

Assessing Yourself as a Board Member

Association of Alaska School Boards
63rd Annual Conference



The Importance of Locally Elected Boards

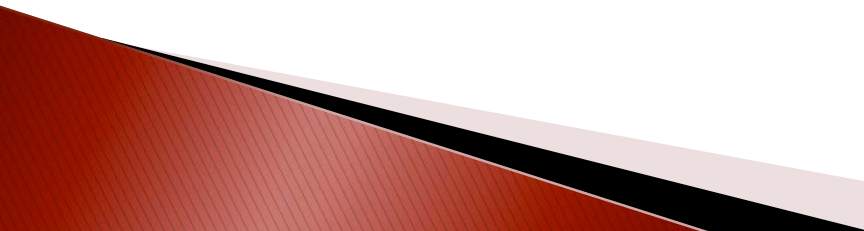
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards matter
to democracy.



“As we have said before, local school boards are the *crucible of democracy*. Local school elections in America provide the closest example of democracy for the American people.”

Laurence Iannaccone/Frank Lutz, 2008
Professors Emeritus,
Univ. of California/Texas A & M
Democratic board theorists, 1959



Why is Self Assessment Necessary?



.....because Elected Boards matter to student performance.

Board Beliefs and Values

Boards in **high achieving** districts were consistently different from boards in **low achieving** districts:

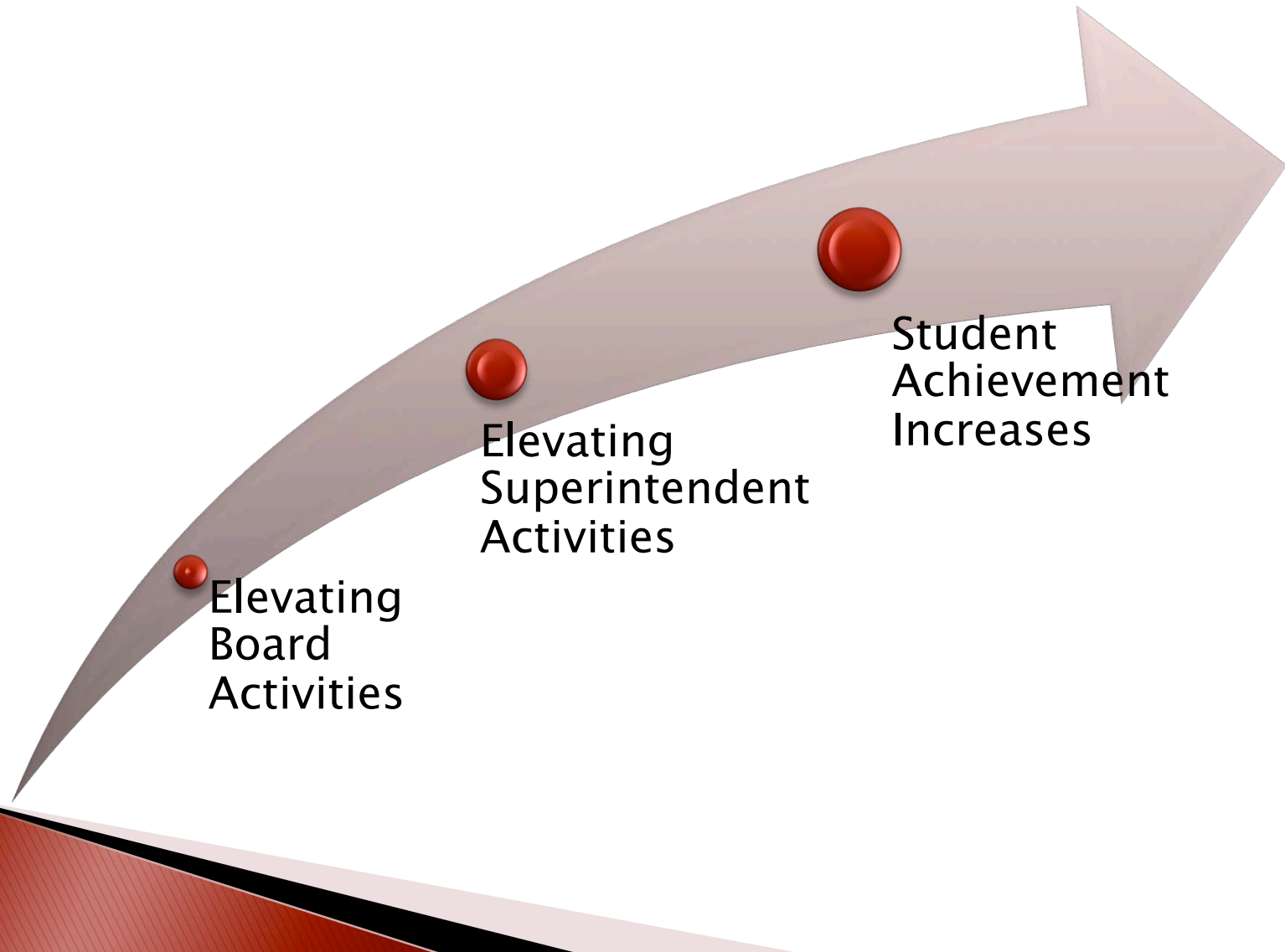
- ▶ They held differing Beliefs

High Achieving district boards believe in.....

- ▶ **Constant Quest for personal and system improvement**

(Delagardelle, 2001–2016)

Shelton– Focus on Activities to Increase Student Achievement



Local Autonomy is Critical

“..(national) systems that grant more autonomy to (school districts) to define and elaborate their curriculum and assessments perform better than systems that don’t..”

“there is a positive correlation in school (district) autonomy for resource allocation and improved student performance”

Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education – PISA Report 2012



Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards are
under attack.



“God made the Idiot
for practice....

...and then he made
the school board.”

Mark Twain, 1897





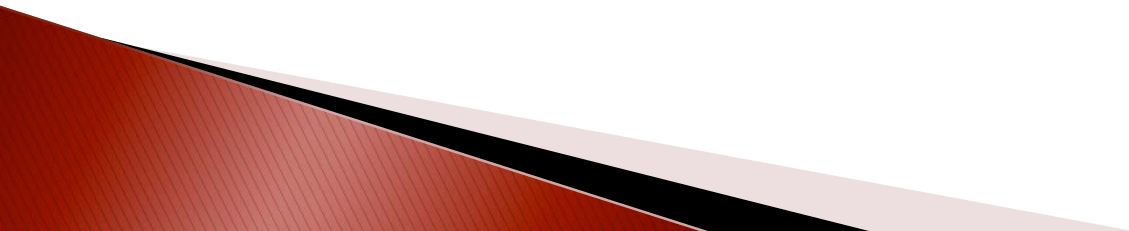
Texas bill would establish a process to allow voters to **recall individual trustees** if the state lowers a school district's **academic** or **financial** rating from one year to the next.

April 18, 2015
Texas, HB 1327

Wave of the Future?

“The more uncomfortable
I can make it (for trustees),
the better the idea “

Texas House Education Chairman, 2015



Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards can
be replaced.



Eli Broad: The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems



“mayoral control of
school boards
or . . . no school
board at all.”

–Eli Broad (address, National
Governors Association Education
Policy Advisors Institute, Marina del
Rey, CA, April 4, 2003)

Mayoral Controlled Board's in Decline

1990: 40
DISTRICTS

2013: 11
DISTRICTS

2016: 8
DISTRICTS

Source: Wong & Shen, 2013 (Center for
American Progress Report, The Broad
Foundation)

Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards need
balanced governance.



Eli Broad: On Board Members

*“Unfortunately, the boards
....tend to be populated
with well-meaning supporters*

*...who often lack
any business background.....”*



The Perfect Board

What board member occupation mix
would create the best school board?

A majority of.....

Educators?

Business persons?

Professionals?

Labor & Homemakers?

Retired?



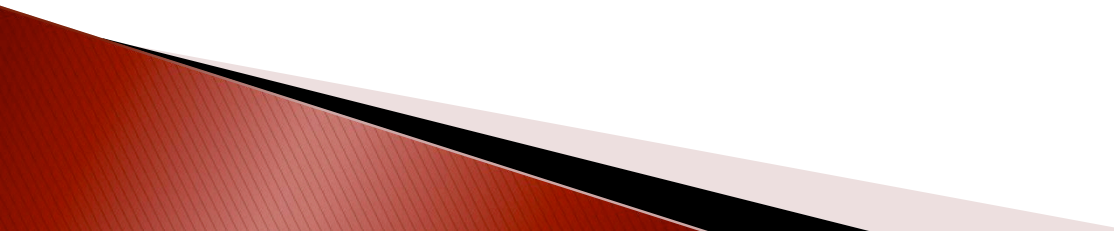
Board Member Occupations

Majority Businessperson = Less Effective Board

Majority Educators = Less Effective Board

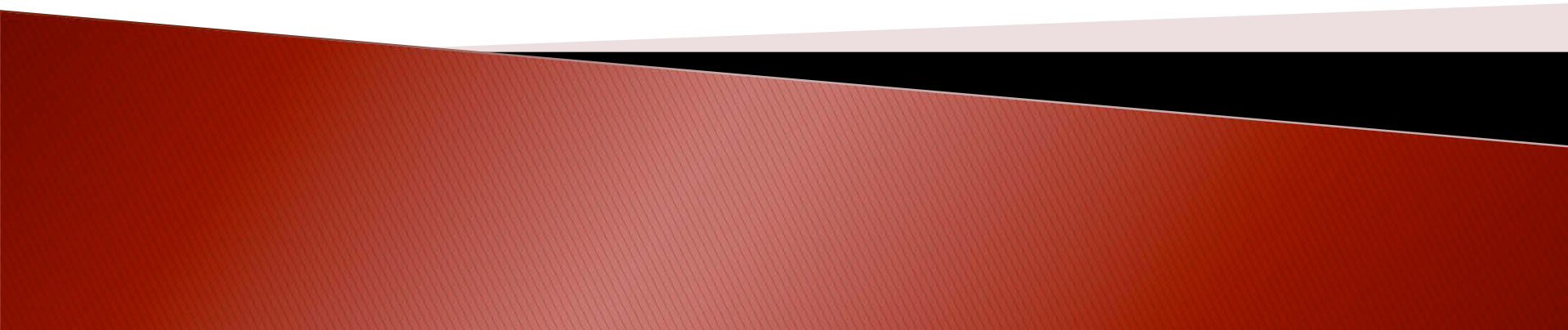
Balance of all Occupational Backgrounds =
Most Effective Board

*Fordham Institute Report: Shober & Hartney, 2014–Does School Board Leadership Matter?



Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards can
be seen as dysfunctional.





“The local school board, especially the elected kind, is an anachronism and an outrage....”

“We can no longer pretend it’s working well.....”

“We need to.....put this **dysfunctional arrangement** out of its misery....”

Chester E. Finn Jr., President,
Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2014

Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards can
become dysfunctional.



Dysfunctional Boards?

Ineffective governance
is often the byproduct
of what has been called
"school board dysfunction,"



–Education Week, March 2015, John Mannes

IMPROVING SCHOOL BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

A BALANCED GOVERNANCE APPROACH

EDITED BY
THOMAS L. ALSBURY
PHIL GORE

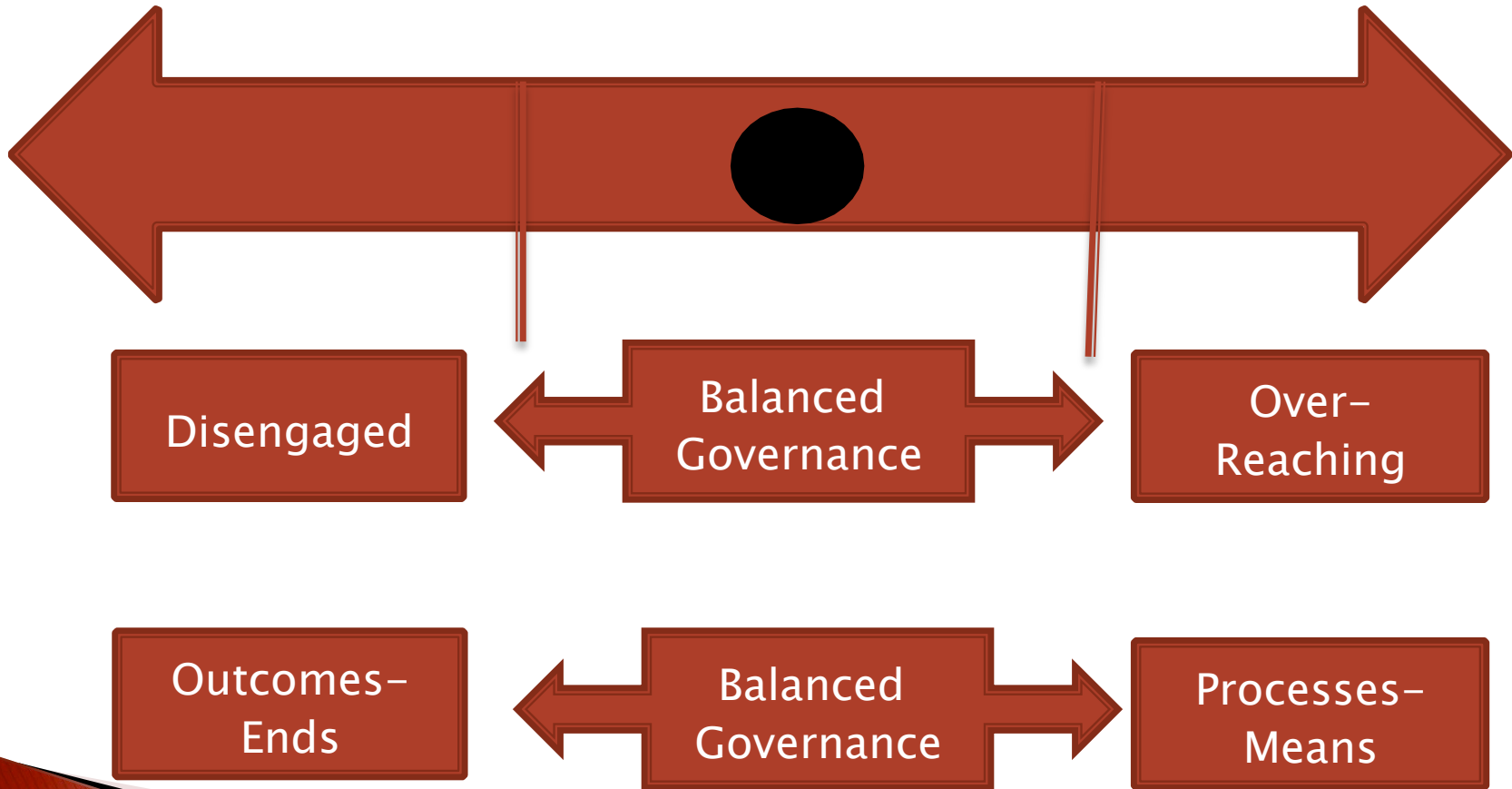
FOREWORD BY
WILLARD R. DAGGETT

Balanced Governance

2015
Alsbury & Gore
Harvard Press

Balanced Governance™

Governance Continuum

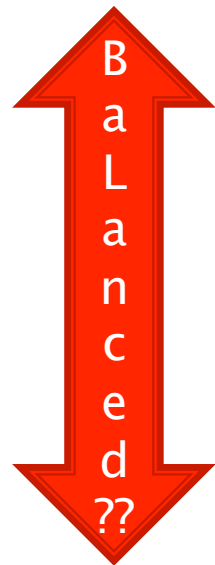


Governance Models Continuum

Disengaged Board



Integrated Governance (Wong & Shen)
Democractic Governance (Hill)



Policy Governance (Carver/Broad)
Coherent Governance (Quinn & Dawson)

Balanced Governance (Alsbury)

Lighthouse Governance (Delagardelle)



Over-Reaching Board

Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

.....because Elected Boards can
become unbalanced.



Unbalanced Boards (Alsbury, 2008)

Frequent Politically–Contentious Board turnover



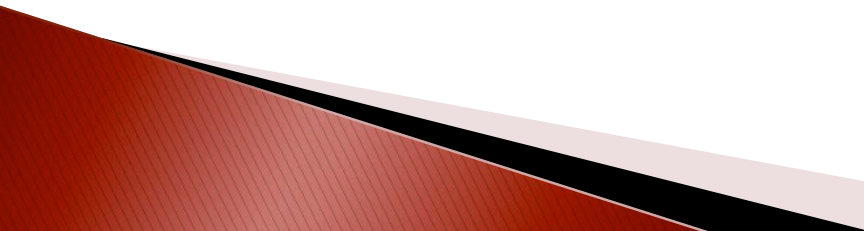
Frequent Superintendent turnover



Student achievement decline



Unbalanced Boards Can Hurt Schools

- ▶ Board and superintendent tenure is declining (Glass, 2009)
 - Loss of organizational memory
 - Loss of board training by experienced members
 - ▶ Indirect but significant influence (Glass, 2007)
 - Decline of staff morale/security
 - Discontinuity of goals/purpose
 - Declining community confidence in schools
 - Personnel instability & Lack of confidence
- 

What can cause school boards to become unbalanced?

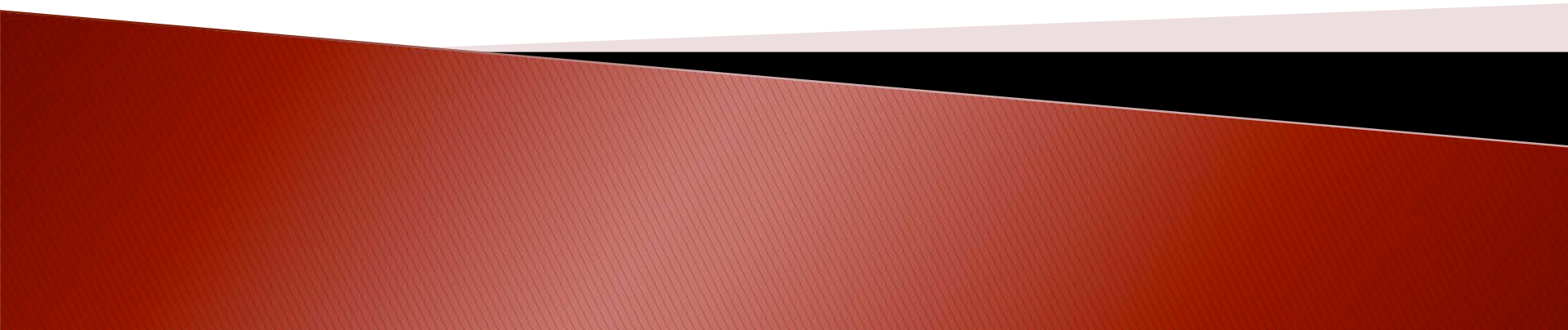


“While a Board member independently calls the shots in the campaign, the job itself demands collaboration”

Education Week, March 2015,
John Mannes

Dealing with the UnBalanced Board

The Disconnected Board Member



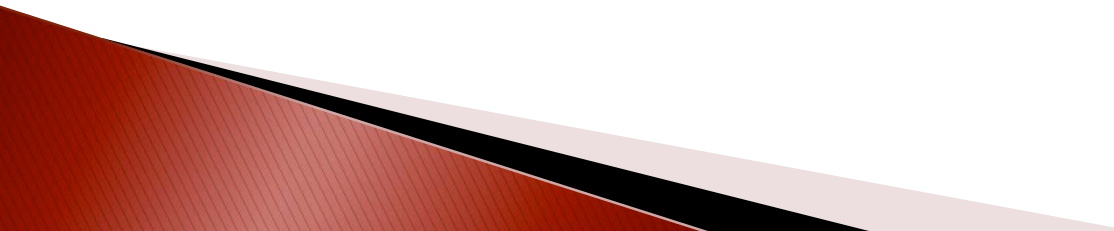
The Unbalanced Continuum



- ▶ Are disconnected board members.....

Disgruntled
or
Rogue?

Disgruntled vs. Rogue Board Members

- ▶ **Disgruntled** members usually recover from whatever is causing their discomfort; they move on for the greater good of the board and the school corporation.
 - ▶ **Rogue** members are preoccupied with one-upmanship and/or getting even. With rogue members, it is seldom about right or wrong, rather, it is about winning at all costs.
- 

Disgruntled Member Solutions

Evaluation

- ▶ Annual board self-assessment
- ▶ External evaluation
- ▶ Required orientation training for candidates and new board members
- ▶ Formative board observation and evaluation

All need to include the Balanced Governance individual board member characteristics.

Disgruntled Member Solutions

Relationship Development

- ▶ Opportunities for social dialogue/relationship building...done through frequent, embedded conversations in work meetings.
- ▶ Embed relationship building opportunities in orientation training.
- ▶ Channel energies of the board member into special projects.
- ▶ Personal intervention

Policy Solutions

- ▶ Craft and follow the Balanced Governance Progressive Response policy

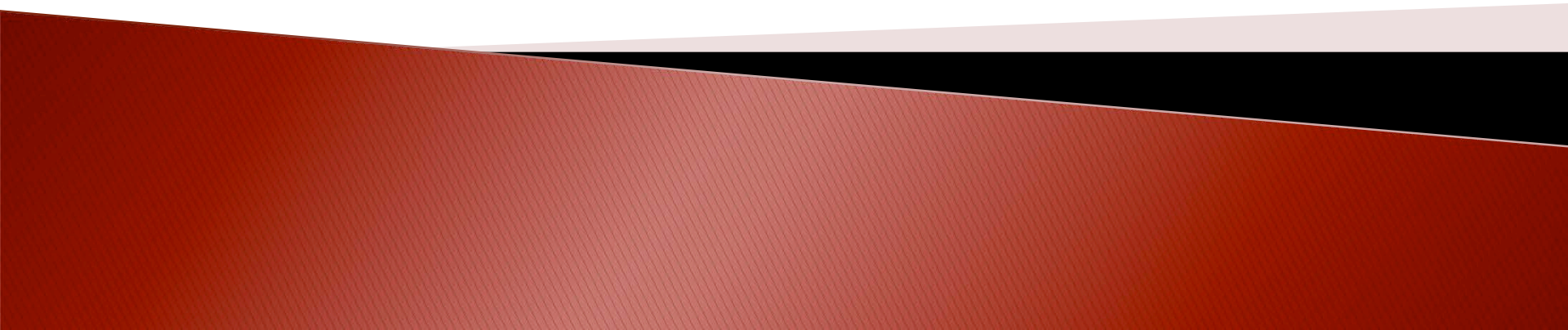
Rogue Board Member Solution: 3 C's

Goal: Minimize influence & survive the term of office

- ▶ Compact (Operating procedures / Board authority)
 - Specific, signed, publicly adopted
- ▶ Containment
 - Written and structured meeting facilitation
 - Give comments/suggestion perfunctory consideration
 - Do not elaborate or allow them to elaborate
 - Follow strict meeting protocols to reduce opportunities to grandstand.
- ▶ Censure

Balancing the School Board

Individual Board Member Characteristics



Characteristic #1: Role Boundaries

- ▶ Understands the difference between a **disengaged or rubberstamp** board member

.....and an **over-reaching or micro-managing** board member and

.....practices ***informed oversight.***

Characteristic #2: Role Orientation

- ▶ Understands how and when to enact...
..... an **open dialogue** versus
.....an **open debate** orientation.
 - An *open dialogue* orientation focuses on general interests and welcomes various viewpoints, but practices unanimous support of final board decisions.
 - An *open debate* orientation focuses on activism and special interests and individual viewpoints over collective consensus. Individual board members do not support final board decisions.

Characteristic #3: Advocacy Focus

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....being *position-driven* and
.....being *interest-driven*.
 - A *position* is often polarizing and identifies “friends” versus “enemies”.
 - An *interest* is discovered through conversation to get to shared solutions that can be applied to many students and achieved through various means.

Characteristic #4:

Student Concern Focus

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....a **broad** focus and
.....a **targeted** focus
on student concerns.
- A **broad** focus on student concerns includes a stated responsibility to insure all students are afforded opportunities to succeed.
- A **targeted** focus emphasizes providing opportunities for single groups of students.

Characteristic #5: Solution Focus

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....*standardized* and
.....*contextualized* solutions.
 - A *standardized solution* is characterized by the belief that one-size-fits-all, and that what works for one district will always work for another. This approach often ignores adequate need assessment.
 - The *contextualized solution* recognizes that the local school district, and each school, has **unique and shifting needs**; often requiring **innovative solutions**. This view supports the need for standards but not standardization.

Standardized Solutions



Characteristic #6: Exercise of Influence

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....*individual authority* and
.....*collective authority*.
- Understands *appropriate visibility*.

School Board Conflict

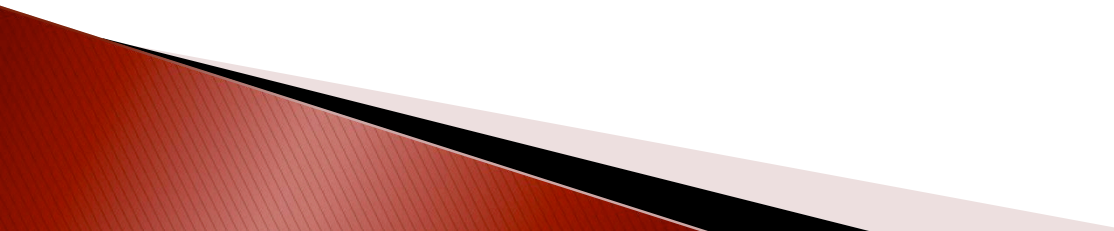
Mountford (2008) Studies

Characteristic #7: Use of Voice

- ▶ Understands the difference between the use of voice
.....to *tell and sell* their position versus
.....seeking to *hear and understand*
interests,
and come to resolution and reconciliation.

Characteristic #8: Use of Power

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....*power over* and
.....*power with*.

- *Power Over* is using your position to get your own way through threat or reward.
 - *Power With* is using your position to ensure all voices are heard and collaborative solutions are guaranteed.
- 

Mixed Power

- ▶ Power conceptualized using some combination of both definitions of “power over” and “power with”

Power is working with others to get them to do what you want them to do. (Board

Member 28M)



Power to me is providing the resources necessary for principals and teachers to meet the district objectives I have set. (Superintendent)

Characteristic #9: Decision-making Style

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....*collaborative* and
.....*individual* decision-making.

Characteristic #10: Motivation for Service

- ▶ Understands the difference between
.....*altruistic* motivation and
.....*personal* motivation
for school board service.

Motivation for Service

- ▶ Understands the difference between *altruistic* and *personal* motivation for service.

Altruistic:

Desire to help all students

Desire to serve

Personal:

To fix a single problem

Ego or prestige

Personal or political need for involvement

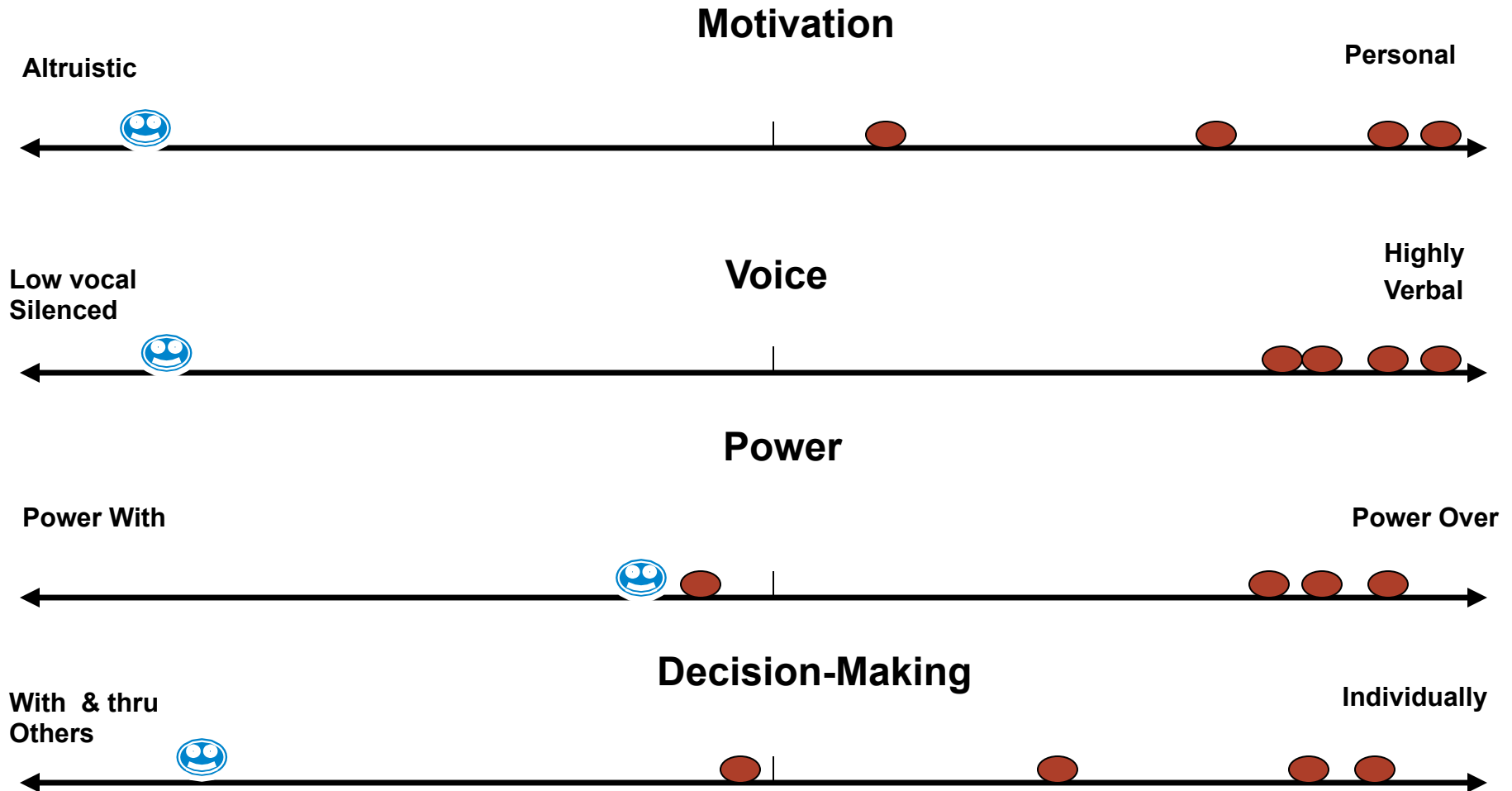
<u>Motivation for Membership</u>	Reported by Board Members		
To fix a single problem	24%		
Desire to help all students	32%		
Desire to serve	40%		
Personal or political need for involvement	4%		
Ego or Prestige	0%		

<u>Motivation for Membership</u>	Reported by Board Members	Reported by Board Member Colleagues	
To fix a single problem	24%	33%	
Desire to help all students	32%	28.5%	
Desire to serve	40%	10%	
Personal or political need for involvement	4%	18.5%	
Ego or Prestige	0%	10%	

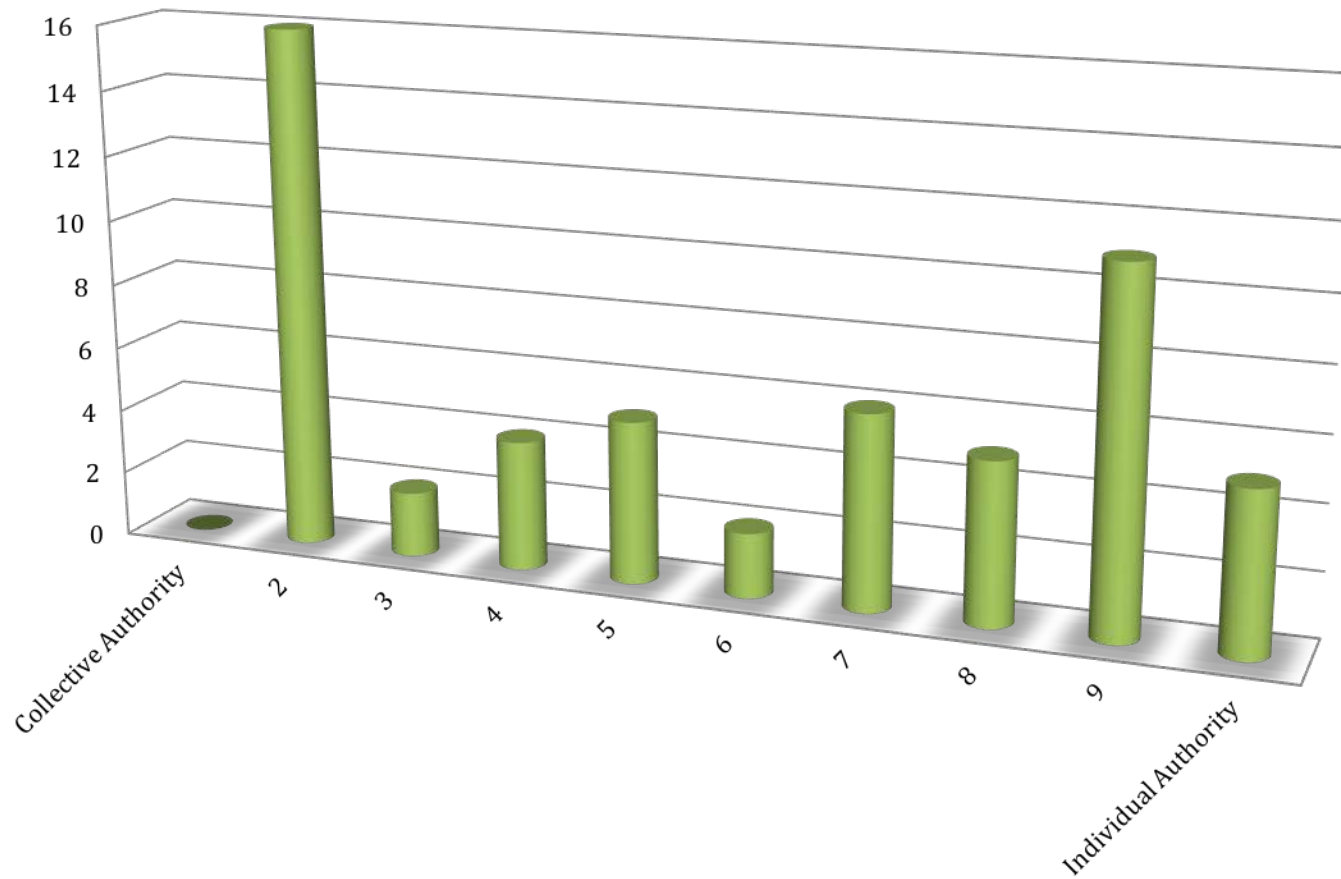
<u>Motivation for Membership</u>	Reported by Board Members	Reported by Board Member Colleagues	Reported by The Superintendent
To fix a single problem	24%	33%	35%
Desire to help all students	32%	28.5%	20%
Desire to serve	40%	10%	10%
Personal or political need for involvement	4%	18.5%	24%
Ego or Prestige	0%	10%	11%

Self-Evaluation Profile

Sample Personal Profile



Characteristic #6: Exercise of Influence





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