PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN NEW JERSEY: KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF GOVERNANCE TRAINING SKILLS BY NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to:

- My four children Hailey Royal Koop, Summer Grace Royal Koop, Dakota Jade Royal Koop, and Kai James Arthur Koop. Their mere presence in this world inspires me from the moment I wake up to the moment I fall asleep each night. Thank you for your love, support, and understanding.

- My smart, independent mother Mary Grace Royal, who modeled for me that there should never be limitations for any woman.

- My sister Mary Royal and one of my dearest friends, who encouraged and supported me throughout every step of my studies.

- My friend Steve Atkinson. Thank you for always believing in me and helping me to believe in myself.

- My colleague and friend Dr. Richard Noonan. Thank you for your positive influence on my work and your guiding, supportive, friendship. I will never forget you.
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Thank you to my friends, your love and care, pulled me through the successes and challenges.
ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN NEW JERSEY: KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF GOVERNANCE TRAINING SKILLS BY NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Kathleen Koop
Jonathan A. Supovitz

When school board of education members in the state of New Jersey are elected or appointed, they begin their service with a diverse array of experiences, skills, and knowledge. Some board of education members may possess the skills and knowledge to be effective board of education members, while others may not be prepared to be governance leaders. To educate board members about the knowledge and skills required for school board of education governance, there is a law that mandates professional development for school board of education members. The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) oversees and offers the professional development. School board members, whose terms are three years and renewable, are required to attend certain topics of training depending upon their number of terms served and the year they are serving within their term. The NJSBA offers trainings online and face-to-face. In addition to the mandated training, the Association also offers optional professional development on a variety of other board topics.

For the purpose of this study, new school board members are identified as
members elected in November 2017 and have never served on a board of education before. This research focused on new school board members and their participation in the February, 2018 weekend governance training provided by the NJSBA.

The study investigated new school board members’ governance knowledge before and after the training, the retention of learned governance knowledge, and the perceptions of the new school board members about how they utilized their learned governance training skills from the mandated training in their practices. To investigate the learned governance knowledge, the retention of knowledge, and application of learned governance skills, school board participants were surveyed and interviewed. In partnership with the New Jersey School Boards Association, surveys were administered three times. The first survey was administered before the mandated governance training and the second survey was administered immediately after the completion of the governance training weekend during the final group session on a Sunday morning. The third survey was administered 3-6 months after the training to assess for retention of knowledge and application of skills. Interviews were conducted during the months of August through October of 2018.

The results of this research study from the data from the three surveys and the data from the interviews, indicated that the study sample participants learned knowledge and skills from the governance training weekend. In addition, the participants in the interviews, indicated that they perceived that they applied the skills and knowledge they learned from the training in their governance practices.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School board members in the state of New Jersey are tasked with enormous responsibilities and are accountable for the success of school districts across the state. My study focuses on newly elected school board of education members and examines their learned knowledge from a mandated governance training and their retention of knowledge and application of governance skills and knowledge in their school board of education practices. The participants in my study are newly elected members to a board of education who attended a mandated governance training. The governance skills instruction was provided by New Jersey School Board Association staff members during mandated professional development sessions of a weekend training experience.

Legislation was passed in the state of New Jersey in 2007 that requires school board members to complete mandated training. The 2007 School District Accountability Act was designed as an accountability structure that also included training for all school board members. The levels and topics of the mandated professional development vary according to the individual school board member. Specifically, the training varies depending on board members’ years of service, the year of their terms, and their participation in any optional professional development experiences beyond their required mandated professional development. The training topics are all related to school district governance. Topics for mandated trainings include new board member governance orientation, finance, student achievement, and updates to legislation and regulations. In addition to the mandated trainings, optional professional development is offered throughout the year. Optional school board training topics include, but are not limited to, leadership conferences, legal issues, and negotiation topics. At the time the legislation
was created, the New Jersey School Boards Association was designated by the state to provide the mandated professional development sessions and optional professional development sessions. The professional development is provided in two different forms: scheduled face-to-face sessions held in various locations throughout the state, and online sessions that school board members may access from their computers. (NJSBA, 2018)

My research focuses specifically on new school board members serving in their first terms. To become a school board member, citizens must possess certain qualifications. As described in the New Jersey School Boards Association document, How to Become a School Board Member, anyone who satisfies the following legal requirements may be considered as a board candidate:

To become a member of a local board of education in New Jersey, you must—

- Be able to read and write.
- Hold U.S. citizenship and one year’s residency in the school district.
- Be registered to vote in the district before filing the nominating petition.
- Have no interest in any contract with, or claim against, the board
- Not hold office as mayor or member of the municipal governing body or, in the case of county school districts, the county governing body
- Not simultaneously hold two elective offices
- Not be disqualified from membership for the conviction of certain crimes. (Within 30 days of election or appointment to the board, a member must undergo a criminal history background investigation through the state Department of Education.) (NJSBA, 2016)

As a result of the broad scope of the requirements, candidates for school boards are composed of members with diverse experiences, knowledge, skills, and backgrounds. Serving as a member on a board of education requires knowledge of educational governance, application of governance skills, and the ability to work as a member of a team. School board members responsibilities are described in a New Jersey School
Boards Association document, FAQ: What Candidates Want To Know About Being A
School Board Member (NJSBA, 2019) as board members adopt policies, oversee the
budget, approve the curriculum, hires and evaluates the superintendent, represents the
public during contract negotiations, and serves as a community link between the
community and the school system, In addition, board members are challenged with
budgetary issues. In the age of increasing accountability along with unfunded mandates
for school districts, school board members face continuous challenges to fund and
provide educational resources for diverse student populations. These challenges make it
even more important for board members to be prepared with the necessary knowledge
and skills in order to work collaboratively, make educated decisions, and serve on a board
that ensures that the district is running effectively.

The roles of board of education members have evolved over time. Prior to the
most recent accountability legislation, school board members were generally responsible
for setting the policies, goals, and objectives for the district. Over time, however, the role
of the school board member has evolved from primarily being a policy enforcer to now
being an overseer of student achievement. The shift of responsibilities for board members
began with the first act of accountability for school districts, passed in 2001, known as
the No Child Left Behind Act. The legislation placed demands upon the school board
members and educators to oversee the success of all students and their diverse academic
needs (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Currently, school districts are required to comply with
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), legislation signed by President Obama on
December 10, 2015. The Act also placed accountability on school districts concerning
equity issues, such as the achievement gap and implementation of statewide student assessments to measure progress. In the state of New Jersey, as described in the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) User Manual, the New Jersey Legislature passed legislation (N.J.S.A. 18A: 7A-10) to monitor districts to ensure that they are providing a thorough and efficient education to the students in the state. NJQSAC monitors and evaluates school districts on research-based components which are Instruction and Program, Fiscal, Governance, Operations, and Personnel. (NJDOE, 2018, p.6) Within the indicators of the District Performance Review (DPR) area of Governance which are to monitor and evaluate school boards, are indicators in areas of curriculum development, budgetary process, developing and approving policies, evaluating the Chief School Administrator (CSA), and ethical conduct. (NJDOE, 2018, p.55)

In accordance with the ESSA legislation, district leaders, school leaders, board members, and educators are responsible for providing a high-quality education to all students. To improve the schools, the stakeholders should work together to analyze data, identify needs, and create action plans to address the systematic needs. Engaging diverse stakeholders in the improvement of schools is important and required under the ESSA for any district that receives federal funding. The participation of all stakeholders in school improvement, including the superintendent and board of education, is one of the important factors critical for student success (ESSA, 2015). In my study, I research new board members to inquire about learned knowledge and the application of skills from professional development. In order to develop the skills
and knowledge required for effective school board governance, school board of education
members in the State of New Jersey are required to complete professional development
trainings. Trainings for school board members are mandated within New Jersey’s School
District Accountability Act, which was signed into law in 2007. The professional
development, which is enforced by the School Ethics Commission and provided by the
New Jersey School Boards Association, is designed to address the school board topics
required so the school board members learn the skills to be effective governance leaders.
Governance Leaders are board of education leaders, while educational leaders are
administrators in a school (NJDOE, 2006).

Problem

School board of education members are leaders of school districts and responsible
for making important decisions that will impact students and communities for a lifetime.
The board members possess an array of skillsets that may be related to different
professions and experiences. While their diverse experiences and knowledge may be
helpful, it may not be enough for them to perform as effective school board members.
According to Doug Eadie in his book *Five Habits of High Impact School Boards*, board
members who are trained in the skills of governing are more effective. To acquire the
necessary governing skills, board members must be committed to professional
development and continuously growing their skills (Eadie, 2005). School board members
who participate in professional development may learn the governance skills required to
lead effectively as board of education leaders. However, just because the board members
participate in school board trainings, does not mean they have retained the knowledge to
apply in their governance work. This leads to a question of - How do we know whether school board of education members are prepared and qualified to lead?

In order to provide essential professional development for school board members, the New Jersey School Boards Association provides both mandated and optional professional development; however, the questions remain regarding how effective the training is, what do training participants learn from the training, and whether or not the board members actually use the research-based skills they learned from the governance professional development weekend in the work they do as board of education members. In addition, if the school board members are not utilizing their learned governance skills, it is problematic, because of the importance of their work and the impact school boards have on the functioning of school districts.

Research Questions

My research study examines the influence that a mandated Governance 1 training, provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association, had on new school board members’ governance practices. In particular, this study focused on new board of education members who were appointed or elected in November, 2017 who participated in a weekend of face-to-face governance training.

The following questions guided my research:

1. How does the governance professional development for new school board members influence their knowledge both after the training and six months later?

2. What did the new school board member governance training participants feel they learned from the governance training?
3. How are the governance training participants applying the knowledge and skills that they learned in their practices?

**Research Methods**

My study utilizes a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative method included examining surveys to determine what and how much information new board members learned at the training. The qualitative method included interviewing sixteen of the training participants to collect data about their perceptions of their learning and application of governance skills.

The participants of this study were new school board of education members who attended the same governance weekend training. The data collection timeline was determined by the scheduling of the mandated training in February of 2018. The first two surveys were administered during the training weekend and the third survey was completed by the volunteer new board members 4-6 months after the training. The interviews were also conducted 5-7 months after the training to allow for board members to experience months of governance before participating in the interviews. The data acquired from the three surveys contained many similar themes because most of the survey questions were the same. The third surveys included the same questions as the first two surveys, with the addition of open-ended questions at the end. The surveys were statistically analyzed to determine learned knowledge and retention of knowledge. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for common themes.
Dissertation Organization

My dissertation contains five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to my study and includes a brief overview of the purpose of the research, the problem associated with the study, the research questions, the research methodology, and the conceptual framework. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on school board governance, professional development, and governance training curriculum school board topics. In chapter 2, I also examine shared leadership theory as an effective method of leadership for school board members. Chapter 3 describes the methods of my study and provides information about the site selection, research study participants, selection criteria, data collection, and data analysis. My positionality and issues of validity are also examined in chapter 3. Chapter 4 is focused on the results of my research study, which includes two main sections: the quantitative and qualitative sections. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the dissertation. This chapter also includes an examination of the implications of the study, as well suggested additional research connected to the results of this study. At the end, there is an appendix which includes surveys, survey questions, interview protocols, and qualitative codes.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for my study focuses on existing studies related to school board members and how professional development influences their practices. Shared leadership theory is included in my literature review as an overarching theory related to school board leadership practices and the importance of their empowerment of other leaders. The topics related to professional development covered in my literature review include effective professional development related to knowledge and practices, and school board professional development. In addition, the literature about the topics focused in the governance training were also reviewed, which included education law, policies, Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), and superintendent/school board relationships.

Professional Development – Knowledge and Practices

The literature explored in this section is focused on describing and defining high-quality professional development. Within the studies, the authors discuss how professional development impacts student achievement. Effective qualities of professional development, as described by Schon (1987) and Cervero and Donaldson (1989), are connected to the purpose and definition of professional development. It is important to consider both when planning any form of professional development. It is also important to consider the facilitator’s part in providing professional development. In addition to providing knowledge, professional development facilitators should also support participants in thinking critically and analytically, engaging in utilizing judgment skills, and provide the participants with learning experiences that build new knowledge (Schon, 1987; Cervero & Donaldson, 1989).
Speck and Knipe (2005) describe professional development as a learning process that is sustained and collaborative in which adults participate in adult learner-centered, job-embedded learning in teams and as individuals. According to Speck and Knipe (2005), the focus is on educators attaining the skills and knowledge that support the achievement of students. Gordan (2004) views professional development as either successful or unsuccessful. He defines successful professional development as a combination of experiences focused on the empowerment of educators, as individuals and in teams within organizational improvement structures, to improve facets of a school such as instruction, curriculum, instruction, and student assessment—all in order to support the students’ growth and development. Professor Thomas Gutsky (2000), also relates the definition of professional development to the improvement of student learning. He described professional development as educators participating in processes and activities that enhance their professional knowledge, skills, as well as the attitudes of educators. Additionally, unlike the other researchers mentioned, Gutsky relates professional development to the redesigning of structures and cultures of an educational setting. He contends that high-quality professional development should be at the center of any enhancement within education.

**Professional Development for Adult Learners**

I explored the literature on adult learning because the participants of my study are all adult learners and, as a result, research on professional development for adult learners is relevant. In the *Handbook of Professional Development in Education*, Rohlwing and Spelman (2014) referred to Malcolm Knowles (1968) and his studies on adult learning.
Knowles presented six assumptions about adult learners: adults bring with them an array of learning experiences which are more numerous than those of children; adults are responsible for their own decisions; adults realize what they need to know to handle real-life situations; adults are life-centered when it comes to learning; adults are responsive to more internal motivators; and, adults need reasons for why they need to know something. Mezirow’s (1978) work, which is also considered to be pioneering in adult learning, presents a theory of transformational learning about how adults make sense of their life experiences, which helps them avoid chaos. Mezirow contends that there are three components that inform adult learning: critical reflection, validating discourse, and reflective action (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative adult learning takes place when the learner’s prior experiences alter the perspective of the learning. I will consider the research about adult learning as related to my study involving the adult school board members. My study is focused on new school board members, which means that even though the participants have not served as school board members before, they all bring a vast number of eclectic professional and life experiences with them as participants in the training.

Effective Professional Development

Given that my study involves how professional development influences school board member governance practices, I considered the literature on how change occurs as a result of professional development. I researched literature on the importance of professional development with regard to personal and systematic improvement, with the idea that trained school board members will also function productively within their
respective school boards. Professional development continues to be the solution for the deficits within our school communities (Brown, Crystal, Militello, & Matthew, 2016). There are a few studies on specific effective professional development for board members, however, studies on effective professional development for educators may be applied to board members as well. Effective professional development for educators should be ongoing and can take place in professional learning communities and structured professional development settings (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Districts are looking to professional development providers for evidence that professional development improves student achievement (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Research on providing professional development for those in the educational process is focused on examining the different forms of professional development. The two forms of governance professional development provided by the New Jersey School Boards association are face-to-face and on-line. There is no one way but a multitude of ways that should be considered to provide adapted to the participants and the contexts (Gutsky, 1994).

School Board Professional Development

The professional development that a board member receives, which may impact the board member’s ability to govern, is also critically important to student achievement. In the final report on The Task force of Student Achievement, recommendations about how school board members may have a positive influence on student achievement. One recommendation, is boards and board members should participate in professional development to learn about The Lighthouse Inquiry and the role of boards and board
School board members must be committed to grow professionally so that they are effective governance leaders within their respective school districts. Professional development for board members supports the growth of the school board members’ knowledge so that they possess the knowledge and skills to fulfill their responsibilities and manage the challenges the school boards face today and in the future. In one study, Roberts and Sampson (2011) report that in order for school boards to function well, states must mandate and provide professional development. The study surveyed 50 state school board association directors about their perceptions about school board professional development and student achievement. Of the 26 respondents, the study determined that most of the responding of the 26 do not mandate professional development for their school board members. The responding state directors thought that school board professional development had a positive effect on student achievement. As evident within the Roberts and Sampson (2011) study, states address governance professional development in different ways. The importance of professional development for board members cannot be understated because of the positive impact the trainings may have. A dysfunctional board member may be a negative disruptive force within a governance body and detract from the board’s ability to support student achievement, as evidenced in the article about a Colorado school board member by Spencer C. Weiler (2015). The information about how to be an effective school board member presented at the Governance 1 new school board member the training educated the new school members about the knowledge and skills within the New Jersey School Boards Association Governance 1 curriculum.
In the book, *The Essential School Board Book: Better Governance in the Age of Accountability*, Nancy Walser describes professional development as “board learning”. Walser describes that, in the past, it was assumed that board of education members would have the knowledge required to be effective board members from their positions and connection in the community. Today, Walser argues that for boards to be effective, they must continuously participate in training. She describes that the training may be provided in different forms and by different people to include: district-based trainings by administrators, school board association workshops, conventions, online trainings, or by consultants (Walser, 2009). Walser also discusses the involvement of states in school board member professional development. While not all states mandate professional development, at the time of the publication of her book, approximately 20 states mandated professional development for new and veteran school board members. Walser contends that it is important for board members to learn because they need to stay abreast of the changes in federal and state laws and mandates, they need to be aware of the latest initiatives to increase student achievement, and they need to possess knowledge about systems for accountability structures to include monitoring data and communicating to the community. Trainings for new school board members should be provided to acclimate new governance leaders to their new positions and to educate them about their roles, responsibilities, required knowledge, and issues of conflict of interest (Walser, 2009).
New Jersey School Boards Association — Mandated Professional Development

Documents were reviewed on the New Jersey School Boards website for information pertaining to the mandated training provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). In 2007, the School District Accountability Act was signed into law and NJSBA was selected as the designated professional development provider.

The mandated professional development topics offered by the NJBSA are New Board Member Orientation Conference, Finance, Student Achievement, and Legal Update (NJSBA, Mandated Training, 2017). The website stipulates that the following required professional is mandated for school board members in New Jersey:

- **Governance I** – 1st term, 1st full year of board service – New Board Member Orientation
- **Governance II** – 1st Term, 2nd full year of service – Finance
- **Governance III** – 1st Term, 3rd full year of service – Student Achievement
- **Governance IV** – Reelected/Reappointed Board Members in the first year of any succeeding term – Legal Update (NJSBA, 2017)

In addition, optional professional development is also offered through the New Jersey School Boards Association to include school board leadership, finance, meeting protocol, as well as individual workshops on an array of topics offered during their annual convention. There are also new state mandates, new legislation, and changes to regulations, which board of education members must be aware of to govern responsibly (NJSBA, Mandated Training, 2017). Changes in the mandates, legislation, and regulation make it even more challenging and important that board members remain well-informed and knowledgeable of effective governance skills.
School board members will lose their board seat if they do not comply with the professional development requirements. As a result of the mandated trainings, we know that the New Jersey school board members are completing professional development, but the question remains about the relationship between professional development and how the training influences the school board members’ practices and ability to function as an effective governing body. There is also the question of whether or not professional development is effective in educating the members in the skills and knowledge they need to lead. If school board members are not utilizing knowledge gained from the trainings or are not held accountable to do so, then their inability to function effectively will impact their work as board members. Board of education members that have received training, but are not utilizing the tools that support best governing leadership practices, may deter the progress of an entire board and, therefore, the entire district. The lack of progress within a school district may be catastrophic for the students that the board members were elected to serve. The consequences of dysfunctional board behavior will prohibit a board to work collectively to support student achievement.

**Governance 1 – New Board Member Orientation Guide**

The Governance 1 – New Board Member Orientation guide serves as an overview of the topics within the governance training curriculum. The guide was provided to the trainers and new school board participants of the governance training weekend. The survey questions in all three surveys of my study were derived from the curriculum and the presentation slides. The guide is organized into informational subtopics, which are as follows:
1. Goals of the Weekend  
2. Board Governance and Support  
3. Student Achievement  
4. Legal and Policy  
5. Labor Relations  
6. Advocacy  
7. Equity  
8. Small Group Sessions  
9. Supplemental Materials

The information within the orientation guide was selected, compiled, and provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association. The subtopics included in the orientation guide are the topics of information the New Jersey School Boards Association decided that every new school board member should know in order to serve as an effective school board member (NJSBA, 2018).

**The Lighthouse Inquiry – Study on School Boards**

*The Lighthouse Inquiry: School Board/Superintendent Team Behaviors in School Districts with Extreme Differences in Student Achievement*, authored by Rice, Delagardelle, Buckton, Jons, Lueders, Vens, Joyce, Wolf, Weathersby (2000), is a research study that is referenced in a significant number of other research studies on the qualities of effective school boards. Regarded as a groundbreaking study, *The Lighthouse Inquiry*, was conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards and was focused on investigating the behavioral differences of school boards in high-achieving districts and school boards in low-achieving districts. The results of the study indicated that the school boards in high-achieving districts exhibited different levels of knowledge and beliefs than the school boards of the low-performing districts. *The Lighthouse Inquiry* paper was published in 2000 and presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational
Research Association in Seattle, Washington in April 2001. The Iowa School Board Association conducted the study because they were interested in what the connections were between school board behaviors and achievement performance levels of students. It was the Iowa Association School Board’s goal to provide “a lighthouse,” as the report describes, for other school boards in order to inform them about how they may support the student achievement in their respective districts (Rice, et al., 2000).

The researchers of the Lighthouse study interviewed a total of 159 school board members, superintendents, and staff members of both high- and low-achieving school districts. Seven conditions of education renewal were identified as they related to productive change in education, and the interview participants were asked whether or not the conditions of educational renewal were existent within their board governance responsibilities and work. All seven conditions were researched within two identification terms which were first used by researcher Susan Rosenholtz in 1989. The terms were ‘moving,’ which was defined by Rosenholtz as a district in which student achievement is continuous and above the norm, and ‘stuck,’ which Rosenholtz defined as student achievement that is stagnant and lower than the norm. (Rice, et al., 2000)

The seven conditions researched in The Lighthouse Inquiry connected to education renewal were:

1. Emphasis on Building a Human Organizational System
2. Ability to Create and Sustain Initiatives
3. Supportive Workplace for Staff
4. Staff Development
5. Support for School Sites Through Data and Information
6. Community Involvement
Within every condition, ‘moving’ and ‘stuck’ conclusions emerged and were included in the report based on data acquired from the interviews. For example, for condition 7, which is described as shared leadership, the following data resulted from the interviews:

Moving – Board members were knowledgeable about the learning conditions in the schools, alternatives for improving education and the needs of the students. Board members could mention specific initiatives that were underway and could explain the initiative and identify specific ways that the board contributed to the initiative. Board members described a clear direction and focus on specific goals related to improving reading. Board members could describe the work of staff around the goals in clear, specific terms (Rice et al., 2000, p. 11.).

Stuck – Although some board members said goals and improvement plans existed in written documents, they couldn’t describe how they are being implemented. (Rice et al., 2000, p. 11).

The Iowa School Board Association concluded that the school boards in both high- and low-performing school districts exhibited different sets of knowledge and beliefs about their governance experiences. The researchers clearly indicated that the study did not prove that boards cause high or low student achievement. However, within the seven conditions of change, there were significant differences in the attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs of the school board members of the high-achieving districts and the school board members of the low-performing districts. The mindsets of the board members were indicative of the focus on improving student learning in the districts. (Rice et al., 2000). This literature is included in my study because by participating in professional development, board members are provided with opportunities to learn
knowledge and skills that support the attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs that are evident in high-achieving districts.

**Board and Superintendent Relationship**

Understanding the working relationship between board members, and the superintendent, and the skills required to sustain the relationship, is important in for achieving effective school board governance. In one study, the perceptions of a school board and a superintendent greatly differed. The researcher concluded that the relationship between a school board and superintendent is complex, ever-changing, and that the issue of change should always be included in updating training topics and materials (Thompson & Holt, 2016). Another study, conducted in Washington, related to the implications of increasing superintendent and board turnover on student achievement. The results of the study indicate that there may be a relationship between increasing school board member turnover, superintendent turnover, and decreasing student test scores (Alsbury, 2008). A district with frequent superintendent and board member turnover may be challenged with sustaining a trusting, collaborative, superintendent/board working relationship which may require development over time.

In an article about creating a strong board-superintendent relationship, author Alexis Rice writes about how school boards and superintendents create and maintain successful working relationships. She describes that the average tenure of a superintendent in a district is only 3.2 years which results in the hiring of a new superintendent every four years. Rice explains that to begin, a board must have a vision and hire a superintendent with a similar vision. She contends that to build a
The superintendent/board relationship takes planning, to include a strategic plan to guide the district. In summary, she explains that trust and respect between the board of education and the superintendent is important for sustainable superintendent/board unification to advance the student achievement and progress of the district. (Rice, 2017)

A report conducted by Hanover Research (2014), *Effective Board and Superintendent Collaboration*, characterizes the importance of the board/superintendent relationship as the following:

A significant portion of a school district’s success depends, undoubtedly, on the performance of its board and superintendent; however, these legislative and executive bodies cannot be evaluated in separate vacuums. Several studies have examined the dynamic between superintendents and school boards, and most conclude that a positive relationship between these two parties ultimately drives the successful governance of a district (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 5).

Hanover Research drew from many sources in the report, however, much of the research was adapted from data from the Iowa Association of School Boards. The association was responsible for *The Lighthouse Inquiry* and Iowa was a key first state to recognize the connection between effective school board governance and student achievement. The Iowa Association of School Boards identified five key principles related to effective board/superintendent relationships. They are as follows:

- **Principle 1:** Clarify roles and expectations for board members and superintendent.
- **Principle 2:** Establish and implement a clear process for communication between board members and administration.
- **Principle 3:** Actively work to build trust and mutual respect between the board and administrative team.
- **Principle 4:** Evaluate the whole team. (board and superintendent)
• **Principle 5:** Actively work on improved decision-making (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 5)

Board/superintendent relationships are important to the overall effectiveness of a school district. In an article on the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) website, there is a description of the importance of a board and superintendent working as a unified team.

Researcher Mary Delagardelle (2008) reported:

> In effective districts the board and superintendent built positive and trusting relationships. They relied on these relationships to enable them to play strong, interdependent leadership roles. They examined and challenged each other's views, studied data and confronted existing realities. They asked probing questions and scrutinized district performance in ways that strengthened and mobilized the entire team. (OSBA, 2018)

The topic of the board/superintendent effective working relationship is important to my study because it is included within the governance training curriculum. In turn, the new school board members are expected to learn and apply the skills that they learned about establishing and maintaining an effective working relationship with their superintendent.

**New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC)**

The school board and the superintendent are accountable for district performance within the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) process, particularly within one of the sections of the report. As described in the *NJQSAC User Manual*, provided by the New Jersey Department of Education – Division of Field Services (2018), the purpose of the QSAC process is to ensure that all students in the state of New Jersey receive a thorough and efficient education. To begin the process,
school districts, participate in a self-evaluation which includes school board member representation. There are five District Performance Review (DPR) areas that school districts are evaluated. They include:

1) Instruction and program  
2) Fiscal management  
3) Governance  
4) Operations  
5) Personnel (NJDOE, 2018)

After completing the self-assessment, there is a verification process conducted by the county superintendent which includes a visitation to the district to collect documentation and tour the facilities. The school board members are accountable for complying with the descriptors listed within the District Performance Review area – Governance. In addition, if a district is noncompliant within any of the other descriptors included in the other District Performance Review areas, the ultimate responsibility for compliance involves the board of education providing the resources, so that the district is compliant within the regulations of all QSAC District Performance Review areas (NJDOE, 2018).

Within the QSAC governance section assessment components, school boards are directly accountable for ensuring aligned curriculum, overseeing the budget process, developing policies, evaluating the superintendent, and reviewing administrative contracts (NJDOE, 2018). To perform effectively as school board members, the board must understand the QSAC process and understand the consequences if a district is assessed noncompliant in any area.
Knowledge of Education Law

Knowledge of education law as it pertains to the school board members’ responsibilities, is critical for successful governance. The law is what provides the school board with the authority to oversee the finances of a district, purchase property, construct buildings, employ teachers, approve curriculum, and manage students (Imber & Geel, 2010). Board members must adhere to the laws to govern fairly and effectively. It is the board’s responsibility to employ teachers and create constructs to ensure that they teach effectively. There are laws that govern teacher privacy and regulate the authority that a school board has to govern teachers (Mawdsley, 2004).

Boards are tasked as policymakers and governors of policies. The policies should drive the decision-making of the boards and, therefore, boards must be aware of and understand the board policies. School boards consist of members with diverse agendas, which may drive the content and direction of policy creation and implementation. In a study about policy and diversity, researchers conclude that the power school boards have in creating diversity policies and the integration of schools (Diem, Frankenberg, & Cleary, 2015). Policies should be created as designs for supporting learning (Cobb & Jackson, 2012). In order to create policies through a student achievement lens, board members must be educated and receive professional development about policymaking and design-making.

Identifying the need for policies, writing policies, revising policies, and implementing policies, are all responsibilities of school board members. In the book
Developing and Adopting School Board Policy, published by the Arkansas School Board Association (ASBA), school board policy can be initiated in the following ways:

- Recommendations from the superintendent
- Positive or negative experiences in the school district
- Action taken by the board on an important problem or issue
- Study and long-range planning that involves the board, superintendent, teachers, student groups, and citizens’ committees
- Suggestions from a personnel policies committee
- Negotiations with employees’ representatives
- Recommendations from the ASBA Model Policy Service (ASBA, 2015, p.35)

In addition, the book outlines all the school district governance categories that should include policies regarding:

- Organization of the school district
- School board operations
- General school administration
- Financial management
- Facilities
- Personnel
- Instructional philosophy and programs
- Students, including discipline, grading, attendance, and graduation requirements
- Internal and external communications
- Parent involvement and volunteer programs
- Relations with other education agencies and organizations (ASBA, 2015, p. 36)

One of the main governance responsibilities of school board members is to create policies for the superintendent to enforce. The Governance 1 training curriculum includes information about policymaking and the reasons why policymaking is a main governance responsibility for school board members.
Accountability

The Governance 1 training includes the history of school board accountability and the ways that board members are accountable today. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 began the age of accountability for school boards. Ford and Ihrke (2016) studied board members on the same team and investigated whether or not they shared the same definitions of school board accountability. A survey was sent to approximately 28,000 school board members and approximately 5,000 responded. The article found that school board members who view their boards as productive, active, and with low levels of conflict are more likely to think similarly to their board member peers about accountability. The research literature about accountability provides the responsibilities and skills that are required for governance practices which will, therefore, assist in identifying some of the professional development characteristics required for effective governance.

School board members are accountable for providing every student with a thorough and efficient education. To ensure that students are receiving the required educational services, legislation was enacted, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, and accountability structures were designed to track compliance. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) acted as a replacement for the NCLB Act reenacted the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The purpose of both NCLB and ESSA was to ensure that every child has equal access to high-quality education and to close the achievement gap. The acts of legislation require school board members to
comply by providing and supporting services for all children, particularly students impacted by the achievement gaps (NJDOE, 2017).

**School Board Leadership**

School board members are regarded as leaders in their communities. To understand the questions researched within this study, it is important to recognize what school board leadership entails. Identifying the characteristics of effective school board leadership will help provide the connection to the professional development topics needed to support school board members in being effective. To research how governance professional development influences the practices of school board members, one must know what practices effective school board members engage in while navigating through their board responsibilities. Literature focused on school board leadership will provide information about the skills required for school board members to lead a district.

The knowledge required for effective school board governance is continuously evolving, just like the resources required for supporting the students. In their paper, Frankenberg and Diem (2012) wrote about the responsibilities of board members to create and support policies that relate to equity issues and remedy segregation. The article examines two communities in the South and the importance of electing proud members that support policies that maintain integrated learning environments.

Campbell and Greene (1994) studied a project conducted by the California School Boards Association where they defined and analyzed school board roles. By defining the role of the board, they utilized the specifics of the descriptions to identify the elements for school board member training. Included in the board role description was establishing
a long-term vision, accountability, establishment of systems and processes, advocacy, and the maintenance of an organizational structure.

This shift of responsibilities from solely policy focused to also issues of student achievement, requires that board of education members are equipped with professional skillsets to not only ensure that the district can function properly, but also to ensure that the students are achieving. As reported in the Hess and Meeks report (2010), school board members who were surveyed worked in occupations other than education, so they may or may not possess the skills required to lead a district. One of the most common occupational fields of school board members identified within the Hess and Meeks report (2010) was the field of education. While this might seem to be a distinct advantage, working within a school district requires educational skills that are different than leading a school district as a member of a governing body. The school board members’ lack of experience in school board governance, may contribute to school board members’ lack of knowledge about what their roles require and about best practices of school board educational leadership. If boards and board of education members are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, then the overall achievement of the district will suffer (Hess & Meeks, 2010).

Shared Leadership Theory

My study utilizes shared leadership theory as an overarching framework for my mixed methods study about school board governance (Creswell, 2014). I selected shared leadership theory because it is one of the seven conditions of educational change mentioned within The Lighthouse Inquiry, which is the most noted research study about
effective school board governance. (Rice, Delagardelle, Buckton, Jons, Lueders, Vens, Joyce, Wolf, Weathersby 2000)

Shared leadership is described in The Lighthouse Inquiry as “a focus on student learning through a shared clear vision, high expectations and dynamic leadership among all levels.” (Rice et al.,2000, p. 12). Board members are responsible for working as a collective group with a shared cleared vision. One way to work as a collective group, is to utilize the theory of shared leadership.

In their book, Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership, authors Pearce and Conger (2003) define shared leadership as “a dynamic, interactive, influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals, or both” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1). They compare shared leadership to traditional leadership and explain that shared leadership is the responsibility of a body of individuals working together. While leadership is usually defined as one individual leading other individuals, school board members work together to establish board goals and support district goals as a group. The board members are collectively responsible for making decisions together to decide on resources to achieve goals. Every board member has the same level of responsibility for setting and accomplishing the goals.

Shared leadership is also relative to allowing other members of the organization to utilize their expertise and talents to lead. In his article, “Sharing Leadership to Maximize Talent,” Marshall Goldsmith describes the benefits of shared leadership as a way to allow an organization to expand their leadership roles so that leaders may utilize their expertise
to lead and improve the organization (2010). This directly relates to the school board and superintendent relationships in school districts. As defined in the New Jersey School Boards governance training guide, a functional relationship between a school board and superintendent is critical for the effectiveness of the school board and the ability for a superintendent to lead. School boards should function as a team, determine policy, determine the district’s mission, plan district goals, and oversee the district’s program. The superintendent is the C.E.O, the source of information, the management expert, and education expert (NJSBA, 2018). Within a shared leadership model, a school board and its members should allow a superintendent to lead with expertise in order to execute policy.

Board members should recognize that, within a district organization, there are members who possess the skills and expertise to lead. It is important for board members to realize that it is not their responsibility to micro-manage and interfere with the day-to-day operations. Board members are responsible to set and revise policies. Shared leadership theory should be the arching leadership theory within every school district, with board members supporting such shared leadership theory.

In his article, “Bye-Bye, Heroic Leadership. Here Comes Shared Leadership,” Carsten Tams (2018) describes the right model for inclusive change as the following:

The shared leadership model conceptualizes leadership as a set of shared practices that can and should be enacted by people at all levels. Leadership is understood as a dynamic and multi-directional group process rather than a role exercised by a select few at the top. As such, the shared leadership model is well suited for enabling continuous and inclusive organizational change. By shifting the perspective from viewing leadership as a single-person activity to viewing it as collective construction processes, space opens up for all participants to
express their agency at every stage of the change process, from ideation to implementation (Tams, 2018, p.1).

School boards are responsible for conducting change in a productive, thoughtful, responsible, manner, but that is not always the case. Effective school boards should embrace inclusive organizational change and the collective construction processes as evident within a shared leadership model.

Establishing and sustaining a shared leadership model requires certain behaviors and elements to be in place. In their article, “Doing More with More: Putting Shared Leadership into Practice” Allison, Misra, and Perry (2018) discovered that there is a spectrum that leadership falls within depending on the leadership circumstance and the evolution of the expansion of authority. The authors explained that within organizations that implemented the shared leadership model, three characteristics were evident within all the organizations. They include:

1. **Adaptability within the Spectrum.** Knowing when a particular expression of leadership is appropriate, and being able to shift within the spectrum as needed.
2. **Orientation toward Shared Leadership.** Expanding the problem-solving capacity of an organization without giving up the option of top-down approaches when necessary.
3. **Culture of Trust.** Developing the relationships needed to shift within the spectrum when necessary, without any negative impact or mistrust. (Allison, Misra, & Perry, 2018, p. 1)
In a shared leadership model, school board members are challenged with deciding when it is appropriate to make decisions that include other members of the organization and when decisions must be made only by the board. Whatever the case, the decisions are almost always made within the spectrum of the shared leadership model and are not often
near the one leader end of the spectrum. The school board, as a whole, should consider
the four prerequisites before implementing the shared leadership model. Effective school
boards are committed to change, invest the time for effective governance, execute sound
management, and are accountable for their actions as servant leaders (Allison et al., 2018).

Shared leadership theory is the overarching theory used in my study due to the
many benefits that shared leadership has in context within school board governance work
and responsibilities. In their article, “Shared Leadership Theory,” Pearce, Conger, and
Locke (2007) write, “We believe that leading change is not about an individual leader,
but rather that it is such an immensely complex process where leadership occurs at
multiple levels” (p. 283). By embracing and utilizing shared leadership theory, boards
can empower the superintendent to perform effectively as well as provide other members
of the organization to participate in leadership roles relevant to their positions.

Summary
The literature review of this study includes research relevant to the roles and
responsible of school board members. Selecting literature related to my research topic
about school board training for new school board members and their application of skills
provided a general overview of literature directly about the research topic and also about
topics related to school board governance. Literature topics included effective school
board practices, relevant school board topics, New Jersey school board professional
development, the aspects of school board governance, research about governance best
practices, and professional development. I also included the Governance 1 training
materials as a literature resource because of the importance of the information that was
included in the binder provided to every new school board member training participant by the New Jersey School Boards Association. Every piece of literature cited within this review, in some way, relates to school board governance effectiveness, the training topics, and the topic of professional development.

Shared leadership emerges within the governance practices and challenges evident within the data of the study. The theory of shared leadership is part of the NJSBA Governance 1 training because it is included within the Lighthouse Inquiry which is part of the training curriculum. (Rice et al., 2000) The literature on shared leadership was explored to gain insight into a form of leadership that is beneficial to school board members as servant leaders in education. Shared leadership theory provides the overarching theory for this study, which is highlighted within the literature review. The governance leadership responsibilities of a school board member can be supported by the shared leadership theory. To govern effectively, school board members should utilize the shared leadership theory to empower the superintendent to lead. Shared leadership will also provide the other people within the school boards’ school district leadership opportunities to utilize their expertise.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

My research on professional development for new school board of education members utilized a mixed methods research approach, involving the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The combination of the two approaches allowed for the research questions to be answered comprehensively and led to a much better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). This chapter describes the study’s design, site selection, participant selection, description of data collection, data analysis, issues of validity, and researcher roles.

Site Selection

The location for my study was at a New Jersey School Boards Association governance training, conducted at the Princeton Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Princeton, New Jersey. The training session hosted the gathering of the new school board members, which offered an opportunity to collect data that would help achieve my research goals and begin to answer my guiding research questions (Maxwell, 2013). The site of the training in Princeton, New Jersey was a perfect place to begin my research because there were approximately 100 newly elected board of education members in one location for the weekend completing their mandated governance training.

Prior to the weekend, I communicated with the New Jersey School Boards Association to acquire permission to share my research proposal and collect data from the participants during the weekend. To secure permission, I sent an email to the New Jersey School Boards executive director explaining the purpose of my study and requesting permission to attend the governance training so that I might seek volunteers to participate in my study. The executive director connected me to a New Jersey School Boards
Association staff member who was in charge of school board member professional development, who assisted me in surveying the new school board members before and after the training. The staff member was welcoming and supported me when I attended the training. He and the other New Jersey School Board Association staff members were instrumental in supporting me in securing professional connections with the new school board of education participants so that they were willing to volunteer for my study. At the training, I presented my research study to the participants. I explained the purpose of my research, requested for volunteers to complete the pre- and post-governance weekend training surveys, asked for volunteers to complete the third survey months after the training, and asked for volunteers to participate in interviews.

The participants, all new school board of education members elected in the state of New Jersey, were gathered together in one room to begin the weekend training on a Friday afternoon. This was the first time I stood before the training participants to explain my research. The participants self-selected the in-person weekend training in order to comply with the state-mandated requirement of governance training for new school board members. Since my study was focused on new school board of education members and intended to investigate whether not they applied the skills they learned from the training in their governance practices, I thought that introducing my research at the training would be an excellent time to introduce my research and request volunteers for the study.
Participant Selection

To select the participants for my study, I considered the three primary questions from a study by Ravitch and Carl (2016) for the selection of the participants of the center of my inquiry.

The first question focused on considering who I needed to include and for what purposes and reasons, as related to the research and goals of my study. It was important for my study that the participants were new school board of education members with no governance experience prior to their governance term, which began in January of 2018. Studying school board members with no previous experience allowed for me to research the impact that the governance training had on their knowledge and application of skills. This would allow me to acquire data about what they learned during the governance training.

Question two focused on inquiring about which individuals were knowledgeable about what I wanted to learn about in my study. Since the goals of my study and my research questions are related to what the new school board members learned, what knowledge they retained after months of governance, and if and how they applied their learned skills in their governance practices, it was important that the participants in my study were new board members.

The third question focused on asking about specific experiences, roles, and perspectives as related to the participants in the study I wanted to explore. In my study, I sought out to inquire about the perceptions, experiences, and knowledge of the new school board members as related to their governance training and skills application,
which is why I selected them as the sole participants in my study. The new school board member participants of my study were included because they attended the governance training held in February of 2018 and they volunteered for the study. There was one other weekend of in-person mandated governance training offered, in addition to on-line governance training, however, my study only focused on the volunteers from the February 2018 training. The participants included in my study serve on school boards throughout the state of New Jersey. They represent K-8 and K-12 school districts that serve various student populations. The backgrounds, occupations, and skillsets of the participating board members are varied.

**Research Design**

My research design was guided by my inquiry into the mandated professional development that new school board education members in the state of New Jersey must attend, and my research questions about the effectiveness of the required governance training and whether or not new school board members applied what they learned to their school board practices. The sample of new school board of education members completed the same school board governance training during a weekend in February of the year 2018.

In the course of my research:

1. I surveyed the participants of the new school board members who attended the New Jersey School Boards Association governance February 2018 weekend training.
2. I surveyed the same group of participants immediately after the conclusion of the weekend governance training.
3. I sent a third survey to volunteer participants months after they attended the governance training.
4. I interviewed sixteen volunteer participants to inquire about how they applied what they learned from the professional development to their practices.

My methodological approach included a mixed methods study, utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods of surveys and interviews. The purpose of using two different methods of research was to acquire analyze data about different aspects of the retention and application of the governance skills taught during the professional development. Utilizing surveys allowed me to research the overall knowledge acquisition participants and their retention of learned skills months after the training. The interviews were conducted to collect data about how the new knowledge acquired from the professional development influenced the participants’ governance practices.

Data Collection

Document Review

In order to begin collecting data, I needed to know what information the new school board members were going to learn during the training. The New Jersey School Boards Association provided me with the governance training curriculum, which included the slides of information presented at the training. The Governance 1 training curriculum contained topics and information about school board governance that was determined by the New Jersey School Boards Associations as necessary knowledge required for effective school board governance by board of education members. After reviewing the curriculum, I identified the main topic areas of the curriculum. Once I knew what was going to be taught at the training, including the main areas of study, I designed the survey questions to match the five topics included in the training: (1) Board
Governance and Support, (2) Student Achievement, (3) Legal and Policy, (4) Advocacy, and (5) Labor Relations. To create the questions, I reviewed the governance curriculum, and selected main topics within the curriculum. The questions in the surveys are aligned to the goals and objectives outlined in the Governance 1 curriculum provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association. The Governance curriculum was created by the New Jersey School Boards Association staff as guidelines for the information that was taught to the new school board members during the sessions within the weekend training.

The questions were associated with the following five main topics of governance:

1. **Board Governance and Support**
   - The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum – State monitoring and district self-assessment system.
   - The Effective Board Member
   - The Four Functions of a Board of Education
   - How to be an Effective, Successful, Board Team

2. **Student Achievement**
   - How Data Assists the Board
   - School Climate/Social-Emotional Learning
   - Iowa Lighthouse Study

3. **Legal and Policy**
   - The Board Secretary
   - The Annual Audit
   - Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Law (HIB)
• Bylaws
• Effective School Board Policy
• Public Employment Relations Commission (P.E.R.C.)
• Duty to Bargain
• Volunteering
• School Ethics Act
• Executive Session
• Special Education Classification Process
• Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)
• Minutes During Board Meetings
• Family Relations
• The List of Bills

4. Labor Relations

• The Chief School Administrator Evaluation (CSA)
• Chief School Administrator (CSA) Merit Goals
• Labor Relations Cycle

5. Advocacy

• How Can NJSBA Help
• NJSBA Governmental Relations

After determining the main topics of study, I composed the questions, and matched the questions with their answers. After designing the questions, I utilized the
governance training curriculum to determine the correct answers to the survey questions and to continuously check the questions and to determine the correct answers. To ensure the validity of the questions, I created a document included in the appendix that outlines the questions and answers to the corresponding slides of the New Jersey School Boards governance curriculum.

In accordance with my data collection plan, I collected the data acquired via the surveys and interviews completed by the volunteer participants of the governance training. Approximately 100 new school board members attended the training. There were 77 participants available to complete the survey before the training began and 64 available to complete the survey after the training concluded. The governance training participants who volunteered completed three surveys: one before the training, one after the training, and another was completed months after the training. New school board members who were surveyed were asked to volunteer to be interviewed to answer additional questions.

The data method collection sequence plan was as follows:

- The sample participants were surveyed before beginning the Governance 1 training for new school board members.
- The second survey was conducted after the completion of the Governance 1 training weekend.
- The third survey was sent to those who completed the survey immediately the training, about 4 to 6 months after the Governance 1 training weekend.
The survey asked for people willing to be interviewed about their Governance 1 training. Interviews were conducted with those who agreed to be interviewed approximately [TIME] after their completion of the Governance 1 training.

**Surveys**

I utilized surveys to gather new school board members’ perspectives on how governance training influenced their practices. The survey questions were derived from the goals and objectives of the governance-training curriculum. The first survey collected baseline information on the participants’ professional knowledge. The follow-up survey, which contained the same questions as the first survey, was administered to the same participants immediately after the training. There was a difference between the number of participants who completed the pre-survey on Friday and the participants who completed the post-survey on Sunday because some of the participants arrived after the first survey was administered and left before the administration of the second survey. The first and second surveys were compared to assess for the knowledge that was learned from the governance training. A third survey was completed by 22 participants in order to assess what the board members remember about the training and whether or not they applied the training information months after the training. To acquire the third survey participants, I emailed a survey link to every one of participants who completed a form volunteering their email and willingness to participate in the third survey and/or an interview. To pursue participants for the third surveys and to participate in the interviews, I pursued them by sending them numerous emails encouraging them to participate in an interview and to complete survey 3. I utilized Survey Monkey to create and collect data for survey
1, survey 2, and survey 3. The final survey was sent to the volunteers through email with a link for board members to access and complete the survey. By creating a survey that the school board members could complete electronically at their convenience, I thought they might be more likely to participate (Creswell, 2014).

The quantitative data was collected through three closed-ended surveys that the participants completed before they participated in the mandated governance training and after they completed the governance training. The closed-ended questions about Governance knowledge in the first two surveys were closely aligned with the knowledge that the board members acquired over the course of a weekend training could be measured. The third survey, which also contained close-ended questions identical to the first two surveys, was administered months after the training. It also contained additional demographic questions and open-ended questions.

The pre- and post-governance 1 weekend training surveys consisted of 34 questions. The third survey contained the same 34 questions from the pre- and post-surveys, and included an additional nine open-ended questions pertaining to board members’ perceptions about their application of governance skills. Table 3.1 shows the number of survey questions in each subgroup.
Table 3.1: Number of Questions by Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Governance Training Topic</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifier Question – Surveys 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>1 Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Levels of Their District -</td>
<td>1 Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Board Members On Their Board</td>
<td>1 Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete the Training In-Person or Online</td>
<td>1 Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support</td>
<td>5 Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student achievement</td>
<td>4 Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Policy</td>
<td>16 Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations</td>
<td>3 Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>2 Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the content questions, questions were included that collected data such as the initials of the participant’s first/last name, birthdate as a participant identifier, a question about the grade levels in the board member’s district, and how many board members were in the participant’s district. The identifier question was asked so that the participants could be anonymously identified and potentially their surveys compared for knowledge growth. Prior to administering the survey, the survey was piloted by four experienced board of education members to check for clarity and validity. The survey
questions stemmed from the goals and objectives of the new school board member governance-training curriculum.

The analysis of the surveys was conducted comparing three groups of new school board members who completed the survey. The groups are as follows:

**Time 1** - The New School Board Member Participants Who Completed Survey 1

**Time 2** – The New School Board Member Participants Who Completed Survey 2

**Time 3** – The New School Board Member Participants Who Completed Survey 3

Times were grouped according to the people who took the same surveys. They are grouped as follows:

**Time 1 & 2** – People who took both Survey 1 and Survey 2.

**Time 2 & 3** – People who took both Survey 2 and Survey 3.

**Time 1 & 2 & 3** – People who took Survey 1, Survey 2, and Survey 3.

**Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with the new school board members who volunteered to be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to collect data from new school board members on their perceptions of the governance trainings and the influence of the professional development on their practices. The interviewees included board member participants who completed the governance weekend training and indicated that they were willing to participate.

The interview participants were new school board members from across the state. The new school board members were from different district factor groups, district sizes,
and grade configurations. The following table 3.2 illustrates the demographics of the school board member participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Board Members</th>
<th>District Factor Group</th>
<th>Approximate Number of Students</th>
<th>Grade Levels of District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. RO</td>
<td>Retired Teacher</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ND</td>
<td>Senior Manager for a Financial Firm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>GH</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HC</td>
<td>Paralegal and another representative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>GH</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MW</td>
<td>Parochial Educator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. TB</td>
<td>School Administrator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>FG</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. TA</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>FG</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. LQ</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. LiQ</td>
<td>College Student</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. LG</td>
<td>Stay-at-home Parent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>GH</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. AB</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>GH</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. JH</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 and Semi-member</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. SP</td>
<td>Educator with a Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. MD</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>16,100</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. BK</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. BC</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>GH</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. EJ</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Participants and Protocol

The interview participants were asked interview questions about their perceptions of governance training skill applications on their school board practices. The new school board member Governance 1 training participants were from all over the state of New Jersey. I interviewed 14 of the participants by phone and two participants in-person. The interviewees were all new school board of education members elected in November of 2017 and began their first term in January of 2018.

The interview sessions were conducted during the time period between August 2018 and September 2018. The interview participants volunteered to participate in the interviews when they were attended the governance training in February of 2018. The interviews were recorded using two devices in case of any potential technical difficulties with one of the devices. The transcription service Rev.com was utilized to complete the transcription of the interviews. Appendix B7 outlines the interview questions that were asked of every interview participant. The following interview protocol was followed:

Instructions for the Interviewer to Follow

- The interviewer communicated with the interviewee via email to schedule the time and date of the interview.
- The interviewer recorded the responses of the interviewee with two recording devices.
- The interview sent a thank you email to the interviewee and requested that the interviewee complete the third survey.
Standards Procedures for the Interview

- The interviewees were asked to sign a consent form.
- The interviewees were told that there were two recording devices.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of my study of a mixed methods design focused on the analysis of both qualitative data from the interviews and quantitative data gathered from the surveys. The data from both methods was analyzed separately and then compared to compare and contrast the results. Both methods yielded different kinds of information.

The surveys provided data on the knowledge that new school board members learned and retained from the training. The data from the interviews provided insight into the perceptions of new board members on topics related to the application of their governance skills in their practices. The qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed using the side-by-side approach. The qualitative data was analyzed first to determine themes and subthemes within the coded themes derived from the questions: the impact of training, effectiveness, application of skills, motivation, learned from training, likes/dislikes, and what supports/prohibits application of skills. Within the data themes and subthemes, conclusions were drawn from the results of the data. The quantitative data results were combined with the qualitative results to confirm and disconfirm the conclusions of the qualitative data (Creswell, 2014).
Survey Analysis

There were two surveys administered to the participants of the weekend training: one survey before the training began and the other survey after the training weekend was completed. A third survey was sent to Governance 1 new school board member training participants who volunteered to complete survey 3 months after the training. The survey questions were divided into categories with assigned colors. The survey results were converted to three Excel spreadsheets. The spreadsheets were uploaded into SPSS in order to analyze and determine any growth of knowledge between the pre-governance training survey and the post-governance training survey for three groups of participants. Group 1 included the survey participants who completed surveys 1 and 2. Group 2 included the participants who completed surveys 2 and 3. Group 3 included the participants who completed surveys 1, 2, and 3. Differences within Group 1 and differences within Group 2 were conducted using paired sample t-tests. Differences within Group three were conducted using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Average raw scores and percentages were determined for the Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3, for all of the questions in each survey and for the questions within the five subgroups of governance topics. The number of questions for each topic subgroup are outlined in Table 3.1. The categories were drawn from the topics covered in the governance training curriculum determined by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

The topics were coded in the spreadsheets in the following subgroups:

- Student Achievement
• Legal and Policy
• Advocacy
• Board Governance and Support
• Labor Relations

Paired $t$-tests were used to determine whether or not scores on the overall and category average scores increased significantly after training for Group 1 and Group 2. An ANOVA test was used for Group 3 to determine if the overall and category average scores from times 1, 2 and 3 changed significantly across each of the different timepoints.

**Interview Analysis**

Sixteen interviews were conducted—two in person and 14 by phone. The 16 interviews were recorded with permission. The audio recordings were transcribed by Rev.com. Dedoose, a cross-platform application was utilized to code and analyze the interview data. The interview questions were outlined and associated with codes. The approach I utilized for coding was the deductive coding process because I associated every code with an interview, question, and then read through the data to look for the specific responses to the questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After identifying the chunks of data within the interview transcripts that were associated with the interview questions, I progressed into axial coding. Axial coding is when qualitative data is analyzed to identify themes within the data, I conducted axial coding by reviewing the interview data to identify themes and then created specific codes for the identified themes. This kind of thematic clustering coding or pattern coding (Miles et al., 2014) allowed for me to group
the codes together into coding categories associated with my research questions. I created 21 codes, which are shown in Appendix A1.

**Issues of Validity**

For this mixed methods approach, I sought to establish validity in both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study (Creswell, 2014).

In order to address the issues of validity of the qualitative data, I considered the five categories from the work of Maxwell (1992). They include: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Descriptive validity is related to the accuracy of the data. (Maxwell, 1992) It was addressed in my study as it related to the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews. The interviews were recorded using two devices to ensure that the recordings were clear and in case one recording device stopped working during the interviews. The interview recordings were transcribed by Rev.com, a paid transcribing company. It was important that I utilized a transcribing service that I paid for to ensure that the recordings were complete and clear.

Interpretive validity is my consideration of the ways I communicated the interviewees’ meaning of how they described their governance perceptions and experiences. (Maxwell, 1992) This kind of validity was considered during the interview process, collection of data, and analysis. The interview questions were open-ended to allow for the interviewees to use their own language and draw from their unique experiences to answer the questions. I provided the participants with enough time to
elaborate upon their answers and, in some circumstances, talk about governance topics that were related to the questions but not always directly relevant. My goal was to provide the participants with an interview experience that created a space for them to explain their perceptions and opinions. During some of the interviews, follow-up questions were asked for clarification and informational purposes. I utilized language that was familiar to the interviewees and focused on common governance terms related to school board work. I was careful to not introduce language that was unfamiliar to the participants and which could have compromised the interpretive validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Theoretical validity refers to the theoretical constructs that I brought to my study. (Maxwell, 1992) It was considered in the inclusion of the shared leadership theory within my literature review and data analysis. Shared leadership theory is connected to school board leadership because of the theory’s focus on leaders working as a group as shared leaders. Within the qualitative data, themes emerged that were related to new board members and their working relationships with other board members. In his article: “Getting Along – At the Top,” Daniel Goleman (2017) writes about how shared leaders work together and share power with leaders with varied experiences and skillsets. Goleman’s description of shared leadership is connected to some of the qualitative data and also sheds light on some of the themes that emerged within the qualitative data about new school board members and their perceptions of governance leadership (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).
Thoughts about generalizability validity relate to the sample of new school board members who were studied. It is recognized that the school board members who volunteered for the interviews were just 16 out of hundreds of new school board members from across the state of New Jersey. Internal validity emerged within the data when some of the interview participants mentioned their perceptions about how other new board members apply their governance skills. Maxwell (1992) relates generalizability to whether or not this data would pertain to data acquired from other new school board members. Since every new school board member is required to complete the governance training face-to-face or online, their training experiences may not be the same; however, the information presented to them was very similar. Generalizability is not a goal of this study; however, the participant sample of this study is a subgroup of a larger group of new school board members who received the same training information from the asset governance curriculum (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Careful consideration of evaluative validity was considered during this study. Evaluative validity refers to making conclusions based on the data, not on my imposed judgements of why I think the participants responded the way they did, or based on my opinions of an organization. (Maxwell, 1992) As both the researcher and school board member, I was extremely careful to not be evaluative or judgmental when interpreting the data. When completing the data analysis, I was careful not to impose my own thoughts about my school board experiences and governance knowledge while interpreting the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).
In order to address issues of validity with regard to the quantitative component of this study, the creation of the survey instrument was considered. In particular, face validity and content validity were considered when addressing the validity issues of the surveys of the study.

Face validity was contemplated when thinking about whether the survey was a good tool to measure what governance knowledge the new school board training participants learned and retained from Governance 1 weekend training. Face validity is the subjective judgement about the consideration if the tool selected for the study actually measured what the researcher intended the tool to measure. (Fitzner, 2007)

Content validity was considered in relation to the questions that were asked within the surveys. Content validity involves the consideration of the questions asked in the survey and whether the questions accurately measured what the researcher was hoping to measure which in this study is growth and retention of knowledge. (Fitzer, 2007) The questions were derived from the Governance 1 curriculum, but were associated with only some of the information presented at the training. I selected the questions based on the subgroup topics contained within the Governance 1 training, which were the major themes of the training. My intention was to create survey questions about the information that was presented by the New Jersey School Boards Association as knowledge that was important for new school board of education members to learn.

**Positionality**

My background as a school board member was helpful in guiding my research. As a board of education member in my fourth term, currently serving as the board president,
I have attended many trainings and I am very familiar with the professional development that the New School Board Association provides for school board members. In the past, I had attended the mandated governance training, so I am aware of what it was like to be a new school board of education member with a limited knowledge of school board governance. As an experienced school board of education member, I continue to attend trainings that the New Jersey School Boards Association offers for school board of education members. In addition, the New Jersey School Boards Association continues, in other ways, to serve as a support for school boards of education across the state of New Jersey and to individual school board members.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter is organized into three parts. In the first part, I examine the survey data to address the first research question: **How does the governance professional development for new school board members influence their pre/post survey knowledge and their approximately 6-month follow-up survey results?** The survey results are displayed and were analyzed to compare the influence that the governance training had on participants immediately after the training and months after the training. The third survey results were compared to the second survey results to determine the extent to which whether the participants retained the governance skills they learned from the training months after the training.

In the second section of the results chapter, I describe the findings from the interview data to address the second research question: **What did the new school board member governance training participants learn from the governance training?; and 3) How are the governance training participants applying the skills and knowledge that they learned to their practices?** Participant responses from the 16 interviews make up the qualitative data. My inquiry into the findings of what the participants learned from the training will also be connected to the research question about the potential application of the governance skills that participants learned. I describe what the participants reported to have learned from the training by providing data from the interviews. Additional data is provided from the interview data set about board governance topics of motivation, the impact of training, and training in relation to effectiveness.
In the third section of the results chapter I summarize the findings that I discovered from the data. Some of the data is directly related to my research questions and some of the data is unrelated, but interesting.

**Survey Sample Size**

Data analysis was conducted for groups of the new school board Governance 1 training participants who completed the same surveys. There were 77 respondents for survey 1, 64 respondents for survey 2, and 22 respondents for survey 3. The number of participants who completed Survey 1 and Survey 2 varied in sample size, according to their availability before and during the training. The sample size for Survey 3 participants was significantly smaller because Survey 3 was sent to the volunteers via email, and fewer training participants responded. Table 4.1 illustrates the three subgroups of times, the number of people within the time subgroup, and the percentage of respondents who completed the surveys.

**Table 4.1: Time, Subgroups, Percentage of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Sample (Number of Respondents)</th>
<th>% of Respondents Who Completed the Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 &amp; 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Results

Comparisons of Time 1 and 2

Table 4.2 illustrates the average raw score and average percentage overall for participants who completed Survey 1 and Survey 2. The table is divided into the Governance 1 All Test (every question in the survey) and training subtopics. Each subgroup and the All Test (every question in the survey) include the raw score (number of questions correct) and the percentage of questions correct. The highest raw scores for the surveys are as follows:

Survey 1 – Raw Score - 34 Questions
Survey 2 – Raw Score - 34 Questions
Survey 3 – Raw Score - 44 Questions Total (35 Multiple Choice and 9 Open-Ended)
Table 4.2: Average Raw Scores and Average Percentage Overall for Survey 1 and Survey 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1 Survey 1</th>
<th>Time 2 Survey 2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Test Raw Score Full Survey</td>
<td>19.43</td>
<td>21.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test % Correct Full Survey</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement Raw Score</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement % Correct</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Policy Questions Raw Score</td>
<td>10.82</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Policy % Correct</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Raw Score</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy % Correct</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support Raw Score</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support % Correct</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations Raw Score</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations % Correct</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paired t-tests were used to determine whether or not scores on the knowledge test increased significantly after the training. Within the subgroups, new school board members scored significantly higher in the areas of Legal and Policy and Advocacy subgroups after the training.

In the Legal and Policy subgroup, new school board training participants scored an average of 10.82 (SD=2.00) 68% questions correct out of a possible of 16 questions on Survey 1 before the training. On Survey 2, administered after the training, new school
board training participants scored an average of 12.47 (SD = 2.59) 78% questions correct out of 16. \( t (48) = -5.30, p < .001, d = .75 \)

In the Advocacy subgroup, new school board training participants scored an average of 1.02 (SD = 0.52) 52% questions correct out of a possible of two questions on Survey 1, which was taken before the training. On Survey 2, the new school board training participants scored an average of 1.27 (SD = 0.70) 63.5% questions correct out of two questions on the survey which was taken after the training. \( t (48) = -2.28, p = .027, d = .33 \)

The scores for the Student Achievement and the scores for subgroup Board Governance and Support did not significantly differ.

For Student Achievement, the results for Survey 1 indicated that the new school board training participants scored an average of 3.24 (SD = 1.03) 81% questions correct out of four taken before they began the training. For Survey 2, the new school board training participants scored an average of 3.43 (SD = 0.87) 85.75% questions correct out of four taken after they completed the training. \( t (48) = -1.54, p = .130, d = .23 \)

For Board Governance and Support, the results for Survey 1 indicated that new school board training participants scored an average of 4.35 (SD = 1.07) 87% questions correct out of five taken before the start of the training. On Survey 2, the results indicated that new school board member training participants scored an average of 4.82 (SD = 1.52) 96.4% questions correct out of five taken after the completion of the training. \( t (48) = -1.79, p = .080, d = .26 \)
In the subgroup for Labor Relations there was a significant improvement between the new school board member training participants who took Survey 1 and 2. For Survey 1, school board member training participants scored an average of 1.347 (SD = .21028) 44.90% questions correct out of 3 taken before the training. On Survey 2, the results indicated that new school board member training participants scored an average of 1.8162 (SD = .24223) 60.54% questions correct out of three taken after the training. t (48) = -3.50, p = .001, d = 0.50

**Comparisons of Time 2 and 3**

Table 4.3 illustrates the Average Raw Score and Average Percentage Overall for participants who completed Survey 2 and Survey 3. The table is divided into All Test (entire survey) and subgroup Average Raw Scores and Average Percentage Overall.
Table 4.3: Average Raw Scores and Average Percentage Overall for Survey 2 and Survey 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Test Raw Score Entire Survey</td>
<td>23.53</td>
<td>23.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test % Correct</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement Raw Score</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement % Correct</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Policy % Correct</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Raw Score</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy % Correct</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support Raw Score</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support % Correct</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations Raw Score</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations % Correct</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paired T Tests were used to determine whether or not the participants’ scores on the knowledge test increased for Survey 2 (Time 2) and Survey 3 (Time 3).

In the Legal and Policy subgroup, new school board training participants scored an average of 13.35 (SD=.1.99816)) 83% questions correct out of a possible of 16 questions on Survey 2 completed after the training. On Survey 3, administered months after the training, new school board training participants scored an average of 13.12 (SD
82% questions correct out of 16. There was very little difference between the participants’ scores between Survey 2 and Survey 3. $t(16) = .554, p = .587, d = .13$

In the Advocacy subgroup, new school board training participants scored an average of 1.35 (SD = .78591) 68% questions correct out of a possible of two questions on Survey 2, which was taken after the training. On Survey 3, the new school board training participants scored an average of 1.06 (SD = .55572) 53% questions correct out of two questions on the survey which was taken months after the training. Participants scored slightly lower on Survey 3 as compared to Survey 2. $t(16) = 1.571, p = .136, d = .38$

For Student Achievement, the results for Survey 2 indicated that the new school board training participants scored an average of 3.59 (SD = .61835) 89% questions correct out of four taken after the participants completed the training. For Survey 3, the new school board training participants scored an average of 3.76 (SD = .43724) 94% questions correct out of four taken months after they completed the training. The participants scored slightly higher on Survey 3 than Survey 2. $(16) = -1.000, p = .332, d = .24$

For Board Governance and Support, the results for Survey 2 indicated that new school board training participants scored an average of 5.24 (SD = 1.39326) 65% questions correct out of five taken before the start of the training. On Survey 3, the results indicated that new school board member training participants scored an average of 5.41 (SD = 1.12132) 68% questions correct out of five taken after the completion of the
training. There was a slight increase between the results of Survey 2 and Survey 3. \( t (16) = -.545, p = .593, d = .13 \)

In the subgroup for Labor Relations, for Survey 2, school board member training participants scored an average of 2.00 (SD = .23570) 67% questions correct out of 3 taken after the training. On Survey 3, the results indicated that new school board member training participants scored an average of 1.47 (SD = .23914) 49% questions correct out of three taken months after the training. Among the participants who completed Surveys 2 and 3 (N = 17), there was a significant decrease in items correct from Survey 2 to Survey 3. \( t (16) = -2.73, p = .015, d = 0.66 \)

**Comparisons of Time 1 and 2 and 3**

In Table 4.4, An ANOVA was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the average raw scores and percentages of the group of new school board member training participants who completed Survey 1, Survey 2, and Survey 3.
Table 4.4: Results for Participants Taking all Three Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Test Raw Score Entire Survey</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>23.53</td>
<td>23.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Test % Correct</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement Raw Score</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement % Correct</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Policy % Correct</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Raw Score</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy % Correct</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support Raw Score</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Governance and Support % Correct</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations Raw Score</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Relations % Correct</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 displays the results for training participants who took all three surveys. In the areas of All Test (Entire Survey), Legal and Policy, and Advocacy, the tests indicate that Time 1 is different from Time 2 and Time 3, but Time 2 and Time 3 do not differ from one another. This seems to indicate that in the All Test, and in the areas of Legal and Policy and Advocacy, there was an increase in scores from Survey 1 and Survey 2. However, the scores from Survey 2 and Survey 3 did not differ, indicating that in ALL Test, and the areas of Legal and Policy and Advocacy, the board members retained their skills learned from the training.
For the **Labor Relations** subgroup, Time 2 differs from Time 1 and Time 3, but Time 1 and Time 3 do not differ from one another. This indicates that the school board training participants did increase their scores from Survey 1 and Survey 2. However, when answering the same questions four to six months later, participants scored less on average. This may indicate that because the application of Labor Relations skills is sporadic, depending on the exposure school board members have to labor relations, participants were less likely to retain the information learned within this subgroup.

For the subgroup of **Board Governance and Support**, this indicates that the new school board members, on average, increased their scores over months of time. The data shows an increase in the average percentage correct between responses to Surveys 1 and Survey 2, as well as an increase between Survey 2 and Survey 3. This may indicate that board members did learn Board Governance and Support information from the training and continued to retain the information months after the training. The retention of the knowledge and the average percentage of survey growth, may be a result that their knowledge grew because the board members were applying Board Governance and Support skills in their school board practices.

**Interview Results**

This section of the results chapter is organized by topics. The topics derive from the interview questions. The topics are the following:

1. Motivation

2. What New Board Members Reported They Learned From the Training

3. Impact of Training
4. Effectiveness

5. Application of Learned Governance Skills From The Training

6. What Supports Board Members To Apply Their Governance Skills

7. What Limits Board Members To apply Their governance Skills

8. What Board Members Like and Dislike About Board Governance

Within each topic, there are themes that are evident in the data. The data focuses on the perceptions of the new school board members about their experiences at the new school board member governance training, what they think they learned, and how they apply their learned skills.

The interview participants were from diverse districts of district factor groups, grade levels, and student population sizes. Within the sample section of the methods chapter 3, there is a table that provides information about each of the sixteen individual board members interviewed. The data presented in this results chapter is organized into topic sections which are matched with the interview questions. Within each section, are themes that emerged in the data.

The first topic is focused on motivation. New board members were asked and described what motivated them to become board of education members.

**Topic 1 - Motivation**

The new school board of education members that were interviewed mentioned a range of motivational factors that they connected to why they wanted to become board of education members. Knowing what motivated the school board members to run for office provided insight into the topics that they found most important to address in their
governance work. Understanding the factors that motivated board members to run for their positions is also helpful for the professional development designers to develop and support effective board of education members. In addition, understanding their motives for becoming involved in governing school districts may connect to their future actions as school board governance servants.

In regard to what motivated participants to become board of education members, three subthemes emerged in the responses:

- School board of education members were motivated because they wanted to get involved in their school district to contribute to positive educational change.
- School board of education members were motivated because they had prior professional and childhood experiences in education before running to be a member of the board in education that motivated their involvement.
- Some school board of education members were motivated because they had personal connections to the school district because their children are and/or were students in the school district.

The desire to get involved in the school district in order to contribute to positive educational changes, was a major theme in the interviewees’ responses. Some of the board members were in favor of the positive changes occurring in their school districts and wanted to be involved in the continuation of activities, while others wanted to contribute to reforms in their districts. The data in the first subtheme describes how contributing to positive change motivated them to become a board member.

**Contributing to Positive Change**

New school board member TA, in a PK-12 school district with a district factor group of FG, observed and was in favor of the positive changes occurring in the district’s high school and wanted to contribute. She explained that her motivation was related to
her desire to be more aware of what was happening in the district and wanted to make
sure it continued in the same direction. She stated:

I had gone to the high school and saw an amazing media center that they put in, and
I had no idea the school did it, and I just started realizing all the great things the
school has done that I didn't realize, and I wanted to, one, be aware more of what
was going on, and also to help contribute to make sure that it went in that direction.

School board member TA’s previous experience of observing the “amazing” media
center was one of her motivational factors for becoming involved in the district as a
board of education member. She observed changes at the high school that she perceived
as positive and wanted them to continue.

One board member discussed how her motivation to become involved in enacting
change was related to improving the district. New school board member TB, in a district
factor group FG PK-12 average sized district of approximately 5,800 students, wanted to
change her residential school board district. She explained that, as a school administrator
in another district, there were “great things” in her working district that she was not
seeing in her board district, which was upsetting to her. Her observation of district
differences and her desire to bring change to her board district is what motivated her to
become a school board member. The second subtheme of motivation is connected to the
improvement of student achievement.

*Improve Student Achievement*

Another area related to what motivated school board members to seek leadership
roles and conduct change, was to improve student achievement. Board member SP, in a
PK-8 district of approximately 5,000 students in district factor group (DFG) CD, was
motivated to join the board in order to help improve student achievement, particularly within subgroups of the student population. Her concern was prompted by the identification of one of the schools in her district as a Focus School. Focus Schools are identified on the New Jersey Department of Education website as belonging to the 10% of the schools that perform at the lowest level, have the widest achievement gaps, and have a student graduation rate that is lower than 75%. (NJDOE, 2019). Since the focus identification was only targeted at one school, the board member wondered if all the low-performing students were sent to the same school and if the students were all racial and ethnic minorities. This was of such great concern to the board member that she decided to run. She reflected:

Yes, one of the schools in the district was on the Focus list for the state. And that concerned me because I thought that, well I went through and looked at the data for the state. And I was curious, I wanted to know if it was sub-grouped, and some subgroups, or if it was that they were sending all the low-performance students to our school. And then I was also concerned that it might be all African-American or all ethnic minorities, all in one building. My purpose is to make sure that our kids had all the opportunities that they could have so that they can have a great education and succeed.

Noticing that one of the schools in her district was labeled by the New Jersey Department of Education as an underperforming school, along with her concerns about equity issues, motivated board member SP to run for a seat on the board of education. Another theme within the data related to motivation involves board members wanting to become governance leaders because of professional and childhood experiences in education.
Professional and Childhood Experiences in Education

Professional and childhood experiences in education was a second theme evident in the data of the topic of motivation. Some of the interview participants possessed prior experiences in the field of education which motivated them to run for the board of education. Experiences in education were described as involvement in education-related careers and childhood educational experiences. Some of the board members commonly believed that their experiences in education would benefit them in fulfilling their responsibilities as board of education members.

Board member AB, an attorney and a member of a K-8 board serving approximately 1,300 students, described how her experiences as a personal injury and special education lawyer motivated her to run for a seat on the board of education. AB described that, as a special education lawyer, she believed her knowledge of the law would make her a capable board member: She described her experiences:

And I'm also an attorney, and I do personal injury and special education law. So, I thought that the assets that I have, which is, just that. Being a parent in the district and having kids in the school and understanding the law would be helpful to our community for me to be a board member.

In addition, AB also explained that she has a child with special needs and that her parental experiences would also contribute to her effectiveness as a board member. AB’s experiences in educational law and as a parent of a child with special needs were both motivational factors in why she wanted to become a school board member.

School board member SP not only was motivated to become a board of education member because of her prior experiences in education as a teacher, but also because she wanted to add her diverse experiences as an ethnic minority to a board that included no
ethnic minorities. Her district was comprised of 16.9% black students and 23.1% Hispanic students, and SP believed that, as a board member, she could be a benefit to helping the children due to her background in education. She stated the following about her motivation to become a school board member:

For my district, it's because they didn't have any minorities on the board, any ethnic minorities and I know I have an educational background and a lot of boards don't generally have a lot of people on the board with educational backgrounds and I knew I could be a benefit to helping the children.

SP was motivated to become a school board of education member by what she perceived as a lack in the areas of educational expertise and minority representation.

School board member and retired educator TB, in a medium sized PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students, was an educator. TB wanted to “understand education, a full 360 of it.” Educators’ experiences may be limited, depending on the responsibilities related to their roles. School board members are exposed to the governance side of education; educational administrators are involved in instructional leadership and management; and teachers in the classrooms are focused on teaching and learning. Just because everyone is involved in the field of education, it does not mean that they are aware of the experiences related to other roles outside of their own experiences. TB continued to describe her motivation to run as related to an experience with an administrator and understanding the “other side” of education. She explained:

So, two things. First thing was, I've always believed in getting to understand education better. You know, when I was a teacher, I made a comment to one of the vice principals and said, “I just don't understand why you're making this a big issue.” He said something that was kind of demeaning. But at the same time, it was not wrong. He said, “Well, you're naïve.” He said, “Because you don't understand this side of it.” And I said, “You know what? You're right.” And the
next day I started researching when I was going through my graduate work. All right, I can fix that.

Realizing and understanding that, as an educator, she had limited knowledge about administration, TB was motivated to become a board of education member.

School board member and retired New York City educator RO, in a K-8 district of approximately 1,400 students, described a similar motivation behind why she wanted to become a school board member. RO also wanted to experience the “other side” after teaching for 38 years in New York City. She described the following as her motivation to become a board member:

Well, somebody actually had contacted my sister who used to be on the Board of Directors of the Galaxy [(Condo Complex in New Jersey)] and he knew that. So, he said would you like to become a school board member? Sarah said, Jane is the one you should be asking because I taught for 38 years in the city. Scott talked to me about it and I was a little hesitant because I didn't know how much time would be involved but it sounded very exciting. I had been on the other side, on the execution side of education for so many years so I thought it would be interesting to be on the other side.

RO’s educational experiences of 38 years as a teacher and her desire to know what was like to be in a different role in the field of education were motivating factors for her decision to run for the school board.

School board member MW, in a large PK-12 district of over 15,000 students, described how her educational experiences motivated her to become a board member, and also described an issue that she needed to overcome before running. MW described her experience of being an educator in another school district, while considering serving as school board member in her town of residence. When MW was a teacher, she was concerned about her supervisor allowing her to become a board member in her home
district. As a solution, MW waited until she was retired before running for the school board. She described her thoughts by stating:

Well, I always wanted to get involved, civically within my town, and I thought my job, the school that I was in, was a little bit too political, and I didn't think my boss would let me. So, the minute when I retired, people knew that I was interested and then I got a call. And I thought, I said whichever way he wants me to go. And so, I thought, I could use my educational experience on the Board, so I accepted and luckily, I won in the election, and so here I am.

Legally educators in other districts are not required to seek permission to become board members in their home districts. However, this presented as a problem for MW until she decided to retire from education professionally.

Childhood experiences related to the value of education in the home was mentioned as a motivation for becoming a board of education member. School board member BC of one of the smallest districts in this study, of a K-8 district with approximately 500 students, talked about how his parents’ experiences impacted the values of learning and education in his childhood home. He described that his parents’ educational expectations motivated his selection of where to raise a family and his decision to run for the board. He explained:

Well, I was raised by . . . my father [who] was a teacher. He retired as a principal of a High School, and my mom was an English major in college, so she loved to read and learn and stuff. So, I was raised in a household where college was an expectation, and for high school, and education was valued as something that people do to better themselves.

Since education was a focus of importance in his childhood home, BC was raised in an environment where it was expected that he would go to college, which impacted him for life. BC’s life experiences influenced the choices he made in regard to where he decided
to live, raise a family, and make decisions about education for his children. As a result, he made specific choices related to education, including becoming a school board education member. The third theme in the next section focuses on the personal connections to the school district was mentioned as a motivating factor what board members wanting to lead.

**Personal Connections to the School District**

The third theme that presented in the topic 1 motivation data was that school board members were motivated to run for the board of education because they had a personal connection to the school district. Either the board members were, at one time, students in the district themselves, their own children currently are students in the district, or their children were students in the school district at one time. Board member BK, a member of a small PK-8 board serving fewer than 300 students, waited until her children graduated from the district before she considered running for the school board. BK was interested in becoming a board member for years, but it was important to her not to become a board member until her children were not students in the district. She explained:

Well, I always had said both of my kids went to the school, and my children are five and a half years apart. My son is also a sophomore and high school. So, I was in the school for 14 years and I always volunteered a lot, but I always told everybody . . . over the years different people would say, you should run for school board. And I always said that I did not want to be on the school board while I had a child in the school. And there was a member who resigned fairly suddenly three weeks before my son's graduation. So, half a dozen people reached out to me, finish out the term, just see how it goes, and that's what I did. And then I ended up running for the slot.
BK was motivated to become a school board member because of her personal connections to the district. She described herself as being very involved in the schools, often as a volunteer, for 14 years. BK made personal connections with the people in the schools, which led them to encourage her to run for the school board. Her personal connections with school community members and the encouragement of others were the motivational factors for her wanting to become a school board member.

Once a Student

Board member LiQ experienced in many of a PK-12 district of 1,500 students, was once a student where she is now serving as a board of education member. As a student, she held many leadership positions, including president of both her class and the student council. LiQ was motivated to become a school board member because, as a student, she thought there was a disconnect between the board of education and the students. She described her personal experiences as a student at the high school where she is now a school board member:

Yeah, so then when I entered high school, I mean freshman year I was kind of trying to figure out how to do everything so I wasn't really involved much my freshman year and my sophomore year I became the vice-president and then my junior and senior year I was class president. And then my senior year I also became extremely involved in student council, in my junior year I meant and then in my senior year I became the president of student council so I was president of both. So, I was extremely involved in all this stuff and every time that I wanted to bring in new ideas, I wanted to create something new, it would be a process because the school of course would approve certain things but some of the things we did have to approve through the board. So, sometimes I felt like there was a disconnect between the board and the students. So, my biggest thing was to be an advocate for the students because I felt like they would make decisions sometimes and not exactly know how the aftermath was, how it felt, how the students actually liked the idea.
LiQ’s personal involvement within the culture of her high school and her experiences as a result of her high engagement, were the motivational factors that inspired her to become a board of education member. Her perception of the student and board disconnect was also part of why she was motivated to run for her governance position.

*Children in the Schools*

LG, a board member of a PK-12 district serving approximately 2100 students, described her personal connection with the school district as just beginning. As a mother of three young children, she was motivated to become a school board member because her children were just beginning their education in the district, and she considered governance work as investing in the district. She was also motivated by her desire, as an educated, stay-at-home-mother, to utilize her education as a board of education member. She explained:

Okay. I would say my interest in being able to utilize my education in some way because I am a stay-at-home mom. And then my investment in the district because I have three small children that are just starting to go through the public-school system. So those are the two main things for me, yeah.

*Organization Connections*

Personal connections with school communities may occur when parents volunteer within organizations that support schools. These personal connections may motivate people to consider running for a seat on the school board of education. Board member MD of a PK-12 district of 16,000 students, was motivated by her previous experiences with the school district, which included working with an organization affiliated with the schools. MD described herself as an active member of a parent/teacher association. She
believed that there was a connection between school improvement and community improvement. Her focus on school improvement and the need for change was the reason she decided to run for the school board. She explained:

Oh wow. Well, I have a little background in education, I have a couple of kids in the district, and I am very active in the HSA, which is our version of the PTA. So, I have a vested interest in having great schools and I honestly believe that school improvement is the best way for community improvement. So, I decided after actually being fairly active in a parent advocacy group who was talking with the administration about curriculum and some need for improvement, I decided to run for the board.

MD’s involvement in an organization that benefitted the school immersed her in the school culture, which included a high level of engagement with the initiatives and community members of the school. As a result, she became part of a parent advocacy group which strengthened her school connection and created more personal ties. For all of these reasons, in addition to wanting to improve the district, she was motivated to become a board of education member.

The new school board members who were interviewed were all motivated by specific reasons to be involved in governance work, and all of them described the ways in which they thought they could contribute to their school boards as members. Exploring what motivated new school board members to run for school board positions provided valuable data about their life experiences, their abilities to lead, and their skill sets. Knowing what motivates board members provides a foundation on which to design professional development, so that the board members have the knowledge to lead effectively. The acquisition and application of the learned skills in the governance training, what motivates board members to their commitment of wanting to serve the
district, and the past experiences and knowledge members possess, are all pieces that work together to make a new school board member an effective governance leader.

The second main topic within the interview results is what the board members reported they learned from the weekend governance training. The topic 2 section includes descriptions of what board members perceived they learned at the training.

**Topic 2 - What New Board Members Reported Learning from the Training**

This section of the interview data directly answered my second research question: What did the new school board member governance training participants learn from the governance training? The interview participants described their learning not only from the content of the governance training curriculum, but also from the participants of the training, as well as the staff members of the New Jersey School Boards Association. As described in the data, the governance training participants who were interviewed described the takeaways from the training that were, in some cases, similar to those of their training cohort colleagues and, in some cases, their takeaways were different. However, a common theme in the data was that they learned information that provoked thoughts about effective board governance and how it might be applied to their school board practices.

During the interviews, the board members discussed the specific topics and skills that they learned during the training. Within the governance training curriculum, there were many topics of study and skills that were covered. Different board members who were interviewed discussed some of the skills they learned and, in some cases, described
the context in which they applied the learned skills. Three major themes emerged from
the interviewees’ responses about what they think they learned from the training. They
are as follows:

- Board members mentioned specific skills that they learned from the training.
- Board members discussed behaviors that they thought they should or should not
do as board members and as functioning boards
- Board members learned things from other people and the NJSBA organization at
  the training.

**Skills Learned from Training**

The first theme within the topic 2 of the interview data focuses on the skills that
the board members learned from the training. During the interviews, board members
mentioned specific skills that they learned from the training. When asked about what
skills they learned, board members described the skills that were most impactful and
those that they remembered most vividly.

*Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) Law*

Several board members reported learning knowledge about HIB laws. For
example, BK, a new school board member of a small PK-8 district of approximately just
275 students, described how learning skills during the governance training was helpful.
She also mentioned that the training was beneficial because it made her realize that she
knew more than she thought she knew. BK mentioned specific topics that were helpful
and also related how the training experience helped address her feelings about being a
new board member. She described her experiences in the training as the following:

I remember having a finance presentation, which was helpful. Obviously, the
HIB information was helpful. His whole presentation, it was kind of like reading
Dr. Spock's baby book, like you know more than you think you know. You're going to be fine. You're going to be okay. So, his whole presentation, I felt, gave us some good parameters on what we were doing, and what we were supposed to be doing. You're going to be fine. You know more than you think you do. You know, that kind of feeling that I got from it. I don't know that he ever said that, but that feeling that I got from his presentation was one of confidence in everybody there. And that was a very positive way that he presented, that made you feel like, 'All right, I can be here. I'm not a fraud. I'm not hiding out,' because, you do feel like that when you start out as a board member.

The finance presentation positively impacted BK. During the HIB presentation, The HIB presentation facilitator, provided good parameters about what they were doing and what they should be doing. In addition, he made her feel capable, and he also made new school board members feel confident about their abilities to govern. BK described what she learned at the training as more knowledgeable and making her feel less of a fraud as a new person in school board governance, and more of someone deserving to serve in a board seat.

EJ, a board member of a K-12 district of approximately 4,500 students, discussed what she learned about the Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) law and how, generally, HIB is a topic of great concern for her. EJ explained that, because the district employees who are the investigators do not have training as private investigators, it makes it difficult for them to properly investigate HIB allegations. The governance training not only alerted her HIB concerns, it also inspired her to attend an entire training about HIB. The training also provided her with the incentive to try to understand the law and think about how the process might be made better. EJ stated the following:

What I did learn was, for example, some stuff about HIB, some situations . . . Because actually, anything regarding that really troubled me, because I think it's a learning process that the state is going through with HIB. So, I think, like I
told my superintendent, "Listen. A teacher is like a table, and we're really without one leg. And we're really setting them up for failure, because they don't have all of the training that they should." He says, "Well they go to their class that the state mandates." I said, "Well, the mandate is never enough, because there's a different type of training that they should have." Like, a cop should. So those are the things that the governance training, for example, alerted me. And I did go to an additional one. I did go to another one. The Princeton one is the one that I went for originally, and then I went to a follow-up one. So, when I was in Princeton, it just all made sense in my mind. It was shuffled in my brain, saying, "Okay, let's put this together, or let's see how we can better this," or, "Let's bring this issue, maybe somebody never realized it."

EJ believed that the governance training alerted her to what was needed in her district to support the teachers with the information they need to know about HIB. She described how that the training “alerted” her to the fact that teachers may not have all the training they need about HIB.

Rules To Run A Board Meeting

AB, a board member of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students, discussed what she learned about school financing, education, the voting structure, board confidentiality, and the proper procedures for a board. She stated:

Oh my gosh, so much. The financing part, school financing, I definitely learned a lot about that. I learned a lot about the proper procedures for a board, and I already knew some of Robert's rules anyway, just because of other boards that I had been on, and like I said, my work as an attorney, I already kind of knew Robert's rules anyway. Understanding the committee structure, the way that things work with the school board. Oh gosh, I could go on so much. There was so much. I'm trying to think of all the things that I've looked back to, where I've looked back in the book. Like voting, voting structure. Again, the confidentiality that we talked about. How important policy is. That was a big one. Conflicts. That was another one. Oh, and about education in general. I loved that one session that we talked about, where, I forget his name, he has a granddaughter on the spectrum, and he's really involved in NJSBA. He was talking about the way schools are first formed, and how we've gotten where we are today with biology, chemistry and physics, in that order. And about the education structure
and how we got to where we are. And the things that we're looking into as far as changing them. That was awesome.

AB described how she learned a lot of information about topics, including finance, proper procedures for a board, committee structure, voting structure, confidentiality, policy, conflicts, and the structure of education. She mentioned that learning about education, in general, from a particular person during a session where they were talking about how schools were first formed and how changes are being attempted. Overall, AB thought that they learned a lot of useful information.

LiQ, once a student in her governing district, described what she learned from the training, “It educated me on what the law is, what's ethical versus legal, the way things should run, the way things should work, the parliamentary system of the Board.” Another board member described what she learned as “just a lot on, basically a lot on the law, on the different laws as well as the way functional versus dysfunctional boards should operate.” In addition, learning about how board members should act during meetings and the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) are topics that another board member mentioned. She explained:

I think definitely it would be the way you talk during a meeting to the . . . like the way you ask certain questions and what questions you can ask during a meeting and what you can do offline so to say. Another big one that I really took away from it was that whole OPRA law because I realize a lot of us even like, I guess they don't even realize it but they'll just go on their phones so that one was . . . so the whole back thing with that.

Board member LiQ mentioned the OPRA law as related to how board members use their phones to communicate with other board members. LiQ also discussed the topic of questioning to include the way a board member should ask questions, what questions a
board member may ask during a meeting, and what questions a board member should not ask during the meetings.

MW, board member of a PK-12 district of 16,000 students one of the largest districts in this study, who has experience as a parochial educator, was succinct is describing three of the learned takeaways for her from the governance training. She described the following as three of the things she learned:

The importance of being unified. Number one. The importance of the ethics involved in our work, and then when we're in closed session in the executive that would be number two. And number three just the position of a, because a board member is an elected official in a town and the importance of how you conduct yourself individually and what you say publicly.

MW mentioned the importance of working as a unified board as being one of the main areas that she learned from the training. The topic of ethics, particularly pertaining to topics of discussion in the executive session, was a second area of learning for MW. The third main topic of learning for MW was the importance of conducting yourself responsibly as an individual and to be aware of what she is allowed to talk about publicly.

When asked about things that she learned during the governance training, board member and a professional educator, LQ of a PK-8 district of approximately 3,200 students, explained that she learned something that she did not think would be included in the training, which was student inclusiveness. She also mentioned that she wished that there was more discussion on the state legislative involvement of the New Jersey School Board Association. She explained:

I liked the fact that they were talking about inclusiveness, but they used new words, better words, they weren't segregated words, I really liked that. I liked the fact that they addressed and I think I was not expecting that at all. I think it
was good that I understood better, of the state school board. I wished they had gone more into the legislature, it was nice to see legislature life but it made me want more. And I don't know if I wanted more going in or coming out. I think going in I was like yeah okay whatever, coming out I was like I really wanted more. So, it was an eye-opener I think for something.

For board member LQ, the training experience made her want more governance information after the training weekend was completed.

Board member HC of a K-12 district of approximately 3,600 students also described her learning related to the topic of inclusiveness, focusing on the topic of diversity. HC was “profoundly” impacted by a woman who spoke about diversity during the training. She explained:

There was an African American woman who spoke about diversity. I remember just being very profoundly impacted by conversations that we had, and some of the group conversation we had, and questions afterwards, as far as dealing with differences of your students. Not so much the racial relations in our school district, but we have a lot of children who are profoundly disabled, and protecting that population and dealing with trends coming from this position, even though it's not exactly the same on point, but just trying to understand the needs of different students of different backgrounds, and the challenges that each face.

Board members are responsible for providing a thorough and efficient education for all the students in their districts. Hearing the perspective of another participant of the training taught HC about the topic of diversity, understanding the needs of different students from different backgrounds, and the challenges that the students face. HC describes the interaction with the African American woman as very impactful and highly educational for her.

Understanding the responsibilities of a school board member is important to performing as an effective governance leader. When asked whether the governance
training changed her thoughts about what the responsibilities entailed, board member MW responded, “I think it deepened my understanding of the importance.” The training also provoked board member BC’s thinking about the functioning of his board after hearing from other new board members about how their boards were operating. He explained, “When we went through that weekend down in Princeton, there were a lot of board members who were very happy with their district. And the board experience is what I thought it was going to be, but I was thinking about our board.” Connected to the skills learned at the training is the second theme that emerged in topic 2, what behaviors board members should and should not do.

**Board Behaviors – What Board Members Should and Should Not Do**

Board members mentioned learning about behaviors that they should and should not do as school board members at the governance training. The governance training curriculum provided board members with specific examples of board members’ responsibilities and the actions associated with their responsibilities. In addition, in their interviews, board members discussed examples of how they should not behave as school board members.

**Board Behaviors and Board Responsibilities**

Board behaviors were discussed by the interview participants as behaviors that they should and should not do as governance leaders. For example, HC, a board member of a K-12 district of 3,600 students, discussed that she learned that it is not the board’s responsibility to manage the district employees—except for the superintendent. She
discussed how she learned about the importance of a board and district goals and the vision of the district at the training, and that one should not lead based on their personal agendas. She learned that it is not the school board members’ position to run the schools but, rather, it is their responsibility to ensure that the district is properly managed. HC also learned that it is important for the board to be a united front. She explained:

We have a responsibility to promote the goals and the vision of the district and it's not about personal agendas. Having to remember that it's the superintendent who's our only employee and not anybody else. We are the shareholders of a Fortune 500 company. We are not the management of the various departments, so ours is for a general overview and not decided the copy paper, the toilet paper, the janitorial staff, etc. That we have to be united, be a united front, that nobody except for the board president can be the voice of the board, and that we have to be discreet.

HC described that she learned at the training that the superintendent is actually the board’s only employee. She learned that, as board members, they are not the management and that board members should oversee the district and not be involved in the minutiae of the running of the district. She compared board members to shareholders of a Fortune 500 company. HC learned that the board president should be the voice of a board and that boards should respect confidentiality issues within their governance.

JH, a board member of a small K-12 district of approximately 950 students, described what he learned from the governance training by succinctly stating, “Just as an analogy of what you can and can't do, sometimes other board members don't have a clear understanding too.” Similarly, another board member stated that her perceptions of the board role changed because “it changed regarding the dos and the don’ts. Very specific
don’ts. Like don't have an email conversation with the whole board because that constitutes a meeting.”

Learning about Board Member Behaviors

While other board members mentioned many skills that they learned from the governance training. AB, a board member of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students, mentioned the many topics she learned and described that she learned “so much” related to committee structures, education, and finance. AB also mentioned how board members should not be involved in the day-to-day operations because it is the superintendent’s responsibility. She stated the following about her thoughts of the daily management of a school district:

How the administration, that school board members aren't really supposed to be involved in all the day-to-day administration in school, you know? You hire a great superintendent. So, all that. There was a lot that I learned about that.

AB described an important point of learning for her about the behaviors of school board members. She explained that she learned a lot about how board members should hire a capable superintendent to run and district and to refrain from micromanaging.

New school board member MD, of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students, learned about things she didn’t think she was allowed to do from the governance training. In addition, she learned about the qualities of a healthy school. MD explained:

I learned that as a board member, you can kind of do your own research and present a program to your board, whereas perhaps before that, I didn't think that that was in my purview to do. I learned, what else did I learn? Again, what I was talking about before in terms of what are some indicators of healthy school, I learned about those, and let's see ... There were a bazillion things I learned, so
I'm trying to say the most important. I felt like we could kind of talk through some questions folks had, and again, there was one session about setting goals, I thought that was really interesting.

Researching and presenting programs to her board was something MD was unsure about until she attended the training. She also described learning about the indicators of a healthy school. Talking through questions that were asked by the new school board members was a point of learning for MD. She also found the goalsetting session to be interesting.

MW, a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students and an experienced parochial educator, also mentioned the transition from running for the board as a candidate to becoming a board member and part of a group of school board members. She discussed:

I learned number one that there's a difference between you're running for the position, and then once you've been elected then you're part of a group, and that you may not agree with a decision. But this is what I think I learned, that it's important that we, in the public's eye, that even if I don't agree with it that I have to support the decision of the Board so that we looked unified, that was one of the things I learned.

Learning about what she should do when working with other school board members as a group was a top skill that MW learned from the training. She learned that, in public, it is important that the board is perceived as a group that works and supports one another.

Board members begin as individuals running for a seat, but then need to transition to working as a team. The third theme of topic 2 about what board members learned from the training, focuses on what the new board members learned from the other participants who attended the training.
Learning from Other Participants

Learning from other participants is a theme within the data about what the board members they described they learned at the training. This theme focuses on the descriptions of how new school board members perceived they learned from the other people at the Governance 1 weekend training. The interview data excerpts include descriptions of what interviewees perceived they learned about other districts from participants, what they learned from the New Jersey School Boards Association, and what they learned from the small group leaders (experienced board of education members) and the NJSBA staff facilitators. Board members mentioned the ways in which they learned from the other training participants and their session leaders during the weekend training sessions hosted by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Board member ND of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students, discussed how he learned from his exposure to the other board members through the information they shared about their board experiences. The opportunities for board members to participate in discussions with other board members were provided formally and informally during the weekend. Formally, participants participated in small group conversations about governance topics. Informally, the participants interacted in discussions during meals and with people during the breaks between sessions. Learning that there were dysfunctional and functional boards, provided him with perspective about what he appreciated about his own reality as a school board member. He described what he learned in the small group sessions and from other school board member in the following way:
Well, the exposure to other Boards was phenomenal. There was the fact that the small group sessions really gave me exposure to what some of the other Boards were doing and some of the experiences that other people were having. All the different trainings that we went through, I still have my books and if I pulled them out I could jog my memory about which topics I thought were quite interesting. But when we broke into small group sessions and we all talked them out, and I realized that there are some incredibly dysfunctional Boards out there, some very high functioning Boards. And some of them, I said to the Board members, what you're being asked for I would never do. I would never go to four committee meetings a month and two School Board meetings, and still have people knocking on my door every week. I don't know what drives you to be willing to be in that position.

Many of the board members mentioned how the exposure to other board members at the training positively impacted them, and ND was no exception. ND believed that learning from the other training participants was, in his words “phenomenal.” ND’s interaction with the other new school board members was helpful because it exposed him to the best practices of school board governance, as well as dysfunctional governance school board behaviors.

Governance experiences shared by other board members at the training were helpful to new school board member LG of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students. She mentioned how she learned from stories that were told by other people at the training. LG stated:

I learned about the format of the meeting, I learned about if how boards are organized and basically, there was a lot of talk of people sharing stories and examples of things that they had experienced. I guess it was a lot of real-life a process of stuff like that.

LG also described that she learned about how boards are organized. When the other board members shared their stories and their experiences, it helped LG to learn about the basics of school board governance.
Board member LQ discussed what she learned about functional and dysfunctional boards from the other board members attending the training. After meeting other new school board members and listening to their stories about their boards, she realized that dysfunctional boards experience much more conflict, which takes up time. She explained:

I think the biggest thing I learned there was dysfunction of so many, and I didn't appreciate ours as much until I got there. I mean my biggest complaint is like I feel like there's not enough to do, and I get that everybody's so dysfunctional, like okay wait, ours works that's why we're not . . . because of all this . . . we don't have the drama and that makes it so much more efficient because we are efficient. And I think that was a big thing I learned.

She realized that sometimes, when she feels like there is not a lot to do as a board member, that it may be because she is part of a board that is functional, not dysfunctional. She learned about the differences just by listening to the governance experiences of the other new school board members at the training.

On the opposite end, TB, a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students, learned from the training that she was part of a dysfunctional board. She said:

I learned that we are considered a hostile board and I think that through the governance training I learned to try to be more diplomatic. And how to go about being diplomatic the best I can. But, I don't know in this situation, fighting certain political forces that I just don't have any control over.

Learning from the New Jersey School Boards Association

Board member SP of a PK-8 district of approximately 5000 students mentioned the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) as a major resource that she could count on to assist her with her school board responsibilities. She stated the following about how she learned the NJSBA could support board members:
One main takeaway I got was if you have a question about anything contact NJSBA because it's better to get an answer then trying to figure out on your own and doing something improper. So, I have used that a lot. I have emailed, I have called whenever I had a question about even the first thing because I do not want to have even the appearance of. So that was my big takeaway. I like the structure of the Jersey School Board Association, I think they're doing a really good job.

SP, a board member and an experienced educator with a doctorate degree, described how learning that the New Jersey School Board Association can be an excellent resource for board members was a main topic she learned from the training. She explained that she utilizes NJSBA as a resource by emailing or calling if she has questions and needs information. SP thinks that NJSBA is doing a good job as a support to board members.

**Group Leaders, Participants, and NJSBA Staff Facilitators**

Interview participants mentioned what they learned from their small group leaders and the NJSBA staff facilitators during the training. HC, a board member of a K-12 of approximately 3,600 students, mentioned what she learned from the other participants from the training. She described that she made connections with her facilitator and a particular school board member participant. HC explained that she continues to utilize the people that she met at the training as resources. She described:

Oh yeah. I actually still keep in touch with a woman, who, ironically, is on facilitator's board of education. We still keep in touch. In fact, the young woman who created the Facebook group, we sometimes go back and forth in our cohort about different things that are done within the district and if anybody's had experience with something.

A Facebook group was created for the participants of the weekend training. It was an idea of one of the training participants as a way to continue their cohort connections and as a way to support one another in their governance work. HC described that she continues to
connect with the people of the training, which serves as an extension of learning that resulted from the training experience.

BK of a PK-8 school district of approximately 275 students credited a training group leader as teaching her the most important piece of information that she learned at the training. BK quoted the group leader’s message by stating:

I will tell you, the one most important piece of information that I learned in the entire weekend came from a small group leader who said, and I'm going to try and say it the way she said it, "Your job is not to run the school well, your job is to make sure the school is well run."

Board members repeatedly mentioned the small group training experiences and group leaders as being helpful to their governance learning. BK remembered one of her group leader’s comments that resonated with her about her responsibilities as a board member. She described this piece of information as being one of the most important things she learned the entire weekend.

Conversing with the facilitators and the participants during the training was eye-opening for new school board member LG of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students. Learning from the other people about the dynamics of their experiences on their boards was a big part of the training as she described it:

I had gotten a full little snapshot of what the board was so far to me, and I feel like yes, talking to people from other districts and even getting the more senior members, the people who are running the workshops, getting their feedback on things and them telling you about their districts or certain things that they had experienced, really was eye-opening. Because through those talks and conversations you learn that every district has a very different dynamic but that some things, you can definitely see where, kind of just oh, like, the way it is, quote on quote. And that's not really the way it should be.
LG explained about the learning that stemmed from her interactions with the other board member participants and the facilitators of the training. By engaging with the other people during the weekend, she learned about the diverse dynamics of different boards which were quite “eye-opening” to her.

Another board member, TB of a PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students and a school administrator in another district, discussed how she learned in the small group sessions from the training facilitators and the other board members. TB explained:

I really liked the mock board meetings that we will have. I think that they were really helpful. To see in your groups, you're governing groups. And you heard, you practiced working as a board and that was helpful. It was also helpful hearing what other people, their experiences were, where they were living and representing. And then, the people that were overseeing us, I guess, the trainers, they were able to get us insight when we went off track. And, I am to practice things. I think that was why those scenarios that we ran through, really worked for me personally.

TB learned from the mock board meetings that were conducted by the facilitators to show the new school board members both appropriate and inappropriate governance behaviors. TB described the small group experiences as helpful because she heard from the other new school board members about their experiences, where they were from, and the communities that they were serving as board members. New school board members described that the governance training was impactful which is outlined in 3 themes of data in the topic 3 section.

**Topic 3 - Impact of Training**

When interviewed, new school board of education members noted the impact of the governance training on their practices as board members after the training. The board
members’ perceptions of how their work was impacted were varied. Within the interview data, themes emerged about how the board members thought the training impacted their governance skills application and experiences. The following were three of the themes in the data:

- School board members indicated that the networking experiences with the other participants at and after the new school board member governance training were valuable.

- School board members indicated that they had more confidence in themselves and in the New Jersey School Board Association because of the training and their thoughts about governance topics were different.

- School board members said that they knew more about what to do as school board member because of what they learned at the training.

**Networking Experiences With Other Participants**

The new school board training in February of 2018 included approximately one hundred new school board members from all over the state. They all gathered in the same location to attend the weekend training. Most of the participants had never met one another before until convening for the training. Yet, the one thing that they all had in common was that they were all new school board members in the state of New Jersey. In interviews, school board members indicated that they benefited from meeting and networking with the other school board members at the governance training. TB of a PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students described how meeting the other board members helped her with her governance work and that they continued to help one another after the training weekend. She explained:

Oh, yeah. Definitely. Definitely. Definitely. And we still keep up with one another, people from our group. We would message each other and ask each
other questions and you know, kind of, what would you do and how is this situation? So, that has been helpful to keep up with the people that were in the training session.

TB explained that connecting with the other school board training participants was beneficial during the training and still remains helpful to her governance work. She described that the training participants communicate with one another to message and ask one another questions related to situations within their governance work. This kind of informational support from the other participants TB perceives as impactful to her governance work.

New board member BC of a PK-8 district of approximately 490 students in a GH district factor group also connected the impact of the training to his interactions with the other board members during the training. BC connected his takeaway training experiences with what he learned from the experiences of the other participants. He thought it was interesting that some board members could not relate to his governance experiences, while others could. BC stated:

You know, it was interesting. I'm kind of a social animal, so I took advantage of being around all those different people to ask them about their experiences. And it was interesting to hear people that couldn't relate to some of the things that I was complaining about with our district. People who say, "Hey, I love our superintendent. Our superintendent works great with the board. I'm not really there to change anything. I just ran, because I wanted to contribute." I said, "Wow, you're so lucky you can look at it that way." But then other people who heard me saying things, said, "Yeah, our district has the same problems. We don't ... the community never knows what's going on, the people feel resentful towards the superintendent because the superintendent thinks he's the only one that matters, what happens in our schools..."

BC took advantage of being around other board of education members by conversing with them about their governance experiences. He describes how it was interesting to
hear the different experiences from other new board members that were not related to his concerns and experiences. BC explained that he was able to share some of his dissatisfaction about some of the things occurring in his district with other participants. As a result of the interactions he said, “So people that heard me, we kind of bonded and I'm in touch with a lot of them, still.” He explained that it was helpful to hear people that thought like him. BC continued to explain:

So that reinforcement that I wasn't crazy, that there were other people who felt the same way was a very positive experience. I came back from that weekend feeling very much validated and ready to continue acting on things that I knew mattered, even though it was going to be difficult for the board to swallow. It was going to create . . . I knew I was going into a fight, basically, that it was going to be unpleasant. But I felt validated, so I felt ready to move forward.

BC felt a form of validation after meeting other new board members who had similar experiences and felt the same way that he does about certain issues. The interactions empowered BC to continue addressing issues that mattered to him, even though it may be difficult for his fellow board colleagues to understand. The validation made him feel confident to move forward with his governance work.

The second theme of the data in topic 3, was that the school board members indicated that they had more confidence in themselves and in the New Jersey School Board Association because of the training and their thoughts about governance topics were different.

**More Confidence About Their Knowledge and Application of Governance Skills**

School board members mentioned that they thought that they had more confidence in their governance skills and application of skills after attending the training.
They believed that the increase in confidence helped them with their school board
governance work. When asked about how the governance training helped her, a board
member of a PK-8 district of approximately 275 students, BK described how her
confidence increased and how the governance training helped her in her position as a
school board member. She explained:

Oh absolutely. Absolutely. First of all, it gave me more confidence. To know
what my role was, and before that I did not feel like I knew what my role was. I
did not feel like I was certain of, what exactly, I was supposed to be doing. The
Governance Training, absolutely, set me in the direction of what a good board
member should be, and what those limits are, and what those lines are. Really,
you can't screw it up, because somebody will stop you first.

BK related her increased confidence to how her knowledge grew from the training,
particularly knowing about her governance role responsibilities. She describes how, at
first, she felt like she did not know what she was doing. BK credits what the training
taught her about how a good board member should be and what the limits are for her
governance role.

New school board member EJ of a K-12 district of approximately 4,500 students
described how attending the training made her feel stronger about questioning things. She
utilized her experiences and knowledge of the training to question and to also provide a
rationale for questioning what behaviors were occurring within her board. Her
governance knowledge gave her power to state the truth about governance work and to
follow what she learned in the training. SP described how she felt stronger:

It helped me to actually make me stronger to just question things without being
afraid of someone saying, "Ericka, that's ridiculous, you just have to follow
protocol." And it's not right. And I'm like, "No, in the governance training it said
that if we don't feel," whatever it is, whatever I'm questioning, I just quote
governance, and then they just back off. Because it's the truth. They can't go against it. So that's one thing that definitely has helped me with that, because I actually carry the governance book that they gave me that Princeton weekend in my laptop bag.

EJ also explained that she was more confident because of the training and less hesitant to question things about the governance decisions occurring in her district. Her governance knowledge empowered her to provide a rationale for her questions and decisions. She carries the governance training binder to utilize as a resource and serve as a reminder of the information she learned at the training.

When asked about how the governance training impacted her position as a board member, MD of a PK-12 district of over 15,000 students mentioned her confidence in the New Jersey School Boards Association as an excellent resource for school board members. MD described the New Jersey School Boards Association as an association that offers research-based information to support school board members in their governance work. She described her thoughts by stating:

I think I became very confident in that the school board association is a fantastic resource for board members, not only in here kind of understanding my role as a board member, but also in that they actively research best practices and share that with school districts. And I feel that that is something that I can depend on when I'm advocating for something at the board level.

MD stated that the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) is a fantastic resource. She explained that when she is advocating for something within her governance work, she can utilize NJSBA as a resource to provide her with research-based information and best practices.
The training also changed the thoughts of school board members about their governance work. The board members reported that before the training their perceptions were different than after the training, in regard to certain topics. Board member MD was motivated to run for the board due to her interest in curriculum, and stated that her thoughts about the curriculum changed because of the training. She stated, “I learned that there are certain questions you ask, like how do you we evaluate curriculum . . . I talked about measuring climate and culture, and that could be part of curriculum as well.” MD described her thoughts as changing as a result of the training, and now she knows what questions to ask in regard to curriculum.

**Board Members Know More About What To Do In Governance**

The topics included during the weekend governance training are included within the governance training curriculum. The topics in the curriculum are topics that relate to important knowledge that every board member should know. New school board members with no prior experience as board members begin with limited knowledge at best about what their roles as board members entail. School board members described that they knew more about what to do as board members after attending the board training. LG, a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 1,200 students DFG (GH) described:

I think it's helped me become more generally informed about policy and the laws and the process of all those school board members because that's still something that can be confusing, so just to understand, what your job truly is and what it's not, I think that that was very important for me because it's everything.

During the training, board member LQ of a K-8 district of 3,200 students DFG (I), was reminded of how it important it is that a board knows how to function. She described the
importance of a board functioning as a team as her takeaway. She explained that trust between board members is important and that even if an idea is something that you do not want to accept, it is important to function as a whole board. She explained:

Where you see some of these people without the trust, you're just fighting yourself and destroying your district cause you're not working. And that was the big takeaway, it was a reminder that if we're not all working together, every idea may not be perfect, every idea may not be what I would want, but if it makes the board more functional, you have to know when. And that was really good take a way for me.

In relation to working with the other board members, the issue of trust was mentioned in another interview. Board member and also an educator in another district LQ’s take away was the importance of trusting the superintendent, and the training helped her realize the board benefits of trusting the superintendent in her board work. She thought that the governance training helped her realize that trust is important in governance. LQ described her thoughts in the following way:

I think that it really sets new board members up, mind you, you're not the minutia, you're the, this is what we'd like, somebody else has to make sure it meets legal and then be told the criteria, you're just the idea person and you have to remember, and that happens. Nice because we trust our superintendent and I see other boards that didn't and I think the big takeaway for me was, if I trust them, I have to trust them.

Another board member SP in a PK-8 school district of approximately 5,000 DFG (CD), discussed how the governance training helped her become more familiar with the meeting protocol and how to ask questions during meetings. The training helped her realize that asking the superintendent questions prior to the meeting, in lieu of asking the questions during the meetings, influences what she believed people may have thought of her. SP described:
It helped me because now instead of prolonging the meetings with asking my question which sometimes I think they thought I was coming off like I was being antagonistic but I really just wanted to know the answer to the question. I just confirm with the superintendent beforehand, and I just let her know my concerns. And it's pretty easy.

The impact of the New Jersey School Boards Association governance training for new school board members was described by the governance training participants interviewed as being beneficial in a variety of ways. Topics such as superintendent relationships, confidence, trust, board member relations, governance knowledge, board meetings, and networking opportunities were all mentioned by board members as topics that they learned about at the governance training. The general consensus by the interviewees, as evidenced by the interview data, was that the governance training was and continues to be impactful for the new school board members and their boards.

New school board members described whether they perceived the training as influential to their effectiveness as governance leaders. The data related to effectiveness is organized into 3 themes and is described in the topic 4 section.

**Topic 4 - Effectiveness**

Board members discussed in interviews whether or not they thought the governance training impacted their effectiveness as board of education members. The interview participants discussed specifically how what they learned at the training influenced their behaviors and their practices as board members. The themes that emerged from the data when the board members were asked: do you think attending the mandated training is related to your effectiveness as a board member? are as follows:
• Board members indicated that the governance training did provide them with governance knowledge that the board members apply in their practices.

• Board members indicated that the training provided the board members with knowledge that made them believe they could be effective school board members while applying their skills.

• Board members indicated the implications if they had not attended the training.

**Application of Governance Knowledge**

Overall, the board members reported that the governance training did provide them with governance knowledge that they then applied in their practices. When asked about the training’s effectiveness, interviewee ND, a finance executive in a top financial firm and a school board member in a PK-12 large school district was absolute in his response. He stated:

> It absolutely is. I would have no idea what I was doing if I, again, there's a little honeymoon period in those first couple of months, but being able to understand my role, and I know I keep going back to that, but to me that's the most important thing. Being able to understand what my role is and how to perform in that role is directly related to what I learned in governance. They don't really teach you that when you win the election.

ND described that, without the governance training, he would have a lack of understanding about his role and what he was supposed to be doing as a board member. He stated that understanding the role is the most important thing about being a board member. In addition, he explained that winning the election did not mean he possessed the knowledge about what the governance role entails and how to effectively perform in the role.
Online vs. Face-to-face

When asked about the training’s effectiveness, TA, a school board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,000 students, compared her experience of the weekend training to other new school board members who completed the governance training online. She explained:

Yeah. I think I got a lot more out of the weekend training than I would have online, and it really was the face to face. It was the small group breakout questions that I actually learned more from and was able to, in the small group, ask questions directly related to me and get those questions answered.

TA stated that when she was in the small group sessions during the training, she was able to ask questions that were directly connected to what she wanted to know. Participating in a smaller group of people, provided her with more opportunities to engage with the group leader and the other new board members in her small group. She commented that the face-to-face interactions contributed to the volume of information that she learned.

Total immersion within the weekend training experiences was a reason why board member AB, an attorney and a school board member of a K–8 district of approximately 1,300 students, thought that the training impacted her effectiveness. AB also compared her face-to-face training with that of board members she knows who completed the online training. She said that the online training participants would contact her for training information to utilize within their governance practices and decisions. She also discussed the value of the contacts she made at the training and described how their knowledge and experiences support her governance practices. She explained:

That was amazing. I can't tell you, there are other board members that I know, not just in my town but in others that took the online training, and there are certainly things that they'll call me about and be like, "Did you learn about
that?" and "Can you refresh my memory?" and "Can you . . .?" And even just the materials that we received, it was . . . And the contacts that I have now. It was, nothing beat it. It was phenomenal. I really wish every board member would be required to do that, because the information that you gain, and the contacts, and the insight to things that other board members are going through. You know what's happening in your school, but to hear other things come up that other board members either are going through or think that they might have to address at some point. That's invaluable.

AB valued the experience of attending a weekend training event because it allowed her to be totally immersed in the training sessions and to make contacts with the other participants attending the training. New board members who have completed the training online sometimes go to AB as a resource for governance skills information. She believes that every board member should be required to attend the training to learn knowledge, make connections with other board members, and gain insights from other board members about governance work in their districts.

*Enlightenment of Knowledge*

MW, an educator in another school and a board member of a PK-12 school district of approximately 16,000 students, mentioned the importance of the training and how it enlightened her about what she needed to know. She explained that board members need to be informed so that they may provide oversight and, if they did not receive the training, they would not be effective. She explained:

I think it's very, very important, because otherwise you're not going to be effective in that. You're just going to be again, not that, you know you hire the superintendent to do the job, but you've promised to be an oversight. And you need to understand everything. I think, had I not attended that weekend, I actually wouldn't have had the frustration that I have, because I was so enlightened by the process.
The enlightenment of knowledge is something that MW connected to by attending the governance training. She credits the training for teaching her to understand the governance skills required to lead effectively. MW also described feeling frustrated because she learned about how school board governance should be from the training, and has not always observed governance best practices in her board.

**Impact of the Weekend**

The governance training is particularly important for school board members with no experience in the field of education. TB, a school administrator who serves professionally in one district and a school board member in a PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students, spoke about how important the governance training was—particularly for board members without any professional experience in education. She explained, in detail, how the governance training impacted board member effectiveness:

Yes. I think that it should be mandated because I think that a lot of people run for the office and they don't know what it entails because they don't know the rules. And there are a lot of rules that they have to be careful not stepping in quicksand and sinking. And I think that the laymen that decide to be on the Board of Education need to know how to navigate public education and how to navigate being in that position. And I don't think that the regular laymen know how to do that. I think that for someone in education, it is not that difficult for us because we are so used to that mold. We already speak the language. You know. But I think that as a new board person, you need to know what HIPPA means. You need to know what a QSAC is. You need to know what PERC is. Like, you need to know what all the crazy, silly acronyms are so that when you are sitting at a board meeting, you can be . . . you can expedite the board meeting by not having to explain what everything is.

TB believes that board members without any professional experience in the field of education need to not only learn how to be board of education members, they also need to learn how to navigate public education. She contended that educators who become board
members have a better understanding of the mold of public education and already know how to speak the language so that their learning curve is not as high as it is for board members who have never worked in the field of education. The second theme of the data describes how the knowledge the board members learned from the training, strengthened their belief that they could do the work of a board leader. The data is described in the next section.

Knowledge from the Training Made the Board Members Believe They Could Be Effective

Believing that they could do the governance work was described as important by the new school board members. They believed that the knowledge they learned from the training, provided them with a belief that they were capable of performing their governance duties.

Board member LG, a governance leader of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students, believed that the training was extremely valuable. She explained that part of the value of the governance experience was to be present and part of the discussions. LG contended that even if attendees were not putting in a lot of effort during the training, they would still reap benefits in some way. She explained:

Yes, because I think that even if you don't really care to try that by default, being present in these discussions and these seminars, it has to help in some way. You're going to get something out of it, even if you're not trying. I think that is important because again, anybody needs to be doing professional development so the people that have been doing it for years and years, I feel like sometimes the lines can get blurred because you start circling into the way that we do things that may not be the way you're supposed to do things and so they think it's a nice refresher.
LG described professional development as important not only for new board members, but also for experienced board members. She believes that sometimes board behaviors are indicative of the way that they have always have behaved rather than best practices for governance. LG thinks it is important that everyone should participate in professional development experiences.

The second theme within the data relates to how the training made new school board members believe that they could apply their skills and lead effectively. New school board members explained that the knowledge that they learned from the training provided them with confidence to lead and, in turn, positively impacted their ability to apply what they learned from the training.

Confidence and Belief As Board Members

Board member LiQ, a former student of her governing PK-12 district of approximately 1,500 students, discussed how what she learned at the training gave her confidence. Having knowledge about governance before sitting down with others to discuss board member responsibilities provided her with a sense of empowerment as a new board member. She explained:

It's definitely made me more confident sitting in my chair, what I was able to do because they took me in when I won and I did a few sit downs with them and I got to ask questions and stuff like that so I was knowledgeable about certain things. But I think after going to the governance weekend it made me more comfortable sitting in the chair because I not only . . . because they just told me, the governance thing explained it to me. So, now not only did I know about it but I knew why or the how to because, it was the back story of it. So, it was really nice to know the before, the step one instead of just knowing.
LiQ described how the governance training not only provided her with knowledge but also explained why board members are supposed to govern the way they are taught in the governance training. Knowing the ‘back story’ of why board members are taught to govern in certain ways made LiQ more comfortable and more confident sitting in her school board chair.

BC, a school board member of a K-8 district of approximately 490 students, related his thoughts about the training connected to his effectiveness as a school board member. He described how the interactions with like-minded board members at the training made him feel more comfortable about doing what needed to be done in his governance district. He stated, “And it also put me in touch, by being there all weekend, it put me in touch with like-minded people that have augmented my own initiative and my own courage, like I said before, validating it, what I felt needed to be done so that I'd be a little more comfortable going out there and doing it.”

Interacting with other new school board members at the training, is a big piece of the governance training weekend experience. BC described the importance of his interactions with the other school board members at the training to his initiative, courage, and validation as to what needed to be accomplished in his district.

*Foundation*

Board member EJ of a K-12 district of approximately 4,500 students described the training as a foundation for skills. She believed that school board members may have certain ideas about what they are getting into, but the knowledge that was learned at the
training provided the real foundation of knowledge required for effective governance. EJ explained what she thought was the impact of her experiences in the training:

Absolutely. I think that we have an idea of what we're getting into, but we really need that foundation there. And that weekend was definitely a foundation. Me, my ideas are like a window to the house, a wall in the house, or my perception throughout the years could be here and there. But that governance training that weekend is really the foundation, because it makes you go, "Oh, yeah. That makes sense." Some of the issues that arose in the group setting were so amazing. We had one trustee in my group, he was 18. And he was the first high school student who was elected on the board. But it made me realize, everybody's perspective made me realize other things. So that's what I think meeting all of these board members. Because your brain, like they say, one person is a world. And meeting all of these worlds together, it was so important to actually have that connection with other communities that you take for granted, or you didn't know about that go on in your town.

EJ likened her thoughts about the training to the structure of a house. She explained that her ideas were the walls or windows of a house because her ideas, as one person, could fluctuate here or there. She described the governance training as the foundation because what she learned at the training made everything make more sense to her. EJ also mentioned what she learned from the participants in her small group discussions. Hearing the perspectives of other new school board members connected her with other communities and educated her about the governance work in other boards.

Board member LiQ, a former student in the district where she is a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 1,500 students, remarked that the governance training provided board members with a great start so that they would believe they could lead. She described the training as an overview of all board governance topics and skills. When asked if the training had an impact on effectiveness, she stated, “Yeah, I think it's definitely . . . gets your feet walking in the water because you get an idea of everything
and I think it just gets your feet on fire for everything so, it gives you a positive start to everything.” LiQ believed that the training provided her with a comprehensive overview of everything she needed to know as a board member. She considered the training to be a positive start because the training included all the skills required to function as an effective board member. In the interview data, thoughts were described by the new board members about the implications of not participating in the training. In the third theme, the interviewees describe their perceptions of the implications.

**Without the Training – Implications Of Not Having The Training**

Board members discussed the implications of not attending the weekend governance training. Participants mentioned implications such as being unsure where they would have learned the information without the training and estimated that it would have taken them much longer to learn the information if they had to learn it in another way. Board members also described a lack of training within their governance districts.

**Lack of Training**

Board member MD of a PK-12 district of approximate 16,100 students described the lack of onboard training in her school district. She said, “There is no formal even onboarding process in our district, so that definitely gave me an orientation, a fantastic orientation to my role as a board member and what that looks like.” Most districts do not offer formal training to school board members. In some cases, they learn their governance skills from their fellow school board colleagues and the superintendent.
the case of the district where MD is a board member, she described no formal onboarding when she transitioned into her governance role.

School board member SP has a doctoral degree in education and is a school board member of a PK-8 district of approximately 5,000 students. She discussed her thoughts about what would have happened if she had not completed the training. She explained that without the New Jersey School Boards Association, she would not have known where to find resources and gain knowledge about school board governance. She explained:

I believe if I had not had the training, I would be two years behind the eight ball. I would've floundered, I would've been embarrassed because I just didn't know, and didn't know what I didn't know. I wouldn't have known, and I'm very resourceful, I might not have known where to go to get the information. I might not have known that the School Board Association was going be there for me. I might not have known about, well I definitely wouldn't have known, about how to register for the different NJSBA classes and workshops. Of how that system works. And I just wouldn't have known about the systematic part of it. And that would have been a big problem, because I'd have been teaching myself and some things you just can't teach yourself.

SP explained the importance of the New Jersey School Boards Association as a resource and the information they provide as being very important to the ability to lead in her governance position. She mentioned the importance of not only what she knows, but also knowing what she does not know. SP also discussed needing to know the systematic part of how governance works and that learning about the system is not something you can teach yourself.
The Issue of Time

Board member LQ, an educator and a board member of a PK-8 district of approximately 3,200 students, explained that the training was effective and took less time compared to if she had to learn the information another way. LQ explained, “But yeah it definitely, it helped me understand a lot of things that would have taken a lot of board time for someone to sit down and explain it all to you.” LQ agreed that the training was effective for learning her role as a board member. She believed that, without the training, it would have required a significant amount of board time for someone from her district to explain everything that she learned at the training.

Board member BK, a school board member of a PK-8 district of approximately 275 students, explained her thoughts as they pertain to her own effectiveness. She described that the training, particularly the small group experience, is related to her effectiveness as a school board member. She also mentioned the amount of time that, without the training, would be required to learn the information from the training in another way. She stated, “I can't stress enough how having that weekend experience, having the small group experience was ... I will tell you how effective I feel as a board member right now, without that training, I would say would have taken me three to four years to get to.” BK learned so much from the training that she thought it would take three to four years to get to the information without the training.

In summary, the themes and subthemes within the data did indicate that the interviewees believed that the governance training was connected to their effectiveness as board members. The new board members discussed how the governance training did
provide them with knowledge that they apply in their practices, that the training made them believe they could be effective board members when applying the skills in their practices, and they discussed the implications if they had not attended the training. Board members also explained that their interactions with the new school board members at the training provided them with a broader scope of skills and made them more effective. In addition, board members mentioned that their experiences in their small groups made them more knowledgeable and allowed them to ask more specific questions pertaining to their governance experiences in their districts. The data indicated that, without the training, the board members were unsure about how they would have acquired the knowledge and learned information about school board governance. The participants also mentioned the value of learning at the training about the resources available to support board members.

In topic 5 of the interview data, the new board members described how they apply their learned knowledge in their governance practices. Within the topic 5 application data, 3 themes were evident and are described in the next section.

**Topic 5 - Application of Learned Governance Skills From The Training**

Board members reported that they learned governance skills from the training, and some described the contexts in which the skills were applied. In this section, the research question—How are the governance training participants applying the skills that they learned in their practices?—is addressed and answered. Just learning the governance skills from the training is not sufficient for effective school board governance. What is as equally important is to discover in what ways school board
members are applying the skills to their practices. For board members to be effective, they should be applying the governance skills that were taught to them during the weekend training. The knowledge gained from the training is only valuable if it is utilized. Themes and subthemes were identified within the interview data that were associated with the application of skills. The following themes and subthemes emerged:

Board members indicated what learned governance skills from the training that they apply within certain areas of their school board responsibilities.

- Board members indicated what learned governance skills from the training that they apply within certain areas of their school board responsibilities.
- Board members indicated whether their fellow board colleagues apply the skills they learned from the training.
- Board members indicated how they remember their skills so that they may apply them to their practices.

**Application of Learned Governance Skills**

The first theme identified in the data focused on the learned governance skills from the training that the board members believed that they apply in their governance roles. When board member TA of a PK-12 of a smaller sized school district, was asked. “Do you think all those things that you learned, do you think you applied them consistently?” the board member responded, “Yes, definitely” . . . “Absolutely” . . . “Definitely.” TA was certain that she is applying the skills she learned in the training within her governance work as a school board member. All the board members who were interviewed indicated that, at certain points within their governance work, they apply the skills that they learned from the training.
Board member MW, with parochial education experience and of a large PK-12 district, responded that she applies the skills she learned. However, as a new board member she was applying them quietly. She explained, “Yes, I do. I try. I think I've been quieter because I wanted to give myself, although, it may be the waste of a year, but because the public school is still so foreign to me in terms of I spent 20 years in Catholic education in my area where I live. So, I'm sitting back, learning and listening.” MW is an experienced educator but considered public school as a foreign system, because the twenty years she was in education was in Catholic education. She explained that she tries to apply her skills; however, because she is new she has been a quieter school board member. MW explained that she is purposely sitting back so that she may learn and listen, to become more familiar with public school education.

ND, a board member of a PK-12 district of 10,100 students and a senior manager of a financial firm, agreed that he does apply the skills that he learned from the training in his governance practices. When asked for examples of how he applies his skills, he responded:

Some simple things like learning how to work with our board attorney in their role to get questions answered. What I would call the basic blocking and tackling, like how to make a motion, how to put things on the agenda. Even little things like how not to copy everybody on an email when you're emailing the board president. All of those things were covered in the governance training and they all matter. I put those into practice almost every week.

ND said that he learned how to work with his board attorney at the training, which is a skill he applies in his governance skills when deciding how to get questions answered from the attorney. He learned how to make a motion at a meeting and how to put items
on board meeting agendas and has applied this to his practice. In addition, he learned email procedures and applies this skill when emailing the board president. He learned not to copy the other board members when emailing the president in an email communication. He believes that what he learned in the governance training is important, and he applies the skills almost weekly.

**Ethics**

Board members mentioned that they encountered ethical considerations and topics during the training, which they applied to their governance work. Knowing about what board members should and should not do, ethically, is extremely important for their governance work. In addition, learning about the resources that are available to find answers about ethical dilemmas was also valuable.

An experienced educator with a doctorate degree, board member SP discussed how the governance skills she learned influenced a decision she made related to ethics and to her public and private identities as a school board member. She explained that she was invited to sit on a panel and, before responding, she checked with the New Jersey School Boards Association. SP knew to be thoughtful about considering her participation on the panel because of the knowledge she learned at the training. She explained:

And so, I personally liked the idea, but I needed to get an advisory, so I contacted the School Board Association and they told me that I could as my private self. So, I'm going to do it but when he was asking it I was inclined to say yes immediately but I held back because the training said just to cover yourself, just to make sure. Because you don't want to get ahead of your feet. I did that, and I told him I liked the idea but I had to check first and make sure that that's something that I'm permitted to do.
In this case, SP described a particular situation in which she applied the skills that she learned. In the training, she was taught that when situations regarding a board member’s private and public identities may intersect, it is important to check to ensure that you are following the board member rules. Before accepting an invitation to participate on a panel, SP checked with the New Jersey School Boards Association just to make sure that it was appropriate.

Retired educator and board member RO, stated during her interview, “I think the biggest help was the ethics part and being aware of potential ethics violations and knowing that I have some place to call because that's the most worrisome part.” Board members frequently face ethical decisions within their governance responsibilities. The topic of ethics is addressed specifically in the training and board members receive ethics training once a year. RO believes that learning about the ethics portion was helpful because she can apply the knowledge she knows about ethics to avoid potential ethics violations.

**Social Skills – Communication**

Board member EJ of a K-12 medium sized district, mentioned that she applies the skills she learned, but mostly the “social skills” that she learned at the training. She stated, “Yes, and mostly social skills. Believe it or not, we all have our field. But the problem is that some people forget that even though you can know everything about your field, it's not what you say, it's how you say it.” EJ believes that what she learned at the training about “social skills”, are the important skills that she applies to her governance practices. She contends that board members may know everything about their respective
professions, but it is not what you say but how you communicate your knowledge to other people.

A board member discussed the timing of the training and how she thought that the participants’ experiences impacted their engagement level at the training. There were two weekend trainings offered by the New Jersey School Boards Association: one in January and one in February. She believed that the February participants were more engaged because they had additional weeks of governance experience compared to the new board members who attended the training in January. She explained:

I went in February. I would suggest people go in February, so you at least have one meeting under your belt. Because, that way you kind of have... One of my other board members who did it in January, and he had not yet... He had come to a couple board meetings, but he hadn't yet sat on the board. I went in February, and we talked about our experiences together, and I know that the February group was a lot more vocal and verbal with their questioning, because they had done a little bit of it already.

The second theme of the data relates to whether the school board member participants perceive that their school board colleagues are applying their governance skills. Board members possess varied training experiences, depending on when they became a board member and how long they have governed.

Interviewees described their perceptions about whether their board colleagues apply their governance skills in their work. The theme 2 data is described in the following section.

**Application of Skills by the Whole Board**

Board members mentioned how the skills they learned from the training were not only applied by them, as individuals, but their entire boards. Related to whether the
interviewees applied the skills that they learned in their training, was also if their board colleagues applied the skills that they learned, at one time, from the governance training. The interviewed board members described mixed perceptions about the application of skills by their board colleagues. Board members indicated that their colleagues do apply their governance skills, but some said that they think their colleagues do not apply their governance skills.

There are implications when a board member is part of a school board where not every member is applying their governance skills. Board member dynamics are very important to understand. HC, a paralegal and a board member of a K-12 district of approximately 3,600 students, discussed her experiences of working as part of a whole board and how she realized after attending the training that there were certain policies that were not being carried out. The knowledge that she gained from the training allowed her to realize that some of her board members were not supportive of every voice of every board member being heard. With her knowledge acquired from the training, HC was able to identify the issue and reach out to a resource for some guidance. She explained the situation in the following way:

It reinforced to me that there are certain policies that were not being carried out by the board, a lot of whom were second and third term individuals, and that there were tools that we could be putting into place, although they have resisted some of them. That we had the right to demand a certain type of conversation, and that was very helpful for me. I actually reached out to my facilitator on two occasions just to get guidance because we were kind of shut down, myself and the two others who had done the training this year, we were shut down saying, "That's not the way we do it." It's like, "No actually, we are. We're supposed to do it." They were not doing it, and we're not serving each
other or the community by standing on old ceremony which is improper.

HC required additional support from her governance training small group facilitator to apply her skills. She perceived that she and her colleagues, who completed the weekend training, were being discouraged by other board members from applying the governance skills that they learned in the training.

Applying Skills in Difficult Times and in Needed Areas

Board members explained the challenges of applying skills in difficult times and in needed areas of their districts. MK, board member of a PK-12 district which is of one of the largest districts in this study, described that because of tumultuous times in her school district, it was difficult for the board members to apply their skills. She said, “It’s not because they don't want to. There's always rumblings on the side, it's just that again, our district went through a difficult time.” MK also mentioned the political tie-in of everything impacting the application of governance skills and how she learned from the governance training that some boards may be more political than others.

TB, a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 5,800 students and a school administrator in another district, described the reason why she thinks that some of her board colleagues do not apply their learned governance skills. TB described:

There's the problem. Some of them have been on there for quite a while and they didn't get that whole weekend training. They just went through something for a day and have completely forgotten it. Okay. So, myself, and another new board member, who was there with me and a member who went the week before me. I would say, "Yeah. We are applying it, but I've heard we've been properly trained." Whereas the other board members did not go through the same training. And so then, it may have been eight, nine years ago and they don't really
remember it. And they also don't go to training so like update themselves.

TB compared the governance training that she received with the training that she believes her board member colleagues received when they first became board members. TB and another new member on her board completed the weekend training recently, whereas her other board colleagues completed a day of governance training a long time ago and since have forgotten the skills that they learned. She explained that some of her board colleagues have served on the board for a significant amount of time. As a result, TB, believes that some of her board member colleagues do not apply the governance skills that they learned.

Some board members who were interviewed mentioned specific areas that board members should focus on to develop their knowledge and apply their skills. Board member MD said that her board colleagues “mostly” apply their learned governance skills. MD stated, “But yeah, mostly, but I definitely feel like there could be some . . . you know, again, with the student achievement, I feel like there could be more improvement in that department.” MD believed that her board member colleagues mostly apply their governance skills. However, she does not think that they apply their skills in every area. She mentioned student achievement as an area that her colleagues could improve in applying their skills.

**Some Board Members Apply Their Skills, Some Do Not**

Within some boards, there is variation when it pertains to whether board members apply their governance skills. Some board members apply their skills consistently, some
board members never apply their skills, while others sporadically apply their governance
skills. BK, a board member of a very small PK-8, described that she was on a board with
colleagues that do apply their learned governance skills and some that do not apply their
skills. She explained:

I think the one that went to the weekend long training does. I have one that I
don't think she does, just by the way she approaches things, I don't think she has
absorbed it. She's in her second year. Well she's actually going into her third
year. So, I think that I've definitely seen over the years the example that of the
use of the governance training. I've also seen people who don't seem to bother to
absorb it or review it or go back to it.

BK described a board member who also attended the weekend training as someone who
does apply her skills. In addition, she believes she has another board member colleague
who does not apply her skills based on the way she approaches some of her governance
responsibilities. BK also described board members who do not even seem to be bothered
to learn the governance nor do they bother to review what they learned when they do not
remember their skills.

AB, an attorney and board member of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300
students, indicated that “some of them do, and some of them do not” when asked if her
board member colleagues apply their learned governance skills. Board member JH of a
K-12 district of approximately 970 students believes that a “majority” of his board
colleagues apply their skills.

EJ of a K-12 district of 4,500 students, thinks her fellow board members apply their skills
“to the best of their abilities.”
ND, a manager of a financial firm and a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 10,100 students, described that he believes some of the board members apply their skills and some do not. He described that he perceives the older, more veteran board members as less consistent in applying their skills. In his words they “drift away.” ND related that the new board members are more cognizant of the application of governance skills. ND described:

I would say that all of them apply to some of them I think that the three of us who just came on are probably more cognizant of them. I think that the older board members or the more veteran board members, should I say, may from time to time drift away. So, but I think that's just life.

ND described the application of skills by board members as being related to the years they have served as board of education members. Overall, he explained that he thinks all his board colleagues apply their skills; however, the new board members apply their skills more frequently than the seasoned board members.

The training participants explained how they utilize resources to remember what they learned at the training as described in theme 3 of topic 5 about how new school board members apply their governance skills.

**How Board Members Remember What They Learned At The Training**

The third theme of topic 5 that emerged within the data was how school board members remember what they learned in the training to apply in their governance practices. In order to remember content from the training, board members rely on resources to assist them in remembering what they learned in the weekend training.
Training participants described the resources they utilize to review the governance skills that they learned at the training and have since forgotten.

*Training Binder*

One important resource that was distributed to every new school board member participant at the weekend governance training was the binder of information provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association. Many of the interviewed board members mentioned that they use the binder as a resource. Board member MD, said, “Well, I like the binder. The binder that we received is very helpful.” She also mentioned calling her New Jersey School Boards Association field representative assigned to her board, considering her to be a helpful resource for when she needs information about governance skills.

Other board members also said they kept the materials they received and utilized them as resources to apply their practices. Board member LiQ of a moderately sized PK-12 district, and a former student of the district, explained how she refers to the binder and slides as resources. LiQ described in detail:

Absolutely, I even have the thing at home, the whole binder, slides and stuff like that, that I have, I still have that at home and once in a while I'll flip through it if I have to remember what to do if I want to start a policy or stuff like that or like all that kinds of stuff so I will definitely will still use it in my day to day if I need it.

LiQ explained that she uses the binder as a resource to remember what to do. She will flip through the binder to find specific information that will assist her in remembering and applying her governance skills.
Board member BK of a PK-8 with a very small size student population of hundreds of students, mentioned how she offered to share the binder materials with her board member colleagues by sharing the training agenda with them. In addition, she mentioned that she utilizes the New Jersey School Boards Association website to review things that she learned at the training. BK described:

Well, I have all my training materials, and what I did was, I made a copy of the agenda for the whole board. I told them, "I'm not going make copies of the whole book. I'll make copies of the agenda for all of you, and if there's anything of interest, here it is. Just let me know and I'll get it to you." And I also use the website for information, the school board association's website.

BK not only uses the binder as a resource, but also offered to share the information with her board colleagues as well. Providing the agenda for the whole board allowed the board members who did not attend the training to see the main governance training topics, and it provided them with an additional resource to inform their practices.

ND of a PK-12 district, described how he also utilizes the binder to find school board governance information. He reported that he does not often use the website for information. ND explained, “I generally just go to the binder and look things up. I don't go to the website very often, because if I can't find it in the binder, I call or text our board president and ask.” ND also relies on his board of education president to answer questions and provide information.

*Accessing the New Jersey School Boards Association for Assistance*

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) was specifically mentioned by interviewees as an organization that supports the new school board members. A board member talked about that, in addition to the binder, she may also call the New Jersey
School Boards Association for information. The board member said, “You go to the notebook and you can make a phone call. I have I guess the ethics person because I've spoken to them. There is somebody who does . . . I forgot her name but again I can get that from the book and she's somebody else I could call.” The New Jersey School Boards Association is an important organization that supports the new school board members. This school board member knew that she could call NJSBA, if there was information that she needed to support her governing.

*Issues and Application of Skills*

Board members were asked about the big issues that their boards face and if and how what they learned in the governance training helps them to navigate through the issues. The interviewed new board members recalled the “big issues” they encountered and the ways they applied what they learned from the training to deal with these issues. LG, a school board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students mentioned two issues that many boards face: communication and class placement. She mentioned how parents were not receiving timely responses from emails and calls about concerns. In addition, her board was dealing with whether there should be a policy about class placement. LG said the following about how she applied what she learned from the training to address the issues of communication and class placement:

Yes, the leader of my group had given me a lot of suggestions and ways because she had said, you have to be gentle, you can't come at someone . . . and I talked to one of the, I guess it was the director, Dr. Feinford, and I had asked him about . . . We had talked about climate surveys and getting a feel for what can I do, what can I suggest, what can I say? I don't want to be the jerk, I don't want someone to be like well, she just comes in here and thinks she's going to . . . But you heard some other people that these things do happen, there are ways to get
them done and try to have a say like look, this is what we want to improve upon, but again, getting the feedback from people with the experience in both education and the school board was very helpful, because it allowed me to proceed with caution, so to speak.

LG connected what she learned from the training to getting things accomplished.

Learning from people in education and school board experiences during the weekend provided her with strategies on how to work with people in order to proceed with caution to progress forward.

Applying governance skills to address a communication-related issue was something that was handled by school board member LQ. They were dealing with an image of “not coming public” meaning they were not considered transparent, and the community was struggling to understand what resources are required for education today and to progress forward. Her board was in general agreement about the issue and she described the following as how what she learned at the training helped her navigate through the issue:

Yeah, I think it does, it helps me understand, bond together as a group and that we have to rely on each other and move forward together and it also helped me to understand where we stand and how we stand and I'm not going crazy. You know this is really the way and I think that's a good thing.

Applying their skills together to address a communication issue bonded LQ and her board colleagues so that they could move forward together. The governance training also helped her to understand where and how she and her board should stand when dealing with issues as a board.

The lack of diversity in her district was a big issue for SP and her fellow board members in her PK-8 district of approximately 5,000 students. She mentioned how
recruiting ethnic minority professional staff was a big challenge. The teaching staff in her
district is not reflective of the demographics of the student body. Now that the new
member is on the board, it has been easier to initiate conversations about these
challenges. SP discussed how what she learned at the governance training is helping her
to work with her fellow board members to address the important issue:

Yes, it's something that gave us on how to work together as a board. How they'd
be telling us you know that you have something you want to get through on the
board, you need to buddy with other members on the board, and it's kind of like
a give-and-take because they're going to have things that they want to get passed
and they're going to buddy with you. You have to pick and choose for the
different issues of who you think will be on the side of those issues or who you
have to persuade to go along with you to get the vote. So, it did help as far as the
negotiation tool that they give you, in dealing with other board members,
especially when you're new. You have to get a feel for people first.

Getting “a feel” for the other board members is an important piece that SP believed is
required when working with others and applying governance skills. SP credited the
negotiation tool that they learned from the governance training as being helpful when
working with other school board members. She mentioned, in detail, the political aspects
of trying to persuade other board members to vote for things that she wanted to get
passed.

Knowing what questions to ask is important. MD of a large PK-12 district of
thousands of students, related how training taught her the big questions to ask. In
particular, it taught her to ask the questions that reveal the district’s indicators of student
success. MD described the importance of asking questions and how the training prepared
her to do so:
Again, I think in some of the . . . in the binder we received, it definitely talks about the big picture questions to ask. Yeah, so that probably helps me the most. Just again, I've referenced a couple times, goal setting, and that the board I don't think has in the recent past been that active in doing shared goal setting with the administration, so trying to move things in that direction so that we are setting goals and measuring success along the way. So that's a key thing that I've learned is that it's important to ask for indicators of success throughout the year, because currently the indicator we have of academic achievement is just the PARCC assessment. So, that information in the training has helped me to kind of give credence to those specific questions, requests.

MD learned from the training that it is important to ask for indicators of success and, specifically, the ways that the indicators may be measured. The training taught her about what questions to ask about how student achievement is tracked. The binder is a resource that MD utilizes to know which “big picture” questions she should ask the administration.

This section reviews the data related to one of the research questions of this research study - How are the governance training participants applying the skills that they learned in their practices? As evidenced by the new school board members data from their interviews, the interviewed board members perceived that they do apply skills that they learned from the new school board governance training to their practices. They discussed the ways in which they applied their skills within their decision-making governance responsibilities. They also described their opinions about if and how their fellow board member colleagues apply their skills, as well as their boards as a whole. The board members mentioned how they navigated through big issues with their boards and how their governance training experience supported them in doing so. Board members explained what they do when they forget what they learned in their practices, such as referring to the binder they received at the training and reaching out to their New Jersey
School Boards field representative. Overall, the new board members described what they learned, how they applied what they learned, the issues that they deal with in their roles, and what resources they utilize to remember the skills they have forgotten.

The next topic focuses on what supports board members to apply their skills. The ability for board members to apply their skills was described by the interview participants as sometimes related to what supports them in their governance work. The next section describes what the new board members perceive supports them.

**Topic 6 – What Supports Board Members To Apply Their Governance Skills**

There are certain things that support the new board members when they apply their governance skills they learned from the training in their practices. New school board member training participants describe in the interviews, specific people and constructs that are supportive of their application of governance skills. They also describe the obstacles that sometimes occur that limit them from applying the governance skills they learned from the training.

The following themes emerged from the data about what the interview participants perceive supports them in applying the governance skills they learned from the training:

- New school board members reported that the school board president supports them in applying their governance skills.
- New school board members reported that there are other people who support them in applying their governance skills.
- New school board members reported that they rely on resources like reading articles about education to support them in applying their governance skills.
School Board Presidents Support New School Board Members

The first theme of this section includes the role that the school board president has in supporting new school board members. New school board members described how their school board president colleague supports her in leading effectively. TA, of a PK-12 district of 2,000 students, said, “Our Board president is really great. She's very supportive.” Having a supportive board president has allowed new school board member TA to apply the governance skills that she learned from her training in her practices.

Board member BK of a PK-8 district described that her school board president is supportive of her in applying her skills. She described the support provided in the following way:

First of all, the President. He's been great, and has been on for a long time. He's running for one term. He's definitely ready to pass the baton. So, he's looking for new board members to be good and strong board members. We also had a large board turnover in the last couple years, so out of a group of nine, we've had at least half turn over; five, so more than half.

BK explained that her experienced board president who has served as a board member for a very long time has been supportive. She described that the president is in his last term and is preparing to step down to make room for new leadership. She believes that because the president is preparing to leave, he is focused on helping to develop new members to be strong and effective. Other people also support new school board members, which is described in the second theme.
Other People Support Them In Applying Their Governance Skills

In the interviews, school board members explained how other people either support or should support them in applying their governance skills. School board member MW of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students, as well as an experienced educator, described what would support her in applying her governance skills:

Well I would go back to what would support me would be other people on the board who are like-minded where I keep on referring back to the mind where we have information and things that we should be doing, like a timeline. You know like what should have happened in the summer? There should have been, sometimes it's called a retreat where we would have been together. And that never happened and we were presented with goals and I keep on saying to them, and part of I think the issue is, that they're not educators maybe.

MW described her support as something that should be coming from like-minded people who sit with her on the school board. She discussed how she and her board colleagues possess information about the governance skills they learned at the training and related what they should be doing given the knowledge they acquired. In addition, MW reflected on the other governance skills that they should be applying but are not, such as creating goals for the board and participating as a team in an annual retreat.

New Jersey School Boards Field Representative

BC, a new school board member of a K-8 district of approximately 490 students, explained how the New Jersey School Boards Association representative supports him in applying his governance skills. He stated:

But I'll usually call Gwen, and the conversation usually will start, "Hey Gwen, I'm sorry if I'm not making any sense, but I'm trying to wrap my head around this," and she'll listen, and she appreciates the nuances between the different arguments, and we'll discuss things. Sometimes we'll discuss things for 20 or 30
minutes, and she's been very generous with her time. She's always been reasonable and balanced in how she's willing to explain things, and I think little by little I've convinced her that I'm only a little bit crazy. So, she still answers my phone calls, but yeah, it's been a great resource, so I'm not going to knock it.

BC explained that he benefits from the conversations he has with the NJSBA field representative. Each school board is assigned a representative to provide professional development support and guidance. He described their communications as being engaging, reasonable, and balanced.

School board member ND of a K-12 district of approximately 10,100 students also described how his New Jersey School Boards field representative supports him. He said, “My fellow board members and I have reached out to the field representative for questions. . . I've reached out to her on my own for questions.” Knowing that there is someone they may call for support is helpful to ND and his fellow board members.

MD, a board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students, described what supports her by stating, “Yeah, so I would say it's relationships with other new board members . . . new and from other districts, where I can kind of talk through how folks have approached certain things.” MD believes that her discussions and connections with other board members supports her in a way so that she may interact other board members to learn how they have applied their governance skills.

*Other School Board Members*

Board member LG of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students also described her support stemming from other school board members. LG described her support as the following:
What supports me? I feel like it would be the other members that I have found to be helpful, to be willing to mentor me in a way. So, having people who are helpful also have the best interests of students at heart and they're willing to give you their senior opinion. The woman I sit next to was the president in the past. She's actually not running again, so her seat is up in December. And I've become friendly with her, so she'll say, well, this is what you should do or don't say that or if you want to talk about this, grab the superintendent after the meeting and ask him about it first and feeling like there are people that you can lean on.

LG described how she thinks she is supported by the other board members who were willing to mentor her along the way. She explained that she receives support from other board members who are student-focused and who are willing to share their governance experiences. Her interactions with a colleague school board member with presidential experience provide her with both a resource and support to assist her in applying her governance skills. Overall, LG feels supported by the other board members.

BK, a board member of a PK-8 district of approximately 275 students explained her perceptions of the new colleagues she works with as board members. She describes the new colleagues as energetic and enthusiastic. In addition, she perceives the superintendent as being supportive of the board. BK also credits the “old guard,” the seasoned board members, as being supportive of the new school board members so that once they leave, there are knowledgeable board members to assume their leadership roles. She described:

So, there's a bunch of us new people, who are still energetic and enthusiastic about all this, and of course, the superintendent is very supportive of the board. So, I would say, the newness of the group is very supportive, and the fact that the old guard is also more than willing to help us grow, so that he can turn that baton over when the time comes, is very supportive.
The combination of new and seasoned board members supporting one another and working together exists for board member BK. She described how the new board members, who are all energetic and enthusiastic, all serve as a great support for her in applying her governance skills.

New Jersey School Boards Association

Board member HC of a K-12 district of approximately 3,600 students discussed the New Jersey School Boards Association as a larger support system to help board members. HC described how, as a new board member, she experiences “growing pains” and knowing that there is a support system in place is reassuring. She stated:

Knowing that we have a support system of other people who are going through it. To me it seems, how many dedicated people were there helping to run the training in and of itself, and knowing that we have the support of a larger group to help us through it. I know I'm new, and it's the first year, and there's always growing pains. Just knowing that there's so many people there with that depth of knowledge that we can rely on, that gives me hope that I'll continue to grow and develop skills. Maybe, be that for somebody else coming up.

HC describes the hope that she feels when she knows that there are people to support her with a deep breadth of knowledge. She also connects that hope to believing that she will continue to grow and develop her skills.

The Whole Board

New school board member JH of a K-12 district of approximately 970 students described how his well-running board supports him in applying his governance skills. He explained:
Probably the fact that we have a pretty, maybe we not ending on the style of peace and love, but we have a pretty good running board overall. It’s kind of works with the others. It's a mix of all members and seem to be working pretty amazingly.

JH describes his support system as being part of a well-running board. He indicates that, while they may not all agree all the time, because the board is functional it is supportive of his individual ability in applying governance skills, overall.

AB, a new school board member of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students, discussed the connection between support in applying governance skills to a board and student achievement focus. She stated:

I think that you have to be vocal and remember that you ran for student achievement and that's why you're there as a board member. That if you constantly are focusing on that kid on the table, and then you're doing a great job. You keep plugging away at that.

Focusing on student achievement, AB describes the supports that exist regarding her applying her governance skills that she learned at the training. She believes that board members who are vocal and focused on student achievement will be effective school board members.

MD, a school board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students, one of the largest districts in this study, described that the members of the cohort of her new school board member training started a Facebook page just for the participants of the training so that they could share information. She stated, “One of the things that came out of that weekend was a Facebook page for folks who were new board members.” As a result of making connections with other new school board members, MD was part of a group that is utilizing social media to share information, which proved to be
a great support. Resources are described as critical in supporting the board members so that they may apply their learned governance skills. Some of the resources are described in the third theme of the data topic describing what supports the board members.

**New School Board Members Rely On Resources**

New school board members described how they rely on resources to support them in applying their governance skills. For example, new school board member BC of a K-8 district of approximately 490 students described what resources he utilizes to support the application of his governance skills. He described:

> I Google it. I look at the state directory, the state department of education website sometimes has pertinent information. If I search something a lot of times, the school board association will generate Google responses with articles and stuff. So, I'll try to do some reading. I'll try to see what some of the different takes on a particular topic are, because there's no one answer for any of this stuff.

Reading information is a way in which BC learns to support his application of skills. He explained that he searches for information online and accesses information from the state’s Department of Education, the New Jersey School Boards Association, and from articles. By reading different sources, BC is able to learn about different perspectives about governance topics.

New school board member ND of a PK-12 district of approximately 10,100 students described how his veteran board president applies her skills, and supports her board colleagues to apply their governance skills. He also credits the newsletters created by the New Jersey School Boards Association and the mandated new board member training for supporting him to apply his skills. He explained:
I mean, we have a pretty veteran board president. So, she certainly applies the skills and helps us apply the skills on the board. I don't know if there's much else. Reading the school board's newsletters will jog something in my head, but in general, I feel like the governance training gave me the basic tools that . . . Now of course I'll go to Governance 2 and learn something completely new, but I think Governance 1 answered all of my basic questions.

ND believes that different resources such as people, newsletters, and what he learned from the training support him in the application of his skills while governing. He also mentioned expanding his knowledge base by attending the Governance 2 training.

Sometimes there are people and circumstances that limit school board members from applying their skills. The next topic 7 section describes the limitations within three themes.

**Topic 7 - What Limits Board Members To Apply Their Governance Skills**

New school board members also described what limits them from applying their governance skills. Three themes emerged from the participants’ responses about what limits them from applying their learned skills to their governance work. The themes are as follows:

- New school board members indicated that sometimes district personnel, and even themselves, limit them from applying their skills.

- New school board members indicated that board structures and systems limit them from applying their skills.

- New school board members indicated that lack of time limits them from applying their skills.
People Can Limit Board Members From Applying their Skills

School board member ND of a PK-12 school district of approximately 10,100 students described how the person who may limit him from applying skills is himself. He stated, “The only thing that would prohibit me from doing that would be my own ignorance.” ND described that not realizing what he does not know may limit him from applying his skills and seeking the support he needs.

MD, a school board member of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students, relates what limits her as the school board culture. She described the dynamics of her board and the challenges she faces:

I think as a new board member, there's kind of a culture on the board for things to operate in a certain way. So, whether it be . . . So, on our board, we've actually, this year there's been an effort to have various retreats so that board members can kind of talk through some things. But aside from that, I feel like there's a major hesitation to speak openly about questions and concerns at a board meeting in public sessions. So, in that sense, it becomes difficult because if I want to let's say advocate for something, again, it's just the culture of the board is just not to speak openly.

MD described her hesitation to speak because of the “we have always done it that way” culture of her board of education. She attended board retreats to talk through some issues with her board colleagues. MD explained that if she cannot speak openly, then she is not advocating and, therefore, not utilizing the governance skills she learned.

New School board member AB of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students experienced the same board culture as MD, which limited her application of skills. She stated:

Sure. Other members of the board. That have been there a long time and are used to doing things a certain way, and say things like, “We’ve tried that before, many years ago.” Or we learn different things about setting up the table, and
how we should be able to see each other, and how it’s really about the board meeting and where the superintendent’s place is. There’re so many things that, it’s like, “Well, I’ve been on the board for ten years and so, this is how we do it.” Things like that.

AB explained how fellow board members impact her ability to apply her skills. She related how her seasoned board colleagues often say things such as, “Well, I’ve been on the board for ten years and so, this is how we do it.” Their responses to her suggestions discouraged and decreased the space and time for new ideas. This, in turn, is a barrier to AB’s application of skills.

School board member BC of a PK-8 district of approximately 875 students talked about the challenges of the perceptions of his board colleagues. At times, he and his board colleagues have different opinions about the progress of the school district.

But the hardest thing has been the difference in perception between how I feel the district is and how these other eight board members think a district is. So, the hardest thing has ... you said the greatest obstacle to applying my governance skills. The hardest thing has been not just introducing ideas, but getting across why I personally think it's a good idea to make this change. Because when you ask our other board members "How's everything going?" most of them just think, "Hey, everything's great."

BC describes that the hardest part of applying his skills is not just the introduction of new ideas, but also convincing the other board members that a change is needed. In the minds of some of the other members, the district is progressing, so no change is necessary.

New school board member RO of a PK-8 district of approximately 1,400 students describes people as being “roadblocks.” She explained:

Well I think, well possibly . . . I mean now with what the superintendent said about not knowing a lot of stuff before, this maybe a roadblock but it is something that I can watch more carefully for. What I should do is go back, and this is where the training would come in and find out if there is a timeline for
stuff that is due or and that's going back to the notebooks and taking a look at
that.

RO described that, because the superintendent did not know about a lot of the governance
information, that was a “roadblock” for her to apply her skills. It is a barrier because if
her superintendent and board are not doing everything they are supposed to do, RO is
limited in her ability to apply all the skills she learned in her governance work.

Board member HC of a K-12 district of approximately 3,600 students also
mentioned barriers that limit her from applying her skills.

I would say the super block. I think our board president is, due to a number of
personal reasons this year, personal judging his life, I think he's a little
emotionally checked out right now. I think he's a wonderful man. I know he
cares, but I think he's willing to take things at face value instead of questioning
them, and so is our vice president who is ardently tight with our superintendent.

Believing that her board president is not as engaged as he should be is something that HC
credits as limiting her from applying her skills. HC would like her president to ask more
questions, which would be more supportive for her in applying her skills.

The second theme of what limits board members is described as the school board
systems and structures of education that may limit the board members from applying
their skills. The data related to the second theme is described in the next section.

**School Board Systems and Structures Limit Them From Applying Their Skills**

New school board members mentioned that their school board systems and
structures also limit them from applying their skills. School boards across the state are
structured, as a whole board, to make all decisions or work within a committee structure.

Board member BK of a PK-8 district of approximately 275 students explained:
I would say that I find the committee structure of a board . . . There're times when I would like to utilize some of the information I received in Governance training, but we have a committee structure, so I'm on personnel curriculum, and the other half of the board is on finance and building the grounds. So, there's not a lot of opportunity for me to get involved in the finance process and utilize any information or any training that I've received. By the time we get to the school board meeting, the expectation is, it's been vetted at that point, and unless we have some glaring opposition to what's happening, which, it's expected that we would have reached out prior to the meeting to the Super, then the expectation is that we're going to trust both sides. So, I find that a little restrictive, in regards to, applying all the information that I received, but that's the structure of our board.

BK explained that she cannot utilize all of her skills because she is on the personnel committee and not a part of the decision-making group on the finance committee. She believes that she has limited opportunities to apply the finance skills she learned at the training because she is not on the finance committee.

MW of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students described her concern about applying skills because she is afraid of being considered opposed to the general committee. In addition, she is concerned that the superintendent will negatively perceive her application of skills. She explained:

There's the fear of being considered anti to the general committee's thought or belief at the time, that . . . I think part of it is that the superintendent will see it as a negative. And he's over-reactive. And so, for me personally, unless it's something that I really think is to die for, if I would say something there would be a reaction and it's just not worth it at this point in time.

Concerns about the perceptions of others are issues that limit board member MW to not apply the governance skills she learned at the training. MW believes that, unless it is something that is really important to her, it is not worth it to her to speak up because of the severe reactions of her board colleagues and superintendent.
LQ of a PK-8 district believes there should be more involvement in the area of legislation. Knowing more about legislation would help her in applying her skills. She said:

I think I would have liked more information on the legislature side, that's something that I feel like I don't know how active our board is in that. And to me it's like there is so much we could be doing. Especially since we're the district that always gets hit, everybody overlooks us, it's like hello. You know and I feel like I don't know if I have enough knowledge to push forward in that.

She believes that if her board was more active in the legislation side of things, it will allow her to better apply her skills. LQ believes more knowledge would also be helpful for her to apply her skills.

New board member LG of a PK-12 district of approximately 3,100 students described how chain-of-command issues sometimes limit her from applying her skills:

In every town it may be different but for us, if our understood chain of command kind of thing, so it's like, some districts some people may feel like they could directly approach one person or directly contact or speak to the superintendent. I feel like there were times where our superintendent has said, if you have a question, absolutely feel free to reach out to me and then there's other times where the where the president is like, if you have anything you need to send it to me first and then I'll tell the superintendent.

Hearing conflicting chain-of-command procedures is something that limits LG from applying the governance skills she learned at the training. In her district, she has been directed to talk to the superintendent first and also told that she should talk to the board president first. The two different messages may limit her from applying governance skills. The next section is the third theme of topic 7 which relates to board members perceiving that the lack of time may limit their ability to apply their governance skills.
Lack of Time Limits Board Members From Applying Their Skills

Time-related issues were mentioned by board members as barriers to applying the governance skills they learned at the training. The board members described wanting to accomplish governance work immediately, only to realize that some initiatives required time to make the decisions and accomplish the work. Board member TA of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,000 students explained that she had to be patient and wait for just the right moment. She stated:

And sometimes you have to be patient and wait for the right moment or just wait, and that's one of the things that I heard that applied. Of course, I want everything to happen right away, but I've learned to be patient.

Learning to wait for the right time sometimes limited board member TA from applying her governance skills. TA learned that, sometimes, she had to wait to apply skills even if she wanted something to happen right away.

New board member EJ of a K-12 district of approximately 4,500 students mentioned not having enough time to apply her skills. She said, “I think that the only thing that prohibits me is time. I need more time, and I need a clone.”

New board of education members learned knowledge from the training but, sometimes, that is not enough. Identifying what supports and limits members from applying their skills is important. It is important to recognize what measures support the application of skills so that new board members receive continued support. It is important to know what prohibits new school board members from applying their skills so that systems are put in place that assist in decreasing the barriers so that board members may consistently apply the governance skills they learned at the Governance 1 training.
The final topic 8 is data about what the training participants like and dislike about being a board member. This data provides insight to the thoughts of new board members about governance, their challenges, and what they like about serving as board of education leaders. The next section outlines the data in 4 themes.

**Topic 8 - Likes and Dislikes About Being A Board Of Education Members**

Board members expressed what they liked and disliked about being a board of education member. The likes and dislikes mentioned in the interviews were associated with the responsibilities required for their governance responsibilities as well as the board dynamics they experienced with other board members as they engaged in their governance work.

Themes emerged from the interview data about what board of education members liked and disliked about their roles as board of education members. These themes include the following:

- Board of education members indicated that they liked being involved in the school district as governance leaders.
- Board of education members indicated that they liked being part of a district that was progressing and liked contributing to the progress.
- Board of education members indicated that working dynamics with other board members can be challenging and are often a part of what they dislike about their board roles.
- Communication challenges were mentioned as something board of education members disliked about their role.
What Board Members Like About Their Roles

Being Involved

Board members mentioned specific factors about their board work that they liked. The board members mentioned involvement in the district and decision-making as aspects that they liked about being board of education members. They stated that knowing what was occurring in their districts and helping the schools were common things they liked about their governance roles. Board member TA of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,000 students said, “I'm aware of everything that's going on in the district, and, I feel like I am helping to keep the school progressing.” TA likes being a board member because she knows what is happening in the district and she can assist in progressing the district forward. She stated. “The school has been progressing, but I'm helping to keep it going in that direction.”

School board member ND of a PK-12 school of approximately 10,100 students explained what he liked about being a school board member. He described how he liked knowing how board governance works and what was occurring in his district:

I like the feeling of it. I like knowing how things work, what's going on. I like knowing why things are happening now. You know, when you're not a member of the board and you don't know how the board works, it's sort of opaque. Now it makes a lot more sense to me.

ND compared what it was like to be a board member with what it was like when he was not and did not how the board works.

New board member MW of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students discussed that, as a retiree, she liked that she could still be involved in the educational process. MW explained:
For me, for being retired it keeps my hand in the educational process, but yet it's not my responsibility to make it happen. That's the superintendent. And I enjoy committee work, I enjoy that process of people coming together for a common good and doing something, and creating something. And so that's what I'm enjoying about that.

As a retired educator, MW enjoys being a board member because it allows her to continue to be immersed in the educational process. She realizes that it is not her responsibility to manage education and she knows that the superintendent is the educational leader. MW also enjoys the committee work, which allows her to work with others to create and convene together for a common goal.

SP, a new school board member of a PK-8 of approximately 5,000 students, describes what she likes related to her governance role responsibility. She said, “The thing I like the most about being a board of education member is making policies.” SP mentions that she likes one of the main responsibilities that she has as a school board member, which is being a governance servant.

New board member MD of a PK-12 district explained that she likes being a board member by stating, “Well, I feel like I have access to a lot of information and better understanding about how decisions are made.” Having access to information and understanding how decisions are made are two main components of effective governing and are reasons why MD likes being a board member. The second theme describes that board members like contributing to the progress of their district which is described in the next section.
Contributing to District Progress

Another theme that emerged in the data was that board members liked their roles because they were part of progressing districts and that, as board members, they were contributors to the progress. LiQ, a new school board member and once a student in her governing district, related the joy of belonging to such a great school district. She explained:

I have to be involved in something, and of course just being involved still in such a great school district, was amazing because we are extremely successful throughout. We always at our school assemblies even just talking to teachers it's just such a successful atmosphere, you're just always happy and you're proud to represent such a wonderful school district. So, I just love being a part of such a wonderful district and such a wonderful community.

LiQ explained that she enjoys being involved in the district in her new capacity. She described the district with pride as being successful, which is a reason why she likes being a school board member.

School board member LQ of a PK-8 district, related the progress of her district to its curriculum and technology and her role in supporting both areas, as well as empowering others to be included. She stated:

I like the fact that, to have a say in, I can, have to be future ready, have to put technology, have to make sure our curriculum. Everybody feels included, not a closed curriculum, especially in a town like ours. So, I think that, that has just been phenomenal.

LQ describes that she is very interested in the district being future-ready in the area of technology. She likes being a board member so that she can do her part in making sure that everyone in the educational community feels included in the curriculum.
Being part of change and progress was what board member LG of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,100 students liked about her governance role. The board member liked being a catalyst for positive change and looks forward to when she may contribute to the superintendent search process when her current superintendent retires. Wanting to help and progress the district is something she likes in her role as a board member. She described:

I like being a part of important conversations, they're not that in the end. My thought is that I want to be able to effect change in a positive way. I know, and especially once you get on a board, obviously, once you get there, you realize I can't do a lot very quickly. But just to know that when something important or something that could change or something our superintendent's going to be retiring in the next year and a half, so being part of a committee that gets to say, these are the qualities that we're looking for in a leader. So being able to help be a part of that catalyst for positive change, I just think it's important because you spend a lot of time as a parent and a community member hearing things that people are unhappy with, so I feel like now's your chance to say, well, I'm going be a mouthpiece, or I'm going to try to help, or I'm going to bring attention to something that maybe is being overlooked.

LG likes being a board member because she can be part of important conversations that impact change in positive ways. She describes how once the superintendent retires, she can be part of the process that selects their next leader. She reflected on how when she was a community member, and not on the board, she would hear a lot about things that made the members of the educational community unhappy. As a board member, she believes that now she can address the things that make community members unhappy and bring attention to issues that may need attention.

New school board member BC of a K-8 district of approximately 490 students, explains that he likes improving the schools and that this motivates him. He stated:
Well, you know, it's a couple different things. For one thing, what really motivates me, what really drives me to step out of my comfort zone is the concept that we're making the schools better. What I try to explain to people are the good kids, with supportive parents, are going to do well regardless of where they attend school.

BC stated that making the schools better drives him to step out of his comfort zone. He believes that students with supportive parents, regardless of what school they go to will do well.

The third theme of topic 8 describes that board members like working with other people. The next section describes how they collaborate with other people and what they like about working with others.

Working with Others

Collaboration is a key word that interviewees used when discussing the reasons they liked about being board of education members. Working collaboratively as a team and gaining the trust of community members were reasons why members liked being on the board. Board member BK of a PK-8 district of approximately 275 students discussed that working collaboratively with her other board members is something she likes about being a school board member. She explained:

I like the collaborative working process. We're all there for one reason, which is for the students and the school. And it's a very close-knit community, so to be able to be in a position to not only serve the students but support the teachers and the administration was a motivating factor.

BK likes being a school board member because it involves working collaboratively with an educational community. She describes her community as being close-knit and she enjoys supporting the students, teachers, and the administration.
The issue of trust was mentioned as being important in relation to working with others. New school board member EJ of a K-12 district of approximately 4,500 students mentioned that what she likes about being a board member is building trust. She related how trust is beneficial to her governance role in the following way:

What I love about being a board member is the fact that I have been able to gain the trust of the community throughout the years, and it has actually been the best benefit as an elected official because it took me, since my kid was four years old I was a PTA president.

Building trust was something that EJ worked on for many years since her child was four years old, before becoming a board member. She described that the trust she built with the community has benefited her in her governance role.

Collaborating with central office administration was another reason why board members liked their governance roles. AB of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students explained:

I would say, I really enjoy working with administration, kind of what I just said, working with administration to further the goals that they have, that we all have as a board, and seeing how they're implementing those things.

Working with a superintendent is a key responsibility for a board member. AB describes that working with the administration, to accomplish goals and observe how the goal initiatives are implemented and achieved, is something she likes about being a school board member.

Board member RO of a PK-8 district of approximately 1,400 students also mentioned that working with the administration was something she liked about being a board member, stating, “What I like most is supporting the Superintendent, she is such a
good woman and she is so berated by the Board that any comfort and any assistance I could give her I want to. That's what I like most.” RO likes her position as a board member because she can support the superintendent. She describes how the other board members were berating the superintendent and, as a result, she offers support to the superintendent.

Knowing what board members liked about their governance roles provides insight into their working dynamics and goals. Furthermore, knowing what they dislike about their board roles provides understanding about what governance skills they need and are utilizing.

New school board members also explained what they dislike about their board governance work. The fourth theme of topic 8, which is also the final theme of the interview data, explains what board members dislike about being a school board member.

**What Board Members Dislike About Being A Board Member**

*Working Dynamics*

Board governance work may be challenging, which can result in board members disliking aspects of their governance work. Board member MD of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,100 students discussed how she disliked learning and applying massive amounts of information. She described:

> It is, especially as a new board member, it is somewhat overwhelming in terms of the amount of information. It kind of feels like there's a huge need to catch up with how things operate, what's going on in all of our schools, since we have I think nine schools. So, that's probably the hardest part is just the overwhelming amount of information to process, and sometimes feeling unsure about what buttons to press to affect change.
MD described a dislike as related to keeping up with the large amount of information about governance. She described that, as a new school board member, she feels like there is a need to learn things quickly and know what is going on in the nine schools in her district. MD explains that the most difficult part of her governance work is to process the overwhelming amount of information and know how to conduct change.

Being less involved was an area that board member BK of a small PK-8 district of approximately 275 students disliked. She described that she dislikes how some of the board members are less involved in the summer and the described behaviors of some of the board members that she disliked as well. She explained:

> Well, I'm learning some people check out in the summer, I don't like that. You know, I don't like that there are a couple of Board members who their earnestness spills over into . . . what's the word? Almost aggressiveness when it comes to researching something.

BK explains that in the summertime, board members can be less engaged in governance work, which she dislikes. She also describes how a couple of her board member colleagues were researching to a point of aggressiveness when finding information to provide rationale for making decisions, which is another thing she dislikes about her governance role.

New school board member LiQ of a PK-12 district of approximately 1,500 students describes what it is like to be a new member and work with other board members. She describes how she dislikes some of the interactions due to the conflict that can exist. She explained:

> I would say because there was a lot of drama before I even became a board member so I think it carried on when I won so I felt like even though I walked in
respecting everyone I know it was a fresh start for me. There were just other things going on so I think they passed it on to me when it wasn't even me.

LiQ is impacted by the culture that was established before she joined the board. She describes how she began her position respecting everyone, but sometimes she feels as though the other board members pass on to her what happened previously.

*Communication Challenges*

In addition to disliking the challenges of working with other board members, new school board members who were interviewed also described their dislikes related to communication challenges. Frustrations about the behaviors of other board members caused a board member to dislike that particular aspect of her governance role. TA, a new member of a PK-12 district of approximately 2,000 students explained, “I don't like certain board members that I don't feel take their job as a board member seriously”. Her dislike is related to her perception of whether or not a board member takes their governance role seriously.

MW of a PK-12 district of approximately 16,000 students describes her dislikes as related to not seeing what she learned in her board governance work. She explained:

I'm a rule follower, and what I see in the information in the binder we receive from the NJSPA, and I don't see that happening in our work. We're not following that process, it seems to me. I feel like it's that we're wearing the wig and being pulled.

Knowing what she should be doing, but feeling that what she learned is not being utilized when she works with her board, is a dislike for MW. She has the binder and knows about the governance information that should be applied, but she does not think the application of skills is occurring in her work with her board colleagues.
It was challenging for board member AB of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students when parents complained to the board member in lieu of following the chain of command. She described:

You know, it's kind of some, it's some of the same thing. That parents come to me with their concerns because I'm a parent and they see me all the time, as opposed to going directly to the administration. That can be, not a conflict necessarily, but it puts me in an awkward position because the administration needs to be able to do their job, and not constantly hear from me about complaints, you know?

AB described how she dislikes it when people do not follow the chain of command. She explained that because people know her and see her all the time, they come to her with their concerns in lieu of going to the superintendent. It puts her in an awkward position because she has to tell the administration about the concerns, rather than the impacted people expressing them directly to the administration.

The lack of communication and the inappropriate flow of communication were common occurrences that caused board members to dislike their governance roles. HC of a K-12 district of approximately 1,300 students found information on social media before hearing it from the superintendent, which was a major point of dislike for the board member. She explained:

I do think that, to a certain extent, there are a handful of people who are sort of like a super block, that have access to information which is not widely disseminated. I think that our committees failed to timely, and fully, keep others apprised. Being a mom who's also on social media and Facebook in our town's groups, I get very aggravated when I find out pertinent information that should've come from a superintendent, before I saw it on social media.

HC described that there was a handful of people who have access to information but do not share it with everyone. She believes that her board committees are not keeping the
other board members informed. HC gets frustrated when she first hears important
information on social media before hearing it from the superintendent.

New school board member AB of a K-8 district of approximately 1,300 students
mentioned the communication challenges she and her board experience have:

I'll tell you this, coming from being somebody who was at board meetings for
years, and kind of not understanding all the work that goes into it. You show up
at a board meeting and you're a parent, and you see this agenda, and you're like,
"Everybody's just saying yes to everything. How did they go through all this
already?" You don't really get to understand the committee structure, so I really
like the fact that now I understand all that. I do wish, though, that there was a
better way for the board to really communicate everything that we're doing, as
opposed to just that monthly meeting.

The data about school board members’ likes and dislikes about their governance
work provided insights in many aspects of their positions, the challenges they face, and
the areas where they feel they are most successful. This data is also related to what they
learned at the governance training, as well as the skills they apply in their practices. In
addition, the data also provides insight into where board members may require additional
support and knowledge. For example, the theme of contribution to progress may assist in
identifying additional ways that board members may focus on student achievement to
promote progress. Working with other board members was indicated by board members
as both a like and dislike, so that should be an area for future support and development.
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

I am a school board of education member in my fourth term in the state of New Jersey. I selected the topic of school board governance as my dissertation topic because I wanted to research about the information that new school board members learn from the training as well how they apply the governance information they learned in their practices. The New Jersey School Boards Association kindly gave me permission to present my study during the training in February of 2018. My interactions with the NJSBA staff and training participants were extremely positive. The dedicated NJSBA staff members offered a wealth of knowledge for the new school board members. The training participants were very engaged in the weekend and willing to participate in my study. As a result of my interest in school board governance, and my status as an experienced board of education member, I was asked to serve as a small session leader in February of 2019. I attended the training with great pride and participated as co-leader of a small group with a top-notch school board member from another district in the state. In May of 2019, I will participate as a group session leader at an NJSBA leadership conference for school board members of many experience levels. My immersion into the role of a training group leader was an unexpected but gratifying outcome of conducting this research study.

The focus of this study was what new school board members learned from a New Jersey School Boards Governance 1 training, what skills they retained months after the training, and their perceptions about how they apply what they learned in their governance practices in their school board work. The data from the interviews and surveys suggest that new school board members did indeed learn governance skills from
the training, they retained skills they learned, and they applied skills that they learned after the training. In addition, new board members shared in their interviews what they do when they forget what they learned, which included seeking support from the, utilizing the Governance 1 binder that they received from the training, and continuing to network with the other new school board training participants in order to support one another.

The implications of this research study draw from my data collection and analysis which indicate that new school board members benefitted from a Governance 1 training provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). The training consisted of a weekend of professional development designed to support new school board members. The training was intended to help new members obtain governance knowledge and learn how to apply the knowledge to their school board work after the training. The interview results of the study suggest that the training was effective as interview participants perceived that they learned governance knowledge from the training and that they actively apply the skills to their work. The interview data also indicate that the participants recognized the importance of the training and the application of governance work; however, there are also people and circumstances that support and limit the application of their knowledge and skills. The quantitative data of this study indicate that, on average, participants’ knowledge of governance grew between Survey 1 and Survey 2, which implied that the new school board member training participants learned from the training.

The Governance 1 training was facilitated by staff from the NJSBA and by experienced volunteer school board members from across the state. The training sessions
consisted of important, research-based governance information that was part of a NJSBA Governance 1 curriculum. New school board members were required to complete the Governance 1 training which is offered in two formats: face-to-face training and online training. The board members were permitted to select which kind of Governance 1 training they wanted to complete. The volunteers of this study described the importance of the information presented at the training as well as the value of interfacing with the NJSBA staff, experienced board members, and the other training participants.

The growth of new school board members’ governance knowledge acquired in the course of their participation in the Governance 1 weekend training was measured in this study. The quantitative data indicate that, overall, the new school board members did learn from the training as the average percentage score of the all test scores increased from Survey 1 to Survey 2.

The comparison results between Survey 1 and Survey 2 suggest that there is a need for professional development to support school board members to increase their governance knowledge. Further, results indicate that some knowledge was lost, as indicated by the Survey 3 results, depending upon the subtopic of the governance training curriculum. Thus, there is a need for supporting for school board members to participate in trainings not only at the beginning of their governance leadership roles, but also in additional mandated and optional trainings provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association.
School Board Working Dynamics

School board members described board working dynamics as being both positive and negative influencers in the application of governance skills. Some board members perceived that their board colleagues apply their governance knowledge skills in their practices, while others believed they did not. The new school board members described their positive and negative interactions with their board member colleagues as being influential to their board governance work. In addition, this study found that school board members believe that the overall culture of their board both support and limit their abilities to apply their governance skills. The interview data shows that new board members utilize their board experienced colleagues as resources in some circumstances. However, board members also described that they were discouraged by other board members to apply their skills because doing so would be contradictory to the ways that the board had functioned in the past. Data gathered for this research implies that it may be helpful for other experienced board members to review governance training information because, in some circumstances, the experienced board members limited the new board members from applying their skills. In addition, this research suggests that board dynamics are tied to whether or not new school board members perceived that they were part of a functional, progressing board of education, or if they were a member of a board that did not work well together and remained stagnant without progressing.

Professional Development for School Board Members

The results of this study are related to existing research about what makes school boards effective and the role of professional development in governance. In The
Lighthouse Inquiry: School Board/Superintendent Team Behaviors in School Districts with Extreme Differences in Student Achievement, the authors describe an effective school board as one that participates in professional development (Rice et al., 2000). The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) is the designated organization assigned to providing the professional development for school board of education members in the state of New Jersey. The data gathered in my study indicate that new school board members perceive professional development as being important for the effectiveness of their governance work. On average, the training participants scored a higher percentage on Survey 2, which they took after the training, as compared to Survey 1, which they took before the training. The increased average percentage of reported knowledge between Survey 1 and Survey 2 implies that the training taught the new school board members information about school board governance during the training weekend. In New Jersey, school board professional development is mandated. However, NJSBA also offers additional professional development which is optional. Interview participants in this study credited their ability to apply their governance skills to the Governance 1 training, which suggests that all school board members may benefit from participating in the mandated and optional professional development provided by NJSBA.

New Jersey School Boards Association

Within the data, the New Jersey School Board Association is mentioned frequently as a valuable resource for the new school board members. Board members mentioned that the governance weekend training was extremely important not only for learning new knowledge, but also for the interactions they experienced with the other
new school board training participants and the facilitators of the training. The data in this study indicate that the New Jersey School Boards Association is a critical support for some of the new school board members interviewed as they transition into and serve in their governance roles. Board members mentioned that the training provided them with not only what they are supposed to do as board leaders but also explored and examined the “why” behind the ways in which they are supposed to govern that they were taught at the training. The data also indicate that the board members perceived that their experiences in the face-to-face training were much more beneficial to them then they thought the on-line option for those who used that option also offered by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

The binder that the new school board members received during the Governance 1 training weekend was mentioned by the study participants as being very important in supporting them with their school board work. The binder contained information from the Governance 1 curriculum and was reviewed during the weekend training sessions. They described the binder as something they use as a resource particularly when they forget something they learned at the training. The importance of the binder implies that if the new school board members have a comprehensive resource that is available to them, they will utilize the resource to assist them with applying their governance skills.

Small Group Sessions at The Weekend Training

The new school board members described their small group training experiences, leaders, and fellow group members as being key to their governance knowledge development. Participants expressed that the small group sessions allowed them to
interact more intimately with the group leader and fellow group members and provided them with opportunities to ask questions that were directly related to their personal governance experiences. Some of the study participants described that they still communicate with their small group leaders and the small group leaders continue to serve as resources for them. The research indicates that the new board members perceived that they learned governance information during the small group sessions. The interview data suggest that the small group sessions were opportunities in which new school board members learned knowledge, and thus, implying that small groups serve as forums where new school board members are likely to learn governance information. The study participants also mentioned that they learned from their small group leaders and the other board members in their small group. Formalized opportunities for the leader and the participants to interact throughout the new school board members’ first year of governance may continue to provide the new school board members with a continuous support group as they navigate through their governance leadership challenges in the first year.

**New Jersey School Boards Association Staff**

New school board members described the New Jersey School Boards Association staff as the main positive influencers of their knowledge acquisition during the weekend training. Some of the training participants mentioned specific knowledge they learned from the NJSBA staff as being positively impactful. They also described the New Jersey School Board Association staff members as being a continuous source of support and information to enable them to do the governance work that is required of them as school
board members. Participants regarded the staff facilitators as knowledgeable. The study results indicate that the staff members were helpful during the training and continue to be helpful to the new school board members as they embark upon their governance work in their respective districts. Some of the interview participants described calling their New Jersey School Boards Association field representatives to ask questions and provide resources. These activities imply that new school board members realized the New Jersey School Boards Association can be a valuable resource to them in support of their governance work. It also indicates that it is important for the NJBSA to continue to provide support, particularly through the assigned school district field representatives.

The results of this research strongly indicate that the mandated Governance 1 training should continue to be required for all new school board members. In addition, the data indicate that it is important for The New Jersey School Board Association to continue to serve as a continuing resource for all school board members. Board members described how sometimes they forgot the information that was taught, needed additional resources, or had questions, and how they utilized the training binder as a resource where they would find most of the answers.

The research suggests that the Governance training may not only be valuable for new board members but also for experienced board members. The research study participants described that providing experienced board members with the updated governance training and materials may result in an increase in the application of governance skills and knowledge within the practices of seasoned board members.
Other New School Board Members at the Training

New board member training participants mentioned that the other training participants were helpful for their professional development. Participants described that hearing the other new board members describe their board leadership experiences provided them with additional perspectives of board governance in other districts. They explained that the additional information, told from the other board members’ perspectives, assisted in shedding light on functional and dysfunctional board member and school board behaviors. The new board members also mentioned that they continue to rely on their fellow training colleagues as resources for information to support their governance work. In fact, some of the training participants created a Facebook page solely for the February 2018 training participants as a way to share knowledge and experiences.

All States Should Mandate Training

The results of this study indicated that new school board members’ knowledge of governance grew as a result of the training and that they perceived that the information they learned at the training influences their governance practices. New Jersey is only one of approximately 25 states that mandates training for school board members. The research data in this study clearly indicate the importance of the professional development for school board members. The participants of the study expressed the value of the training to their school board work again and again. The results of this study imply that all states should mandate professional development for school board members. The work of school boards across the country is critical to the success of our school districts.
States that do not mandate training for school board members must rely on superintendents to train the board members, which may result in inconsistent training and varied content and levels of instruction. By having one organization in charge of all training, such as the New Jersey School Boards Association, it ensures consistent training. Given the importance of professional development for school board members, it is assumed that in the states that do not require training, there may be many board members with minimal governance knowledge with limited resources available to assist them with their governance.

**My Participation in NJSBA Leadership Trainings**

An unexpected but exciting implication of this research was my inclusion in the February 2018 new school board member weekend orientation as a small group co-leader and a leader in the May 2019 leadership weekend training for experienced school board members. Taking part as a co-leader during the February 2019 weekend training allowed me to be part of facilitating the very important weekend governance training which was a focus of my dissertation. My experiences as a small group co-leader, solidified my understanding of the importance of not only the experience of the weekend training for the new school board members, but also the resources required to support all school board members in their governance work. It also provided me firsthand experience of the dedication of the staff of the New Jersey School Boards Association to support every school board member and their boards as a whole across the state.
Future Research

The results of this study prompted me to think about the benefits of future research in the area of school board governance. From the beginning of my research, I found it difficult to find many sources that focused on school board governance. The topic is extremely important because school boards are leading our school districts across the country. Yet, there is very little research about the topic of school board governance. The data from my study suggest that further research about school board governance may better support boards of education, school board members, and the people and organizations that support them. Future research should focus on what information and skills are required to make school boards and school board members most effective in their governance work. As time passes, the roles and responsibilities of school boards and school board members evolve over time. In order to stay current about governance best practices, board members should continue to participate in professional development. Research on best practices of professional development for school board members will determine the best topics of professional development that should be offered as well.

All interview participants expressed that the Governance 1 training was impactful to their knowledge of governance skills in their board work and their application of governance skills while performing their board responsibilities. The New Jersey School Boards Association serves as a resource to all board members throughout the state by offering mandated trainings, optional trainings, and field representatives to support boards and board members. The NJSBA resources are focused on providing instruction and resources for school board members, and boards as a whole, so that they may
function effectively as governance servants within their respective school districts. This research strongly indicates that the NJSBA is a valuable organization that provides valuable resources and professional development for school board members to lead effectively.

Research on the impact of professional development on the overall effectiveness of board work will provide board members with additional rationales about why board members should receive training and sustain continuous growth in the area of school board leadership. As evident by the data from this study, board members possess diverse professional and personal experiences that both negatively and positively influence their school board governance behaviors. They also interact and work with their fellow school board member colleagues who have diverse backgrounds, which may limit or support their ability to perform their board responsibilities. Providing school boards and school board members with additional studies on the importance of professional development will offer concrete evidence of why school board members should make thoughtful, data-driven decisions in their governance work.

New school board members frequently mentioned superintendents as being both supportive and restrictive of applying what they learned to their governance practices. Future research on the impact of superintendent and board relationships connected to student achievement would be helpful in providing concrete, research-based examples of effective superintendent/board behaviors. The data collected in this study indicate that the new board members perceive superintendents as important to their work and to the success of the district.
Throughout my research, I was reminded about the importance of board members understanding their roles and responsibilities and the reasons why it is important that they govern within their governance responsibilities. Additional research, connected to this study, about what effective board members and school boards should do would be helpful in providing school boards with examples of specific behaviors and actions that they should take to be effective.

**Summary**

Evident within this study was the commitment of the new school board members to their development and application of school board governance skills. As committed new school board members, they described their willingness and interest in learning the skills they needed to govern effectively. The participants also described the challenges they have encountered in applying their skills and how they have attempted to utilize their learned skills to try to navigate successfully through their governance challenges.

The comparison of the Survey 1 and Survey 2 results, indicated that the new school board members developed their governance knowledge during the weekend training. Thus, implying that the weekend governance training was an important contributor to new school board members in building their school board governance knowledge so that they could lead effectively.

The support of other people was a theme within the results of the research. The support of the New Jersey School Boards Association as an organization, was mentioned frequently as a means of resources to assist board members with their board leadership. Also mentioned as important to their governance work, were the people who work for the
New Jersey School Boards Association, to include their respective NJSBA field representatives and the presenters during the weekend. Other school board training participants were mentioned as helpful to the new school board members as resources and people who continuously support them in their work. The study participants described that learning from other board members from other districts, about what their boards do and do not do, was and still continues to be very helpful to them. The new school board members also mentioned their small group leaders as extremely helpful in answering questions specific to their individual governance needs.

Overall, my study indicated the importance of school board professional development and the importance of resources to support school board members with their governance work. Board members are engaged in important and challenging work, which requires a specific skillset of knowledge. The data indicates that the new board members learned the knowledge required for successful governance during the training and the importance of applying the skills they learned. The research also indicates that sometimes board members experience conditions, such as working with other school board members, that may limit their knowledge and skills application and they described utilizing their skills to help them conquer their limitations. They also mentioned what factors support them in applying their skills and their complex working relationships with other board members. Collaboration with other board members was described as a challenge for board members, as well as a great support for board members.
APPENDIX A

CODES
# Appendix A1: Code Frame

## Code Frame

**New Board Member Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOTIVAT</td>
<td>What motivated you to become a board of education member?</td>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>Description of... how board members were motivated to become board of education members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIVAT_ISSUES</td>
<td>Did you decide to become a board of education member because of a single issue or issues?</td>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Description of...issues that board members said motivated them to become board members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKES</td>
<td>What do you like about being a board of education member?</td>
<td>Likes about being a Board Member</td>
<td>Description of...what board members like about being on a board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISLIKES</td>
<td>What do you dislike about being a board of education member?</td>
<td>Dislikes about being a board member</td>
<td>Description of...what board members dislike about being on a board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVRNING_THTS</td>
<td>Is your experience as a board of education member what you thought it would be, and how has what you thought it would be changed because of the Governance training?</td>
<td>How Thoughts Changed Because of Governance Training</td>
<td>Description of...impact of governance training on their thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#_BOE_MEM</td>
<td>How many board of education members are on your board of education?</td>
<td>Number of BOE Members</td>
<td>Description of...number of board of education members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTR_TRNINS</td>
<td>Do you attend optional school board trainings offered by the New Jersey School Boards Association? Which board trainings have you attended or plan to attend?</td>
<td>Other Board Trainings</td>
<td>Description of...other board trainings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Code Frame

## New Board Member Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GR_LVL5</td>
<td>What are the grade levels in the district you serve?</td>
<td>Grade Levels in District</td>
<td>Description of... the grade levels in the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRN_FR_TRA</td>
<td>What did you learn from the governance training?</td>
<td>What did they learn from the governance training</td>
<td>Description of what did they learn from the governance training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMEM</td>
<td>What are three things you remember from the governance training?</td>
<td>What did the board members remember from the training?</td>
<td>Description of what they learned from the training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPCT_OF_TRA</td>
<td>How if at all, has your governance training helped you in your position as a board of education member? If so, how has your Governance training helped or not helped you?</td>
<td>Impact of Training on Governance Practices</td>
<td>Description of...if the governance training assisted in the board member's governance practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPL_SKILLS</td>
<td>Have you applied your learned skills from the Governance training in your school board practices? If so what are some examples of how you applied them?</td>
<td>Application of Governance Skills in Practices</td>
<td>Description of...how the board member applied their skills in their governance practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRHBTS_APPL</td>
<td>What prohibits you from applying the skills that you learned from your Governance Training in your practices?</td>
<td>Prohibits Application of Skills</td>
<td>Description of...what prohibits the board member from applying what they learned from the training in their governance practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPRTS_APPL</td>
<td>What supports you in applying the skills that you learned from your Governance training in your practices?</td>
<td>Supports Application of Skills</td>
<td>Description of...what supports the board member from applying what they learned from the training in their governance practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Code Frame
### New Board Member Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESRCES</th>
<th>Resources that Board Members Use When They Forget What They Learned from Their Training</th>
<th>Description of...what do board members do when they forget and want to review something they learned in the training to apply in their practices?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you forget something that you learned from your Governance training, how do you find out the information to apply in your practices? How do you review your Governance training application of skills to ensure that you are an effective board of education member?</td>
<td>Board Issues and if Governance Training Helped Them Navigate Through the Issues</td>
<td>Description of...what are the big issues their boards are dealing with and if the governance training helped them navigate through the issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUES</td>
<td>What are the big issues that your board is dealing with? As a board are you in general agreement? Did anything in your governance training help you navigate through the big issues?</td>
<td>Governance Training Topics Related to their Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOV_TRA_TOPICS</td>
<td>What parts of the Governance training are connected to what you do and which parts are not?</td>
<td>Other Board Members and Application of Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTR_APPL_SKILLS</td>
<td>Do you think your fellow board of education colleagues apply the Governance skills taught in the training in their practices?</td>
<td>Training Attendance and Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFCTIVNES</td>
<td>Based on your application of the Governance training topics in your practices, do you think that</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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#### New Board Member Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Frame</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OTR_TPCS</td>
<td>Now that you have months of governance under your belt, what do you wish the governance training cover that they didn’t cover?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WT_ELSE</td>
<td>Is there anything else that we haven’t talked about that would be helpful for me to know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

SURVEY MATERIALS
Appendix B1: Survey 1

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<th>New School Board Member School Governance Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Survey</td>
</tr>
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This survey is part of a doctoral dissertation research study conducted by Kathleen Koop, a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. The purpose of this study is to compare governance training in-person and on-line participants and their perceptions of applying their learned skills from the training within their governance practices during a three month period. The New Jersey School Boards Association is in support of this project.

Please be assured that the survey is not an evaluation of you or the New Jersey School Boards Association. Your participation is voluntary and your responses are completely confidential. There is a small risk that confidentiality and anonymity may be lost, but every precaution will be taken to protect this information. No individual will be identified in any results produced from the data. All data will remain accessible only to doctoral student Kathleen Koop and the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Completing this survey indicates that you consent to participate in this aspect of the research project.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kathleen Koop at k.koop@me.com.

1. Identifier: First and Last Name Initials and Birthdate (Day of the Month)
   Example: KK24

2. What are the grade levels in the district you serve?
   - K - 12
   - K - 8
   - 9-12
   - K-5
   - Other (Please specify.)

3. How many board members are on your board?

180
4. Did you complete your governance training in-person or on-line?
- In-person
- On-line

5. Improving school climate is a means to improve achievement for all SEL. What does SEL stand for?
- Second English Language
- Standards Early Literacy
- Social Emotional Learning

6. What is the name of the study that reports that Boards of Education that are focused on student achievement and adopt best practices have a positive influence on student achievement?
- Massachusetts Student Achievement Study
- New Jersey Achievement Study
- Iowa Lighthouse Study

7. The following characteristics are characteristics of an effective, successful, board team except for:
- Develop a willingness and readiness to lead and allow others to lead.
- Email frequently to include all board members to make decisions and discuss issues.
- Learn together.

8. OPMA stands for?
- Optional Partnership Mandatory Assessment
- Open Public Meetings Act
- Open Participatory Meeting Action

9. Each board must keep reasonably comprehensible minutes for all the meetings showing everything except for:
- Subjects considered.
- Vote of each member.
- Names of students receiving services.
10. In negotiations, conflicts of interest may exist, who is considered an immediate family member?

- Parent of a school official residing in the same household.
- Cousin of a school official residing in the same household.
- Grandparent of a school official residing in the same household.

11. Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying, is the gesture, act or communication is reasonably perceived to be motivated by:

- As a single or series of acts of unkindness.
- Any actual or perceived characteristic.
- A change of mood by the aggressor.

12. For Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying, board members assume the following roles except:

- Investigate incidents.
- Report incidents.
- Oversight of school climate.

13. Bylaws are:

- Board rules to chart a course of action.
- Policies for the board’s own governance.
- Laws that govern the district administration.

14. Effective school board policy is clear, legal, and...

- assessable
- concise
- workable

15. How can the New Jersey School Boards help boards of education?

- Facilitate school board meetings.
- Update board policies.
- By hiring teachers.
16. What does P.E.R.C. stand for?
- Public Employment Restrictive Codes
- Public Employment Relations Commission
- Professional Education Restrictive Code

17. In labor relations, the board's obligations are to respect the rights of the employees and the union and to honor the duty to bargain in good faith. The following are bargain duties except:
- Abide by terms of agreement
- Agree to representation for both parties.
- Meet as equals with the union.

18. How many seats are on the state board of education?
- 11
- 12
- 13

19. The Labor Relations Cycle consists of:
- Face to Face
- Question and Answer Sessions
- Legal Updates

20. There is no general prohibition against a board member as a volunteer, however, a board member must:
- Alert the principal of the intent of voluntarism.
- Not have executive functions.
- Not interact with staff.

21. The School Ethics Act is enforced by the:
- New Jersey School Boards Association
- Department of Education
- School Ethics Commission
22. Before adjourning to executive session, the Board must announce:
   - General nature of executive session matters being discussed.
   - The duration of the executive session.
   - The participants of the executive session including any guests.

23. What data should board members review?
   - Individual Student Records
   - Student Growth Objective Reports
   - Student 504 Plans

24. The special education process includes an IEP, what is an IEP?
   - Instructional Education Placement
   - Individualized Education Plan
   - Internal Evaluative Program

25. What is the State's monitoring system used to verify that a district is providing a thorough and efficient system of education?
   - New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)
   - New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)
   - New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)

26. What does the state monitoring system process include?
   - District Goals
   - Chief School Administrator Review
   - Statement of Assurance (SOA)

27. What are the functions of a board of education?
   (Check all that apply.)
   - Policy Development
   - Hiring and Evaluating of School Personnel
   - Provide a Program of Quality Instruction
   - Provide Communication between the Community and the Board
28. There are characteristics of effective board members. Which of the following is one of the characteristics?

- A board member provides a superintendent feedback about his performance after a board meeting.
- The board member seeks superintendent performance feedback directly from the principals.
- The board member realizes that certain decisions are the prerogative of the professional staff.

29. The Chief School Administrator (CSA) is evaluated by what people in the school community?

- The Chief School Administrator is evaluated by parents, students, and other administrators.
- The Chief School Administrator is evaluated by the board of education.
- The Chief School Administrator is evaluated based on performance feedback from the other administrators in the district.

30. The Chief School Administrator merit goals are not one of the following:

- Limited number of merit goals and percentages.
- Part of the annual Chief School Administrator evaluation.
- Optional
- Annual

31. Within a board of education meeting agenda, there is a list of bills. What is the list of bills?

- A list of recent legislation bills by the Department of Education.
- A list of bills from vendors doing business with the school district.
- The list of bills is a list of client expenses by the district administrators.

32. The board secretary is the secretary to the board of education. How long is a secretary’s term?

- 3 Years
- 2 Years
- 1 Year

33. An important fiscal board responsibility is to cause an annual audit of the district’s accounts and financial transactions to be made by a public school accountant. What is the name of the audit report?

- Careful Assessment Financial Report
- Comprehensive Assessment Fiscal Report
- Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
34. Data is important in assisting the board of education with their governance. What is not a reason for board of education members to analyze data?

- To evaluate the effectiveness of policies and practices.
- To select data to include in a teacher’s evaluation.
- To focus board policies on student achievement.
Appendix B2: Survey 2

1. New School Board Member School Governance Training
Post Survey

This survey is part of a doctoral dissertation research study conducted by Kathleen Koop, a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. The purpose of this study is to compare governance training in-person and on-line participants and their perceptions of applying their learned skills from the training within their governance practices during a three month period. The New Jersey School Boards Association is in support of this project.

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Completing this survey indicates that you consent to participate in this aspect of the research project.

1. Identifier: First and Last Name Initials and Birthdate (Day of the Month)
Example: KK24

2. What are the grade levels in the district you serve?
   - ○ K - 12
   - ○ 9 - 12
   - ○ K - 8
   - ○ K - 5
   - ○ Other (Please specify.)

3. How many board members are on your board?

4. Did you complete your governance training in-person or on-line?
   - ○ In-person
   - ○ On-line
5. Improving school climate is a means to improve achievement for all SEL. What does SEL stand for?

- Second English Language
- Standards Early Literacy
- Social Emotional Learning

6. What is the name of the study that reports that Boards of Education that are focused on student achievement and adopt best practices have a positive influence on student achievement?

- Massachusetts Student Achievement Study
- New Jersey Achievement Study
- Iowa Lighthouse Study

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- Learn together.
- Email frequently to include all board members to make decisions and discuss issues.

8. OPMA stands for?

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- Open Participatory Meeting Action

9. Each board must keep reasonably comprehensible minutes for all the meetings showing everything except for:

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- Vote of each member.
- Names of students receiving services.

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- Abide by terms of agreement
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18. How many seats are on the state board of education?
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19. The Labor Relations Cycle consists of:
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- The participants of the executive session including any guests.
23. What data should board members review?
- Individual Student Records
- Student Growth Objective Reports
- Student 504 Plans

24. The special education process includes an IEP, what is an IEP?
- Instructional Education Placement
- Individualized Education Plan
- Individual Evaluative Program

25. What is the State's monitoring system used to verify that a district is providing a thorough and efficient system of education?
- New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSSA)
- New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)
- New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)

26. What does the state monitoring system process include?
- District Goals
- Chief School Administrator Review
- Statement of Assurance (SOA)

27. What are the functions of a board of education?
(Check all that apply.)
- Policy Development
- Hiring and Evaluating of School Personnel
- Provide a Program of Quality Instruction
- Provide Communication between the Community and the Board

28. There are characteristics of effective board members. Which of the following is one of the characteristics?
- A board member provides superintendent feedback about his performance after a board meeting.
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Appendix B3: Survey 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New School Board Member School Governance Training</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Months After Training Survey</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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- Comprehensive Assessment Fiscal Report
- Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

33. Data is important in assisting the board of education with their governance. What is not a reason for board of education members to analyze data?

- To evaluate the effectiveness of policies and practices.
- To select data to include in a teacher's evaluation.
- To focus board policies on student achievement.
34. In what ways did governance training influence your practices as a school board member?

35. What prohibited you from applying the governance training skills in your practices?

36. What are some governance training skills that you learned before but would like to review again?

37. What are some examples of how you applied the skills you learned in the governance training in your practices?

38. During what particular governance situations, if any, do you apply the skills you learned in the training the most?

39. In what governance situations, if any, do you NOT apply the skills you learned in the training?

40. If you completed the governance training on-line, would you complete an on-line training again? Why or why not?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41. If you completed the governance training in-person, would you take</td>
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<td>the training in-person again? Why or why not?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>42. Have you attended or plan to attend additional professional</td>
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<td>development offered to school board members by the New Jersey Boards</td>
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<td>Association? If so, on what topics?</td>
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</table>
Appendix B4: Interview Consent Form

*Interview Consent Form*

You are invited to participate in this interview because you are a new board of education member in the State of New Jersey as of November 2017. Please read this document and ask any questions that you may have prior to beginning the interview.

Kathleen Koop, a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, in partnership with the New Jersey School Boards Association, is conducting this research study.

The purpose of this study is to survey and interview new school board members about their retention of and application of in-person and on-line governance training skills. Procedures: If you agree to participate, this interview will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you. Interviews will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. With your permission, the conversation will be audiotaped.

Risks and Benefits: Your participation may help to inform the New Jersey School Boards Association and Kathleen Koop about the knowledge and application of learned skills of in-person and on-line governance training participants.

Compensation: There will be no financial compensation for participation.

Confidentiality: You understand that all information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential. There is a small risk that confidentiality and anonymity may be lost but every precaution will be taken to protect this information. If any publication results from this research, you will only be identified by a pseudonym, and other information that could reveal your identity will be disguised.

Withdrawal: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher of the New Jersey School Board Association. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting the relationships. You are also free not to answer any question during the interview and to end the interview at any time. If you have any questions, please contact Kathleen Koop at k.koop@me.com

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I have had, and I have received answers to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature of Participant ____________________________ Date ______________

Name of Participant (Please print.) ______________________________________

I DO ( ) DO NOT ( ) consent to be audio recorded

Signature of Researcher __________________________________________ Date __________

Appendix B5: Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Recording the Interviews - Information will be recorded by audiotaping using two devices, just in case there are technical difficulties with one of the devices. Rev.com will complete transcription of the interviews.

Location of Interviews: Since the board of education members will be from all over the state, I will travel to the location of their choice for the interview or I will interview the participants by phone. For safety reasons, I will suggest a public place or interview the interviewee before or after a public board of education meeting.

Topic - Perceptions of Governance Training Skill Applications on their School Board Practices

Date – Between August 2018 and October 2018

Interviewer - Kathleen Koop

Interviewees – New School Members who completed the governance training face-to-face.

Instructions for the Interviewer to Follow

The interviewer will arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the interview to ensure that the recording equipment is set and the location of the interview is comfortable.

The interviewer will bring water for the interviewee.

Standards procedures for the interview

The interviewees will be asked to sign a consent form.

The interviewees will be told that there will be two recording devices.
Appendix B6: Recruitment and Eligibility Information

Research Study - School Board of Education Members and Professional Development - Influences on their Practices.
Research conducted by Kathleen Koop – Doctoral Student at the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education in partnership with the New Jersey School Boards Association.
Department – Graduate School of Education
Principal Investigator – Dr. Jonathan Supovitz
There is no compensation or reimbursement.

In partnership with the New Jersey School Boards Association, I am seeking volunteers to participate in surveys and interviews for a research study about New Jersey School Board of Education members and their professional development. I am looking for participants who have completed the face-to-face governance training.

Eligibility: To be eligible for the study you must be a new New Jersey school board member, who was elected or appointed in November 2017.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to survey face-to-face new New Jersey School Board of Education members about what they learned at governance training, whether they retained what they learned at the governance training, and how they think they have applied their learn skills during a three-month period of governance practices.

Time Commitment –
Surveys
First Survey – Approximately 5 minutes
Second Survey – Approximately 5 minutes
Third Survey – Approximate 10 minutes
Interview – 30 – 40 minutes

Procedures – Participants will complete a survey before completing the governance training and the same survey after the training. Volunteers will be asked to complete a third survey six to eight months after the completion of their governance training. Survey participants will be asked if they would volunteer to be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted in a location of the interviewee’s choice or on the phone.

For further information about the research study, please contact Kathleen Koop at (908) 249-2219. Thank you for your consideration for participation in this study!
### Interview Questions and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>What motivated you to become a board of education member?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Did you decide to become a board of education member because of a single issue or issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>What do you like about being a board of education member? What do you dislike?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>Is your experience as a board of education member what you thought it would be, and how has what you thought it would be changed because of the Governance training?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>How many board of education members are on your board of education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>What are the grade levels of the district you serve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Do you attend optional school board trainings offered by the New Jersey School Boards Association?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Which board trainings have you attended or plan to attend?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>What did you learn in the Governance training?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>What are the three things you remember about the governance training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>How if at all, has your Governance training helped you in your position as a board of education member? If so, how has your Governance training helped or not helped you?</td>
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## Interview Questions and Categories

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<td>12.</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Have you applied your learned skills from the Governance training in your school board practices? If so, what are some examples of how you applied them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>What prohibits you from applying the skills that you learned from your Governance training in your practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>What supports you in applying the skills that you learned from your Governance training in your practices?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>When you forget something that you learned from your Governance training, how do you find out the information to apply in your practices?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Background/Impact of Training</td>
<td>What are the big issues that your board is dealing with? As a board are you in general agreement? Did anything in your governance training help you navigate through the big issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Application of Skills</td>
<td>How do you review your Governance training application of skills to ensure that you are an effective school board of education member?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>What parts/topics of the Governance training are connected to what you do and which parts are not? Some of the topics included in the training were effective board member governance, QASAC, education law, board meeting protocol, student achievement, budget, school operations, and CSA evaluation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Do you think your fellow board of education colleagues apply the Governance skills taught in the training in their practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Impact of Training</td>
<td>Based on your application of the Governance training topics in your practices, do you think that attending the mandated Governance</td>
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### Interview Questions and Categories

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<td>training is related to your effectiveness as a board member? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Now that you have six months of governance under your belt, what do you wish the governance covered that they didn’t cover?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Is there anything else that we haven’t talked about that would be helpful for me to know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.


