St. Louis Public Schools
Long Term Governance Special Committee Task Force

Elected Board Governance

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Missouri School Boards’ Association

• Private, non-profit established and governed by local school board members
• Unified voice of school board members in advocating for strong public schools
• Board of Directors represent 17 regions; St. Louis, Kansas City and Springfield
• Provide services, including training, legal and policy, to 400 member districts
  • (94% of Missouri students)
National School Boards’ Association

• Represent state school boards associations and more than 90,000 school board members
• Advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership
• Education is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people
• All children should have equal access to an excellent education
St. Louis Public Schools

Mission
We will provide a quality education for all students and enable them to realize their full intellectual potential.
Elected or Appointed
Urban School Board Members (N=40)

- Locally Elected: 82%
- Primarily Appointed: 15%
- Elected and Appointed: 3%

Elected School Boards

• 96% of school districts have elected boards
  – including 2/3 of the 25 largest districts

• Result of Progressive Movement
  – Provide local control
  – Insulate from political influence
  – “Off-cycle” and non-partisan elections

School Boards in Missouri

• 515 locally elected school boards
  – Metropolitan (St. Louis)
  – Urban (Kansas City; St. Joseph; Independence; Lee’s Summit; Ft. Zumwalt; Columbia and Springfield)
  – Other

• Governed by statutes and regulations
  – Qualifications; ethics; terms; training

• 3 Specially Appointed Boards
  – St. Louis; Normandy; Riverview Gardens
  – Additional statutes and regulations
Elected Board

• Models **democratic process** for stakeholders, including students
• Increases stakeholder and community **interest** and **engagement** in schools
• Allows for more **direct accessibility of families** to officials who make policies
• Non-partisan boards allow for **greater independence** to act in best interest of district and children
Models Democratic Process

• School board members **largest number of elected officials**
  – 13,600 local school districts
  – 90,000 school board members
    • 86,400 elected school board members
  – 3,605 elected board members in MO

Increases Stakeholder Engagement

• Provides representation of entire community, wards and regions

• Avenue for racial and ethnic minorities to enter elected community service
  – Large districts
    • 21.8% African American; 6% Hispanic

• Ensures involvement of the public in public education
Direct Accessibility for Families

• Allows taxpayers and parents to choose those making the decisions
• Elected school board members have increased responsiveness to stakeholders
• Allows for increased opportunities for public discussion and criticism

Greater Independence

- **Non-partisan** elected officials
  - Inherently **more accountable** to stakeholders
- **Unpaid** positions
  - Missouri Revised Statutes 162.581

Governance Challenges

• Serve as a **team** and not an individual

• Require **balanced leadership**
  – *Governance* - Board
  – *Administrative* - Superintendent/Central Office
  – *Operational* - Principals, Teachers, Staff

• Maintain **unity and focus** in achieving mission with many demands, including constituents

• Operate in a **dynamic and uncertain political climate**
Individual Authority

• No individual board member authority
  – *Colombo v. Buford, 935 S.W.2d 690 (1996)*
  – “Unless otherwise authorized by the Board, individual members are not empowered to act and cannot govern.”

• Govern as a team
  – SLPS Board Policy B9270

• Delegate to superintendent
  – SLPS Board Policies P2111; P2400; P8331
Maintain Unity and Focus

• Increased national, state and local demands
  – NCLB; ESSA
  – MSIP5

• Increased financial challenges
  – Reduced funding for education

• Increased social and political issues
  – Increased poverty and income inequity
    • 29.3% poverty rate for St. Louis City (2014)
  – Trauma related issues
  – Mental health of students, families and staff
Effective Governance
Key Studies

- **Does School Board Leadership Matter?** (2014)
  Shober and Hartney, Fordham Institute

- **The Problem: Low-Achieving Districts and Low-Performing Boards** (2015)
  Lee and Eadens, University of Southern Mississippi and Northern Arizona University

- **Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards** (2011)
  Center for Public Education

- **Lighthouse Study #1 (2000) and Lighthouse Study #2 (2007), Standards of Effective Boards**
  Iowa Association of School Boards

Effective Governance Teams

• Primary focus -- student learning and performance
• Clearly established vision, mission and goals
  • Clarify district purpose and critical priorities
  • Identify *measurable goals* for the district
• Effectively fulfill board responsibilities
  • Ethical and legal behaviors
  • Maintain and use current *policies*
  • Delegate authority; yet ensure accountability and *monitor progress*
Effective Governance Teams

- Respectful and **collaborative relationships** with each other, superintendent and staff
- Encourage **two-way reliable and representative communication** with all stakeholders
- Engage in **training and professional development** to improve governance practices
Transitional Formats
Appointed to Elected Boards

- Fully Appointed to Fully Elected
  - Prince George County, MD (2002-2013)
    - 14 member hybrid board of elected and appointed

- Shared Governance
  - Logan County, West Virginia (1992-1996)
    - Now all elected

- Incremental Governance Responsibilities
  - Fayette County, West Virginia (2011-2017)

- Staggered Replacement of Appointed Members
  - Aberdeen, MS (2012-2017)
  - Hartford, CT (1997-2002)
    - 4 elected; 5 appointed
Governance Structure of SLPS Reflect What the Community Values

- Commitment to Serve All Children
- Democratic Process for Stakeholders
- Direct Accessibility to Policymakers
- Accountability and Transparency
- Non-partisan Governance Structure
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