</u> , 43, 45, <u>48</u> , 51, 57, 63, 67, <u>71</u>
Connecting to the Community:	4, 10, 11, 16, 18, 22, 23, 29, 39, 47, <u>55</u> , <u>61</u>
Working Toward Board Improvement:	2, 12, 20, <u>21</u> , <u>25</u> , 28, 31, 34, 40, <u>44</u> , <u>52</u> , 58
Acting Strategically:	<u>8</u> , 9, <u>19</u> , <u>41</u> , 42, <u>46</u> , 50, 56, 62, 66, 70, 73

The questions are scored as follows: If a school board member responds "Strongly Disagree" on an item, the item is scored as zero (0). A response of "Disagree" is scored as 1. "Agree" equals a score of 2, and "Strongly Agree" equals 3. The cumulative score for all respondents is then averaged and divided by 3 to obtain a percentage of the highest possible score by the group. Questions that are underlined are "reverse scored." This means that the proper response is in the negative, so "Strongly Agree" is scored a zero (0), "Agree" a 1, "Disagree" a 2, and "Strongly Disagree" a 3.

For comparison purposes, use an average response of "2" or "Agree." Then you can examine, for your board's total response and for the board's response on each of the six areas, how well the board scored by comparison with a response in keeping with the effectiveness model.

Exhibits 9.1 and 9.2 illustrate the graphic display of this information.

Source: Format adapted from "Assessment of Board Performance," Holland, Blackmon & Assocs., Inc., Athens, Georgia, February, 1998, unpublished report. Used by permission of Holland, Blackmon & Associates, Inc.