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Abstract – From Vision to Learning: Effectiveness Measures of Christian School Boards

This exploratory study investigated the effectiveness of Christian School boards, as perceived by its members, and examined patterns and characteristics that describe internal board activities. The study employed a quantitative survey research design that revealed areas of strength and areas of growth for Christian School board operations. Board effectiveness was measured in accordance with Smoley's (1999) Model for Effective School Boards.

The research focused on four questions: (a) What are the background characteristics of Christian School board members? (b) What patterns exist in the Christian School board effectiveness ratings of school board members, presidents, and school administrators? (c) Are there mean differences between the ratings of Christian School board members, presidents, and school administrators? and (d) What are some of the factors (e.g. role on the board, school characteristics, and board member characteristics) that predict school board effectiveness ratings?

Data were collected through an online survey of 37 Christian School boards in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The survey was completed by 217 school board members, school board presidents, and school administrators.

The analysis of the demographic data revealed that Christian School boards are primarily comprised of well-educated, White, middle-aged men from business and/or professional backgrounds. Internal school board activities data revealed that Christian School boards perceive themselves to be highly effective at making rational decisions and moderately effective at connecting to the community. The data also revealed that, when compared to Smoley's (1999) Model for School Board Effectiveness, Christian School board self-perceptions fell short in the areas of functioning as a group, exercising authority, working toward board improvement, and acting strategically. The difference was particularly pronounced in the area of working toward board improvement.

The research findings suggest implications for the work of Christian School boards, namely the vociferous need to diligently examine internal board activities and their effect on external outcomes. Future studies should center on the demographic representation on the board and the benefits of professional development directed to the school board itself. Attention to these implications and recommendations will contribute to strengthening the internal work of the Christian School board and, ultimately, student achievement.

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