

School boards continue to serve as the central policymaking body in U.S. education. This unique study examines the experience and perspective of board members, especially those working outside of urban areas.



This study examined:

-  How does local context shape board members' policymaking?
-  How do board members differentially understand and respond to their communities?
-  How can state level associations support the work of school boards?

Our goal is to connect theory to action, leading board members and policymakers in a conversation about how to support boards' efforts to improve and enhance educational opportunity.

PROJECT DIRECTORS

Lisa M. Dorner, Ph.D.
dornerl@missouri.edu

Sujin Kim, Ph.D.
kimsujin@missouri.edu

RESEARCH TEAM

**Laura Browning
Jinmyung Choi
Jason McKinney
Isabel Montes Gutierrez
Jeong-Mi Moon**

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS *and* POLICYMAKING

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Dr. Lisa M. Dorner
Associate Professor
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
& POLICY ANALYSIS



SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS and POLICYMAKING

This research aimed to understand:

1. The challenges facing school boards and how state associations could support school boards more effectively
2. How school board members make sense of demographic changes and challenges, in particular

FINDINGS

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF BOARD WORK

Across six participating school districts, this study found:

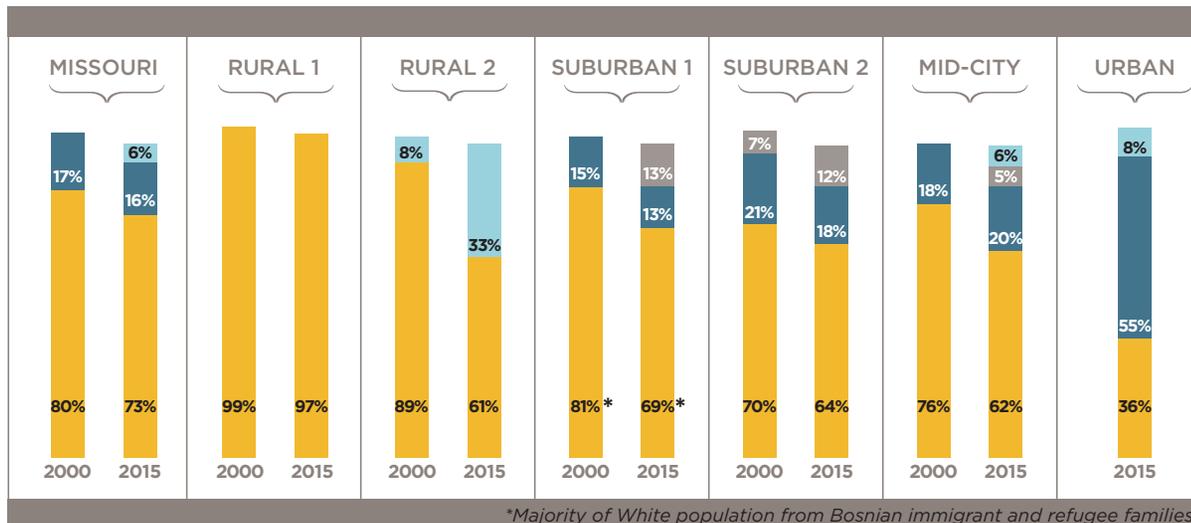
- Highly motivated and engaged board members
- State association training and opportunities (MSBA/MASA/MARE)
- Collaborative and data-driven decision making
- Community accountability, including incorporation of community voice and shared decision-making process
- Awareness of racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in their communities
- Development of responsive policies and programs

CHALLENGES OF BOARD WORK

However, board members faced a variety of challenges in their districts, including:

- Pressures to meet federal and state accountability measures
- Achievement gaps between student subgroups
- Insufficient funding and resources
- Lack of established policymaking processes
- Demographic changes and challenges of serving culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Unequal and lack of full community representation and voices in decision-making

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPATING MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICTS



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MOVING FORWARD

School boards need support in how to:

- Customize policies for particular needs of their local district
- Serve and engage their linguistically and culturally diverse communities
- Find specialized training for specific programmatic and policy decision making that may occur in the design of charter schools, dual language programs, multicultural education, and family engagement
- Establish a database of resources, grant opportunities, and collective professional development opportunities across districts in Missouri