

The School Board Chair: “Meeting” Expectations

by Susan Leigh Flinspach and Jason Bradley Kay

“[I harbor] some uncertainty about how much power the board chair should have.”

—1999 survey respondent

THE CHAIRPERSONS of North Carolina school boards have an excellent resource for improving their leadership roles: the members of their own boards. Each school board member holds his or her expectations of the chair, and the board chairperson who is aware of these expectations is better prepared to lead the board. Some chairpersons learn about these expectations while at a retreat or a board work session; others learn less formally by listening and asking questions. Either way, as chairpersons reflect on board processes and problems, they benefit from knowing what members expect of them.

The purpose of this article is to help North Carolina school board chairpersons improve their leadership roles by examining board members’ expectations of the chair position. The data used throughout the article derive from a 1999 survey of school board members in North Carolina and have been evaluated in light of the notion of *facilitative leadership*, that is, leadership directed toward meeting the interests of everyone involved. The article concludes with a checklist of chair roles, based empirically on board members’ expectations, that is designed to give chairpersons a structured way to reflect on their own leadership.

The article comprises three main sections. The first section presents a statistical picture of school board

chairpersons in North Carolina from the 1999 survey data. The second sets out a framework for studying leadership roles that is based on school board members’ expectations of the role of chairperson. Survey data on these expectations give shape to a checklist of chair roles, which is presented in the third and final section and which offers current board chairpersons an indicator of how well they are doing in the position.

School Board Chairpersons in North Carolina

“The chairman is the key to the success or failure of a school system.”

—1999 survey respondent

In 1999, the Institute of Government and the North Carolina School Boards Association co-sponsored the School Board Training Survey. Questionnaires were mailed to all 787 members on the 100 county, 17 city, and 3 federal school boards in the state. The questionnaires were sent in May. A follow-up questionnaire was mailed to non-respondents in August. The response rate was 54 percent, meaning that 428 board members had returned their questionnaires by November 1, when the study ended. Only one school board—a county board—did not respond. With that exception, the board-level response rates varied from one returned questionnaire to nine. The average number of returned questionnaires was 3.6 per school board.

A total of 139 survey respondents reported that they currently serve as the board chairperson or that they had served as chairperson in the past. Most of these 139 respondents have been on public school boards for

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more than one term (see Table 1), and 45 percent of them have been school board members nine years or longer. In North Carolina, apparently only rarely is the board chairperson a newcomer to the school board.

Even experienced board members, however, are unlikely to assume the chair position fully prepared for the office. The incoming chairperson is usually called on to learn new skills and handle new responsibilities, such as managing meetings, helping the school board work with the superintendent, and representing the board to others. Because of the learning curve associated with becoming the chair, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards¹ and a national study of “well-governed” versus “troubled” school boards² agree that boards benefit when the chairperson remains in office for at least two years. The national study of school boards makes the following recommendation:

The board should select its most able member as chair or president, based on his or her leadership qualities. The practice of rotating the chair among members should be eliminated, and each chair should serve for at least two years.³

Table 2 shows the years in office reported by the current and former board chairpersons in the 1999 survey. Of these respondents, 43 percent report that they have served as chairperson for less than two years, the minimum length of time recommended in the two national reports; 80 percent, for four years or less. Given the demands on the board chair, these figures are not surprising. Yet shorter terms mean that school board chairpersons have less time to master the skills, responsibilities, and expectations of the office.

Expectations of the School Board Chair

“The board chair sets the tempo—what he does affects the whole board.”
—1999 survey respondent

The concept of facilitative leadership—that is, leadership based on facilitating and empowering oth-

1. E. C. Dorsey, *The Role of the Board Chairperson*, NCNB Governance Series Booklet 11 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1992), p. 13.

2. R. H. Goodman et al., *Getting There from Here. School Board–Superintendent Collaboration: Creating a School Governance Team Capable of Raising Student Achievement* (Arlington, Va.: New England School Development Council and Educational Research Service, 1997), p. 43.

3. *Id.* at 42.

Table 1
Current and Former School Board Chairpersons:
Years of Service on the Board

Years of Service	Number of Chairpersons	Percent (%)
< 2 years	1	0.7
2 to 4 years	20	14.4
5 to 8 years	54	38.8
9 to 12 years	30	21.6
13+ years	33	23.7
No response	1	0.7
Total	139	99.9

Table 2
Years of Service as the Chair by Current and Former School Board Chairpersons

Years of Service	Number of Chairpersons	Percent (%)
< 2 years	60	43.2
2 to 4 years	52	37.4
5 to 8 years	19	13.7
9+ years	8	5.8
Total	139	100.1

ers—provides the framework for the remainder of this article. A facilitative leader helps others to

... focus on the interests of all stakeholders and craft solutions that address all the interests. This does not mean that facilitative leaders give up their own interests. Rather, they think of their interests as one of many sets of interests to be considered when crafting solutions.⁴

Of particular interest in the use and study of this concept is the checklist of facilitative leadership roles developed by James Svava for city council chairs and mayors.⁵ Svava’s checklist consists of ten roles organized into three categories:

4. R. M. Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), p. 254.

5. Svava’s research focuses on mayors and chairpersons in the council-manager form of city government. He first elaborated his model and developed the roles checklist in J. H. Svava & Associates, *Facilitative Leadership in Local Government: Lessons from Successful Mayors and Chairpersons* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994). The checklist is also part of the re-

- traditional or automatic roles
- policy and organizing roles
- active coordination and communication roles.⁶

Traditional or automatic roles are “built into the office”;⁷ they include doing ceremonial tasks, presiding over meetings, acting as a representative or promoter to other governments and agencies, and serving as a link between the board and the public. The second category, *policy and organizing roles*, calls for the chair to be a goal setter, a delegator and organizer, and a policy initiator for the board. The last category, *roles focusing on active coordination and communication*, is dependent upon the facilitative skills of the mayor or chairperson. These encompass articulating the issues facing the board and mobilizing resources, building a partnership with the executive officer, and helping the board network and function as a team. Obviously there is overlap among the roles, and as Svava notes, “success in one enhances success in others.”⁸

Svava’s checklist for mayors and city council chairpersons provides a basis for developing a checklist of roles for the facilitative school board chair. Figure 1 presents a preliminary adaptation of such a checklist that is suitable for analyzing the 1999 survey responses about the board chair position.⁹ The 1999 School Board Training Survey touched on only seven of the ten roles outlined in Svava’s checklist but did include items in each of the three categories of roles: automatic, policy, and coordination and communication. The survey asked board members to indicate, from a list of fourteen items, what they considered to be the responsibilities of the school board chair and also allowed them to write in other comments.

Automatic or Traditional Roles

The survey asked North Carolina school board members about some of the “traditional” or “automatic” roles on the board chairperson checklist (see

Figure 1 Preliminary Checklist of the Roles of the School Board Chair

Traditional or Automatic Roles

Presiding Officer
Representative to Other Governments and Agencies
Link to the Public

Policy and Organizing Role

Goal Setter

Active Coordination and Communication Roles

Educator
Liaison and Partner with Superintendent
Team and Network Builder

Adapted directly from “Checklist of Roles for Council-Manager Mayors,” Exhibit 2, Chapter 12, in J. H. Svava & Associates, *Facilitative Leadership in Local Government: Mayors and Board Chairpersons in the Council-Manager Form* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, forthcoming).

Figure 1). These roles are functioning as the *presiding officer* at school board meetings, acting as a *representative to other governments* and agencies, and serving as a *link to the public*.

Presiding Officer

In a joint publication, the National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administrators state that conducting the meeting and “other activities related to serving as the presiding officer of the board” are the responsibilities of the board chair.¹⁰ In a survey published in 1996, U.S. school superintendents rated “presiding over board meetings” as the single activity that is crucial to the school board chair’s role.¹¹ And, a 1991 national sample of school board members included “presides over board meetings” as one of the few crucial roles of the chair.¹²

Managing school board meetings is the central component of the role of the presiding officer. Indeed,

in the council-manager form of government can be compared to the roles of the school board chair. To adapt this checklist to school board chairs requires the following changes: “Chair” or “chairperson” substitutes for “mayor”; “board,” for “council”; “superintendent,” for “manager.” The aptness of this preliminary adaptation will be assessed in light of the school board survey results.

10. Joint American Association of School Administrators–National School Boards Association Committee, *Roles and Relationships: School Boards and Superintendents*, revised ed. (Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators, 1994), p. 10.

11. D. M. Seaton, “What Superintendents Say about Board Leadership,” *American School Board Journal* 183, No. 2 (1996): 18–19.

12. D. M. Seaton et al., “The Burden School Board Presidents Bear,” *American School Board Journal* 179, No. 1 (1992): 34.

visited volume *Facilitative Leadership in Local Government: Mayors and Board Chairpersons in the Council-Manager Form* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, forthcoming).

6. Exhibit 2, Chapter 12, in *Facilitative Leadership in Local Government: Mayors and Board Chairpersons in the Council-Manager Form*, *supra* note 5.

7. *Id.*, Chapter 12.

8. *Id.*

9. Svava distinguishes the mayor-council form of government (the elected mayor has formal powers over other officials) from the council-manager form (the mayor or chairperson lacks formal control over others). In structure, the council-manager form resembles school board–superintendent governance, and so the argument here is that the roles of the mayor

in the view of one survey respondent, the chairperson is “responsible for the quality and effectiveness of the board meeting.” In addition to conducting the meeting, meeting management encompasses preparing for the meeting and providing follow-up.¹³ The 1999 survey contained three items about the chairperson’s responsibility for meeting management: establishing rules, keeping meetings focused, providing follow-up.

Fewer than half (47.7 percent) of the respondents in the 1999 survey said that establishing meeting rules is the responsibility of the school board chair. Interestingly, in the national survey of school board members taken in 1991, 84.8 percent of the respondents ranked “establishes meeting rules” as crucial to the chair’s role, and 60.2 percent reported that their chairpersons had done so.¹⁴ Clearly North Carolina school board members in 1999 were much less willing to allow the chair-

person to decide on the meeting rules than were their counterparts across the country in 1991.

The second meeting-management item in the 1999 North Carolina survey is keeping board meetings focused. Almost all of the respondents, 98.4 percent, considered that to be the responsibility of the chair. Nonetheless the responses of chairpersons and other board members were slightly different. Every current and former board chairperson surveyed expected the chair to keep meetings focused, an expectation that was held by significantly fewer school board members.¹⁵ On this item, the 1999 sample of North Carolinians and the national sample taken in 1991 were in complete agreement; 98.3 percent of the 1991 respondents ranked keeping meetings focused as a crucial role of the chair.¹⁶

With regard to following up on matters after the meeting, just over 60 percent of the surveyed board members said they expect the chairperson to follow up with individuals who agree to gather information or to carry out other tasks for the next board meeting. As

13. J. J. Herman, “All the Right Moves,” *American School Board Journal* 177, No. 4 (1990): 44–46, emphasizes the chairperson’s participation before, during, and after the meeting. J. Carver, *The Chairperson’s Role as Servant-Leader to the Board* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997); Dorsey, *supra* note 1; and E. C. Hirzy, *The Chair’s Role in Leading the Nonprofit Board* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998), focus on the chairperson’s actions before and during the meeting.

14. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

15. The chi square is 4.28, with one degree of freedom. The *p* value is .039.

16. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

Bibliographic Resources for School Board Chairs

Many written sources are available to school board chairs, and in this accumulated literature it is common to find lists of roles or responsibilities, sometimes with descriptions or explanations. The following sources, for example, all contain lists of chair roles or responsibilities:

- Amundson, K. J. et al. *Becoming a Better Board Member*. Alexandria, Va.: National School Boards Association, 1996.
- Dorsey, E. C. *The Role of the Board Chairperson*. NCNB Governance Series Booklet 11. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1992.
- Goodman, R. H. et al. *Getting There from Here. School Board–Superintendent Collaboration: Creating a School Governance Team Capable of Raising Student Achievement*. Arlington, Va.: New England School Development Council and Educational Research Service, 1997.
- Hirzy, E. C. *The Chair’s Role in Leading the Nonprofit Board*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998.

Also common are articles that include pointers about meeting-management tasks. One such example is

- Jones, G. L. “Lessons for Leaders.” *American School Board Journal* 183, No. 2 (1996): 17–19.

Board member expectations, however, have generally been overlooked in the literature. A notable exception is Daniel Seaton’s survey work with school board members:

- Seaton, D. M. et al. “The Burden School Board Presidents Bear.” *American School Board Journal* 179, No. 1 (1992): 32–37.

with the second item, responses to this third meeting-management item differed by chair service. Current and former chairpersons were significantly less likely to expect the chairperson to handle this task than were the other respondents.¹⁷ This difference in expectation signals the potential for misunderstandings to develop on North Carolina school boards, as most board members do in fact hold the chair responsible for following up with others after the meeting.

Serving as the presiding officer at board meetings would seem to be an automatic role of the school board chair, yet as has been described, school board members have different expectations of the duties of the presiding officer. Slightly less than half of the board members surveyed expect the chair to be responsible for establishing meeting rules, and slightly more than half do not. Virtually all of the respondents reported that they expect the chair to keep the meetings focused, but that expectation is stronger among current and former chairpersons than among other board members. Significantly more board members than current and former chairpersons say that chairs are responsible for following up with others after the meeting. The role of presiding officer may be automatic, but its obligations are not.

Representative to Other Governments and Agencies

Much of the literature on school board chairpersons ignores their role as the school board's representative to other governments and agencies. Most of the 1999 survey respondents, however, acknowledged that board chairpersons do indeed have that role. In North Carolina, local boards of education and the boards of county commissioners interact to develop the school system's annual budget, and 59.2 percent of the survey respondents reported that they expect the chairperson to be the school board's liaison to the board of county commissioners. A few respondents wrote that the chairperson could or should select the school board's representative to the board of county commissioners rather than do the job him- or herself. These comments indicate that the chair has the right to choose a liaison to outside agencies but that his or her decision to become that liaison should not be automatic. Most of the board members who responded to the survey reported that they expect their chairperson to represent their school board to other governments and external agencies, but a

few said they expect their chairs to select the representative from among the other members of the board.

Link to the Public

As shown in Figure 1, acting as a link to the public is considered to be another automatic or traditional role of the school board chair. Being board spokesperson is one of the duties of this role. The National School Boards Association describes the spokesperson for the school board as follows: "It is often helpful to have one individual who presents the board's official position to the public. Typically, the board president fulfills this role."¹⁸ In the national survey of school board members taken in 1991, 86.4 percent of the respondents considered "board spokesman" to be crucial to the role of the board chair.¹⁹

Among the 1999 North Carolina survey respondents, 83.6 percent indicated that they expect the board chairperson to be the board spokesperson. One board member openly challenged this expectation, however: "There is no reason that the chair's views should be the dominant view espoused—either to the public or to staff." A few respondents expressed discomfort with the automatic character of the responsibility. For example, one respondent suggested that the board chair should "serve as board spokesperson sometimes," whereas another said the chair should not serve as spokesperson "unless directed by the board." Of the fifty-seven respondents who wrote additional comments about the chair's responsibilities, seven (12.3 percent) singled out the spokesperson role. These comments tended to be characterized by emotional language, and several were critical of the way in which a given respondent's board chairperson had carried out the duties of spokesperson. Nonetheless, most board members agreed that being spokesperson is part of the board chair's role.

Another component of the link to the public role is dealing directly with citizens and the community. North Carolina school board members are sharply divided on the issue of whether or not that should be a responsibility of the chair. Only 48.4 percent indicated that they expect the chairperson to serve as the board liaison to the community. Four respondents wrote that the chair could or should delegate the community liaison role to others, but seven indicated that the entire board shares

17. The chi square is 4.67, with one degree of freedom. The *p* value is .031.

18. K. J. Amundson et al., *Becoming a Better Board Member* (Alexandria, Va.: National School Boards Association, 1996), p. 74.

19. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

this responsibility. One respondent said it is “important for all board members” to serve as liaisons to the wider community, “especially in large school systems.” A plausible cause of the disagreement over this item can be discerned in the words of a former school board chairperson from Virginia:

The growing complexity of internal board relations is mirrored in the board’s external relationships. The same sociological and ideological divides that show up among board members on many issues also complicate a school board’s relationships with its community. Neither “the board” nor “the community” is a single entity with a predictable agenda and predictable expectations.²⁰

In sum, just under half of the 1999 survey respondents indicated that the school board chairperson should be the board’s liaison to the community, but most agreed that the chair should act as the spokesperson for the board.

Analysis

The 1999 North Carolina School Board Training Survey data are inconclusive as to whether or not all three of the automatic or traditional roles—presiding officer, representative to other governments and agencies, and link to the public—are appropriate for the school board chair. That the board chair should always assume the role of presiding officer has been officially recognized by the National School Boards Association²¹ and has gained widespread acceptance, as gauged by a national sample of school board members²² and of superintendents.²³ The other two roles, however, lack these clear indicators of agreement. The 1999 North Carolina survey results offer support for all three roles but are more equivocal about the link to the public role. Whereas a majority of the school board members agreed it is the responsibility of the board chair to serve as board spokesperson, a minority of respondents voiced concerns with the status quo. More importantly, less than half of the board members reported that they consider it the chairperson’s job to be the board liaison to the community, and several wrote strong objections to the chair assuming that responsibility. The evidence

thus suggests that narrowing “link to the public” down to “board spokesperson” would more accurately reflect board members’ expectations of the role.

A second question arises about the categorization of these roles as automatic or traditional. Both labels, especially automatic, imply that school board members should expect such roles to be built into the chair position. The school board respondents, however, took this posture toward only one task, keeping the meeting focused, and for just one role, that of presiding officer. A few board members suggested that the chair could or should select other board members to be the board spokesperson and the representative to the county commissioners. Additional research could help to separate member expectations of the *role* from their expectations of the *tasks* encompassed by it. Given the current evidence, though, the two problematic roles—serving as a representative to other governments and agencies and as board spokesperson—could more accurately be labeled *probable* roles of the school board chair.

Figure 2 takes this analysis into account and breaks out the probable roles from the automatic or traditional ones. Whereas acting as the presiding officer remains in the automatic category, serving as board spokesperson and functioning as a representative to other governments and agencies are now labeled as probable roles of the school board chair in order to reflect more accurately board members’ expectations of the position.

Policy and Organizing Roles

The policy and organizing category on the Svara checklist for mayors and chairpersons includes three roles: goal setter, delegator and organizer, and policy initiator. The National Center for Nonprofit Boards suggests that the board chairperson should “set goals and expectations for the board.”²⁴ The National School Boards Association’s guide to boardsmanship recognizes the board chair’s role as a delegator,²⁵ but the literature on school board chairs has little to say about that person’s role in policy making. The 1999 North Carolina School Board Training Survey included one question about policy leadership—related to the role of goal setter—but no questions related to delegating, organizing, or policy initiation. For that reason, the checklist for school board chairs (Figure 1) contains only the goal setter role. Clearly more research is needed

20. G. L. Jones, “Lessons for Leaders,” *American School Board Journal* 183, No. 2 (1996): 19.

21. Joint American Association of School Administrators–National School Boards Association Committee, *supra* note 10, at 10.

22. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

23. Seaton, *supra* note 11.

24. Hirzy, *supra* note 13, at 6.

25. Amundson et al., *supra* note 18, at 74.

Figure 2
Realignment of the School Board Chairperson's Automatic or Traditional Roles Based on the 1999 Survey Data

Automatic or Traditional Role

- Presiding Officer
- Keeps meetings focused (98.4% agreement)
 - Follows up on individuals who agree to gather information or carry out tasks for the next board meeting (60.8% agreement)
 - Does *not* establish meeting rules

Probable Roles

- Representative to Other Governments and Agencies
- Serves as board liaison to the county commissioners (59.2% agreement)
- Board Spokesperson
- Serves as board spokesperson (83.6% agreement)
-

to help school board members understand the policy and organizing roles of the board chair.

Surveyed school board members were asked if taking the lead in setting board goals or priorities is a responsibility of the school board chair. Board members were divided over this question, with about 54 percent responding that they do expect the chairperson to take the lead in setting goals or priorities. Figure 3 incorporates this information into the partial checklist of roles for school board chairpersons.

Active Coordination and Communication Roles

"I continue to see the chairman's most effective role as that of a facilitator/coordinator."

—1999 survey respondent

The last category of roles derived from the Svara checklist focuses on active coordination and communication. The three roles constituting this category are: educating the board, the school superintendent, and the public; serving as board liaison to, and partner with, the superintendent; and team and network building.

Educator

The educator role has received some attention in the literature on school board chairs. The school board members who responded to the 1991 national survey tended to criticize their board chairpersons for not helping to educate other board members. They gave

Figure 3
Partial Checklist of School Board Chairperson's Roles Based on the 1999 Survey Data

Automatic or Traditional Role

- Presiding Officer
- Keeps meetings focused (98.4% agreement)
 - Follows up on individuals who agree to gather information or carry out tasks for the next board meeting (60.8% agreement)
 - Does *not* establish meeting rules

Probable Roles

- Representative to Other Governments and Agencies
- Serves as board liaison to the county commissioners (59.2% agreement)
- Board Spokesperson
- Serves as board spokesperson (83.6% agreement)

Policy and Organizing Role

- Goal Setter
- Takes lead in setting board goals or priorities (54.7% agreement)
-

their chairpersons low ratings on planning board in-service training, providing orientation for new board members, and instructing the board on superintendent relations.²⁶ Superintendents in the 1996 survey rated the board chairperson's educational tasks as "important,"²⁷ and the National School Boards Association's boardsmanship guide urges chairpersons to take part in planning one particular educational task for board members—the orientation process for new members.²⁸

The 1999 North Carolina School Board Training Survey included one question about the chair's educator role, to which 70 percent of the board members surveyed reported the expectation that their chairperson should help new school board members learn the ropes. Even more than other 1999 respondents, current and former school board chairpersons acknowledged the importance of this task. They have significantly higher expectations of the chair's responsibility to assist new board members than do other board members.²⁹ Some board chairpersons take part both in the planning of local orientations for new members and in the instruction. About a quarter of the survey respondents who had gone through a local orientation to the school

26. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

27. Seaton, *supra* note 11.

28. Amundson et al., *supra* note 18, at 73.

29. Chi square is 6.15, with one degree of freedom. The *p* value is .013.

board reported that their board chairpersons had helped with their orientation. Twenty-five board members said that the chairperson was the sole instructor in their local orientation. Thus all school board members, and especially board chairpersons, expect the board chair to carry out this aspect of the educator role.

Liaison and Partner with Superintendent

In its guide for board members, the National School Boards Association notes: "The board president must serve as a liaison between the board and the superintendent."³⁰ This role is central to maintaining open lines of communication between the superintendent and the school board. The chairperson and the superintendent have the opportunity to work together regularly to develop the meeting agenda. According to a national study published in 1997, board chairpersons and superintendents in high-achieving districts meet or confer by telephone or e-mail at least once each week.³¹ Following those exchanges, the chairperson then contacts the other board members to keep them informed. In the national survey of school board members conducted in 1991, 86.2 percent of the respondents indicated that "keeping superintendent communications open" is a crucial responsibility of the board chair.³²

The 1999 North Carolina survey asked board members if they thought that the board chair is responsible for keeping communication open between the board and the superintendent. A total of 85.2 percent said that they do expect the chair to fulfill this role. Board chairpersons and other board members are largely in agreement on this task, but members' responses varied according to their length of service on the school board. The longer a member had been on the board, the more likely she or he was to expect the chair to keep board-superintendent communication open.³³ This result indicates that with greater experience on the board comes a greater willingness to accept the board chair's role as liaison between the board and the superintendent.

Team and Network Builder

Using case studies of mayors and city council chairpersons, Svava has shown that the chairperson's ability to help the council work as a team and build net-

works with outside groups is central to successful facilitative leadership. The chairperson acts as a facilitative leader by forging collaborative relations, by helping others accomplish their goals, and by using cooperation and consensus to further the board's mission or vision.³⁴ Four items on the 1999 survey of North Carolina school board members dealt with these aspects of facilitative leadership and helped to clarify board members' expectations of the chair's role as team builder and network builder.

The first item asked board members whether or not they consider "building consensus at meetings" to be a responsibility of the board chair; 70 percent of the respondents said they do. A significantly greater number of current and former chairpersons hold this expectation than do other board members,³⁵ and it may be that leadership experience underscores the importance of consensus building.

The survey also asked school board members about the chair's responsibility to motivate members and to help resolve conflicts among them. The respondents were divided about motivation. Just 54.2 percent reported that they expect the chair to help motivate board members. The 1999 respondents do however consider the chair to be responsible for dealing with the third item, involving internal conflicts, with 74.6 percent reporting that they expect the chair to help resolve such problems. Responses to all three items, especially the ones on consensus building and resolving internal conflicts, indicate that board members expect the school board chair to help the board work as a team.

The fourth item, which pertains to networking with outside groups, asked if it is the chairperson's responsibility to help resolve conflicts between the school board and other entities. Almost 60 percent of the respondents indicated that this is indeed a responsibility of the chair. Although school board members do not necessarily consider the chairperson to be the board's liaison to outside groups (and certainly not the board's liaison to the community in general), they do expect him or her to help with any fence-mending that is needed in order to do a better job of networking. Thus the survey results provide evidence that all of the active coordination and communication roles pertain to school board chairs.

30. Amundson et al., *supra* note 18, at 74.

31. Goodman et al., *supra* note 2, at 15.

32. Seaton et al., *supra* note 12, at 34.

33. Chi square is 12.32, with four degrees of freedom. The *p* value is .015.

34. Svava & Associates, *supra* note 5, at 216-55.

35. Chi square is 9.48, with one degree of freedom. The *p* value is .002.

Figure 4
Final Checklist of School Board Chairperson's Roles
Based on the 1999 Survey Data

Automatic or Traditional Role

- Presiding Officer
- Keeps meetings focused (98.4% agreement)
 - Follows up on individuals who agree to gather information or carry out tasks for the next board meeting (60.8% agreement)
 - Does *not* establish meeting rules

Probable Roles

- Representative to Other Governments and Agencies
- Serves as board liaison to the county commissioners (59.2% agreement)

- Board Spokesperson
- Serves as board spokesperson (83.6% agreement)

Policy and Organizing Role

- Goal Setter
- Takes lead in setting board goals or priorities (54.7% agreement)

Active Coordination and Communication Roles

- Educator
- Helps new board members learn the ropes (70.0% agreement)

- Liaison and Partner with the Superintendent
- Keeps board-superintendent communications open (85.2% agreement)

- Team and Network Builder
- Builds consensus at meetings (70.0% agreement)
 - Motivates board members (54.2% agreement)
 - Helps resolve conflicts among board members (74.6% agreement)
 - Helps resolve conflicts between the board and others (59.6% agreement)
 - Does *not* serve as board liaison to the community

The Final Roles Checklist

Figure 4 presents the final checklist of roles expected of the school board chair, according to the 1999 North Carolina School Board Training Survey. Adapted from the Svava checklist for mayors and city council chairpersons, this checklist comprises the roles that are appropriate for facilitative leadership. Facilitative leaders seek out the interests of stakeholders, help others meet their goals, and work toward building consensus based on the mission of the board.³⁶ The active coordi-

Table 3
School Board Members' Ratings
of the Board-Chairperson Relationship

Rating	Number of Responses	Percent (%)
Very Good	201	47.0
Good	114	26.6
Satisfactory	60	14.0
Poor	30	7.0
Very Poor	7	1.6
Other	16	3.7
Total	428	99.9

nation and communication roles in particular derive from the facilitative framework and reflect its priorities.

Figure 4 puts the data from the 1999 survey onto the checklist. The data present the board members' reactions to a list of possible chair responsibilities and embody some of the members' expectations concerning the chair position. Organized by role, the survey data outline the ways in which 54 percent of the board members in the state (the response rate for the survey) expect school board chairpersons in North Carolina to carry out those roles.

The survey data affected the contents of the checklist in two major ways. First, the survey had no information about three roles on the original Svava checklist, so those roles were dropped from the analysis. Second, school board members expect the chair to be the presiding officer at meetings, but they do not consider the chair's other roles to be "automatic" or built-in features of the office. Consequently, the school board chair's checklist has a new category (probable roles) containing two roles (acting as representative to other governments and agencies and acting as board spokesperson) from the automatic category on the Svava checklist. Despite the parallels of their offices, facilitative mayors and school board chairs have slightly different roles.

Relatively few school board members throughout the state are dissatisfied with the relationship between their board and its chairperson. Almost three fourths of the survey respondents characterized the quality of their board's relationship with the board chairperson as good or very good, and 47 percent rated it as very good (Table 3). In completing the survey, respondents also assessed the quality of their board's relationship with the superintendent, school staff, students, parents, county commis-

36. Svava & Associates, *supra* note 5, at 216-55.

sioners, community, and the media. The relationship between the board and the chairperson was rated high compared with these other individuals and groups. Only the board-superintendent relationship received consistently higher ratings than the board-chairperson relationship. These high ratings suggest that many school board members feel their own chairperson is meeting many of their expectations.

The final checklist (Figure 4) should give chairpersons, especially newly elected chairpersons, a starting point for reflecting on their own roles and for learning

about their own board members' expectations about those roles. For instance, a chairperson can be reasonably certain that the board will expect him or her, as the presiding officer, to keep meetings focused. Whether the chairperson should be the board's representative to other governments and agencies is less certain, though, and what the board expects that representative to do is completely undetermined. The checklist should help the board chairperson develop and raise important questions, looking to her or his own board for the answers. ■

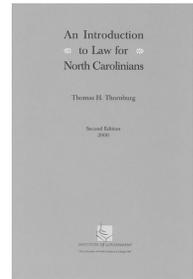
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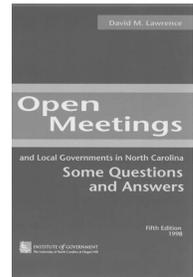
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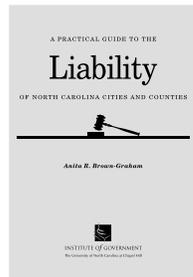
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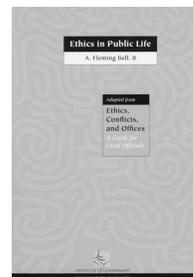
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