



*Masters in  
Governance Program*

**A Report of the Opinions and Suggestions  
of Three Sets of Graduates:**

**“My Thoughts...My Assessment... My Suggestions”**

**January 10, 2005**

***Prepared for the  
California School Boards Association***

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# THE MASTERS IN GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

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## Introduction

The Masters in Governance Program provides comprehensive knowledge and skills to enable school board members to function effectively as trustees to govern the district and to participate with the superintendent as productive members of the district's governance team. This two-year program covers five major responsibilities of the board which are to:

- Set the direction for the district;
- Maintain an effective and efficient structure;
- Provide support;
- Ensure accountability; and
- Provide community leadership as advocates for all children, the district and public education.

## Background

The California School Boards Association completed a comprehensive study to define the roles and responsibilities of school boards in order to provide governance teams with effective leadership skills. The project was completed over a three-year period by board members, superintendents, school district staff members, public policy experts, consultants and CSBA staff. The end-result was an eight-volume series of publications that outlines the governance role of board members and the superintendent. The *Maximizing School Board Leadership* series gives district governance teams the tools to keep all efforts focused on student learning. The *Maximizing School Board Leadership* series covers the topics of vision, curriculum, finance, human resources, policy, collective bargaining and community leadership, which provide the basis for the development of the Masters in Governance Program. CSBA provides all copyrighted course materials, including *Maximizing School Board Leadership* manuals and resource packets, for each class in the program. Both board members and superintendents are encouraged to participate in the Masters in Governance Program.

## Program Outline

The Masters in Governance Program consists of nine one day courses which center around the following emphases:

- setting direction for the district;
- establishing and maintaining financial health;
- clarifying human resources decisions;
- developing policies;
- focusing all district efforts on enhanced student learning and achievement;
- discovering collective bargaining methodologies; and
- promoting community leadership and involvement.

The program begins with the Foundations of Effective Governance and concludes with Governance Integration session which ties together principles and concepts covered in the individual classes.

The Masters in Governance Program has two methods of delivery. First, the program is offered statewide to all interested board members and superintendents. Each workshop is held in a northern

and a southern California location. The schedule of classes can be found in the Masters in Governance program brochure and on the following web site ([www.csba.org/mig](http://www.csba.org/mig)).

The program courses may be taken in any order, with the exception of the first module, Foundations of Effective Governance and the last module, Governance Integration, which may be taken only after all other coursework has been completed. It is also recommended that Setting Direction be taken second.

Besides the statewide delivery system, the program may also be offered at a regional level. This design allows school board members and superintendents easier access to the courses, since no long-distance travel is required. It also provides an excellent networking opportunity for governance team members on different boards in the same region. While all of these courses are required components of the program, the schedule is tailored to the needs of the regional site.

NOTE: Any Masters in Governance program participant who misses a session may make it up by attending the same session offered by CSBA at another location at no additional registration cost. Admittance will be based on the availability of space and pre-notification to CSBA.

The nine modules are:

1. Foundations of Effective Governance
2. Setting Direction
3. Human Resources
4. Policy & Judicial Review
5. Student Learning & Achievement
6. School Finance
7. Collective Bargaining
8. Community Relations & Advocacy
9. Governance Integration

## PREFACE

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On July 21, 2004, a postcard was sent to the 2002, 2003, and 2004 graduates of CSBA's Master in Governance (MiG) Program. The postcard informed the potential respondents that within a short time, they would receive a questionnaire asking them to indicate their thoughts, suggestions and assessments about the program, including strengths, weaknesses, and how the program might be improved.

The questionnaires were mailed on July 30, 2004. A second set was sent to non-respondents on August 23, 2004. The table below indicates the number and percent return of each of the sets of participants.

Table 1: Questionnaire Population and Percent Response from Three MiG Graduating Classes

<b>Graduate Year</b>	<b>Number Mailed</b>	<b>Percent Mailed</b>	<b>Number Received</b>	<b>Percent Received</b>	<b>Percent Response by Graduate Year</b>
2002	108	35%	54	35%	50%
2003	152	49%	79	51%	52%
2004	49	16%	23	15%	45%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50%</b>

The questionnaire to which the graduates responded was rigorously developed. Several iterations preceded a survey test group participating in a CSBA on-site validation process. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A of this report.

By design, the report is not wordy, nor does it contain everything it could, given the length of the questionnaire. It is not written as a scholarly piece of research; although the reader can be assured that the processes from planning to final data analysis were carried out in the most scholarly manner possible. Also, I have included a small boxed section entitled "*Researcher's Reflections*" following each presentation in which I have taken liberty to editorialize. My brief statements generally take the form of highlighting the findings by asking questions or pursuing an issue I have found to be significant over my many years as an educator.

Relative to the results, I offer a caution: From the above table, the reader sees that 309 questionnaires were mailed and 50 percent were returned. There should be an element of caution attached to the interpretation of the results and drawing of subsequent conclusions. Given the nature of the inquiry, and that many of the potential respondents had been away from the program for two years or more, 50 percent is a considered a good response rate. However, it is important to realize that 50 percent of the graduates did not respond. Giving credibility to the information in this report requires an assumption that *the opinions of those who did respond and the opinions of those who chose not to are similar*. Thus, we are assuming that the information contained in this report is representative of all graduates from these three years. We do know, from the above table, that the percent mailed and the percent received from each of the graduate years were similar.

Many thanks to the staff of CSBA, Marge Peterson, Manny Scrofani, Stephanie Goodlett, and I'm sure many others, for making this an enjoyable and challenging project.

Jim Cox, Ph.D.

## SEVEN KEY QUESTIONS DERIVED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Question 1: Generally, how do the graduates feel about the MiG program?

The first item on the questionnaire stated the following: “Think back to the training program, as a whole. Undoubtedly, there were some parts that were more helpful than others. When you look at the total program from beginning to end, how valuable was it for you?” Six choices from “Highly recommend” to “Definitely not recommend” were offered. The table below reports how the question was answered.

This question was answered by 116 of the 156 respondents. The rate of response may have been reduced by the virtue of the way in which the question was formatted on the page. It was not an area of concern for the validation group.

Table 2: Respondents’ Answers to the Question: “How Valuable was the MiG Program?”

Highly recommend		Confidently recommend		Probably recommend		Probably not recommend		Could not recommend		Definitely not recommend	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
37	32	69	60	8	7	0	0	1	1	1	1
Positive				Ambivalent				Negative			
N = 106		92%		N = 8		7%		N = 2		1%	

**Finding:**

More than 90 percent of the responding participants rated the MiG program as “Highly recommend” or “Confidently recommend.” While seven percent indicated that they felt ambivalent saying they would “Probably recommend” or “Probably not recommend.” One percent gave a negative response of “Could not recommend” or “Definitely not recommend.”

The description for “Highly recommend” was ... *“The program was invaluable. It was a truly worthwhile learning experience.”* The “Confidently recommend” selection stated, *“It was really a good program. There were a few places that could have been better, but that did not detract from my overall positive experience.”* From these two positive descriptions, one can conclude that the highest rating was really high.

*Researcher’s Reflections*

*By all accounts, MiG is a superior program for California Boards of Trustees. Data from three graduating classes indicate this. With results this positive, it would be easy to rest on one’s laurels, and live by the adage, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” This would not be a good choice. With education dramatically changing, adding goals, additional expectations, and policies almost daily, what was superior training last year, may not be this year.*

## Question 2: What were the stronger and relatively weaker elements of the MiG program?

Eight program elements were presented to the graduates with three given descriptions for each element. An additional description, “Can’t recall” was also offered to eliminate, as much as possible, guessing at a response, which was rarely used.

The shaded areas in Table 3 below, in rank order, report the percent of respondents who gave the most positive of the three responses.

Table 3: Respondents’ Reactions to Important MiG Elements

Element	Description	N	Percent
Difficulty of content	Right on!	126	<b>81%</b>
	Generally too difficult	2	1%
	Generally too easy	24	16%
General pacing of the sessions	About right	116	<b>76%</b>
	Too fast	5	3%
	Too slow	32	21%
Quality of presenters	Excellent	92	<b>60%</b>
	Generally satisfactory	58	38%
	Expected better	4	3%
Involvement by all participants during sessions	Good; no dominance	90	<b>58%</b>
	Occasional dominance	62	40%
	Dominance a continuous problem	3	2%
Materials used for training	Excellent	76	<b>49%</b>
	Generally Satisfactory	78	50%
	Disappointing	1	1%
The way modules connected to each other	Smooth flow; seamless	74	<b>48%</b>
	Good in most places; some bumps	66	43%
	Modules presented separately	13	8%
Relevance of group exercises and activities	Almost all meaningful	67	<b>43%</b>
	More good than poor	80	51%
	More poor than good	8	5%
Practicality of content	Very practical; immediate use	59	<b>38%</b>
	Most were practical	88	56%
	Too theoretical	8	5%

### **Finding:**

Way out ahead were the appropriate “Difficulty of content” and the “General pacing of the sessions,” in which at least three-quarters of those responding gave the most positive response. Four of the eight had percentages over 50, followed closely by a 49 and 48. The last two, “Relevance of group exercises” and “Practicality of content” certainly wouldn’t be considered negative, with percentages at 43 and 38 respectively, but they are different enough from the others to warrant further discussion. A conclusion one would draw from Table 3 is that, while overall, MiG gets incredibly high marks, the respondents were quite discerning, and each element, in its own right, can continuously be worked on to improve that particular element.

### Question 3: How much impact did the MiG program have on the participants and their work as board members?

The seven statements in Table 4 below were presented to the graduates, each describing areas of possible program impact. The focus of the statements was (1) knowledge, (2) application, (3) personal confidence, and (4) influence on others. Respondents checked the statements applicable for them, leaving those blank when the area did not represent an area in which they had not experienced personal impact.

Table 4 reports in rank order (see shaded column) the percent of respondents who checked each item.

Table 4: The Number and Percent of Respondents Who Reported How They Were Impacted by the MiG Program

Areas of Possible Impact (N = 156)	N	Percent
The program has given me a better <b>knowledge base</b> that has allowed me to be a more productive governance team member.	134	86%
I <b>apply my skills</b> as a governance team member more productively after MiG than I did before my participation.	122	78%
I <b>feel confident addressing the board</b> regarding issues covered in the MiG program.	122	78%
I have <b>developed a collegial network of relationships</b> as a result of my participation in the MiG program.	88	56%
The MiG program has <b>empowered me</b> to make a positive difference in the way the board functions as a governance team.	84	54%
I am <b>more influential with my fellow governance team members</b> as a result of the MiG program.	56	36%
<b>Colleagues have commented to me</b> that my participation has really made a difference in the way I carry out my roles and responsibilities as a trustee.	27	17%

#### **Finding:**

The greatest impact of MiG was reported to be (1) creating a better knowledge base, (2) applying skills more productively, and (3) enhancing the overall confidence to address the board. Each of these three was marked by at least 75 percent of the respondents. An additional two areas, checked by somewhat over 50 percent, were the development of collegial relationships and a feeling of empowerment to make a positive difference with their respective boards.

The least effect, though these figures are fairly impressive given the nature of the items, is (1) influencing other members of their respective boards, and (2) eliciting responses from other board members about the changes made by the participants. Still almost one in five of the graduates indicated having been complimented in that regard.

### *Researcher's Reflections*

*For any program designed to build the capacity of its participants, enhancing one's knowledge base is the first order of business. Too often, programs of this type emphasize "Here's what to do," before focusing on "Here's what you need to know." Based on these results, MiG has accomplished building a knowledge base, at least as self-reported. Perhaps the most impressive of the figures in the table is that of applying skills more productively.*

**Question 4: Of the three hopeful effects upon participants, (1) knowledge, (2) application, and (3) impact on their respective governance teams, how much difference did MiG make, and of the three, which was the most dominant?**

**Part I.** The goals of the MiG program are that the participants: (1) gain knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively, (2) take the skills home and apply them, and finally, (3) have an overall positive impact on their respective boards. On a four-point rating scale, the responding graduates indicated the extent to which these three goals were met. Their responses are noted in Table 5 below.

Table 5: The Extent to Which Respondents Indicated that the MiG Goals Were Met

Program Goals	It exceeded expectations		A significant amount; it made a difference		Less than hoped for, but there was change		Not much change from “before” to “after” training	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gained knowledge and skills regarding role as a trustee	24	16%	111	75%	10	7%	4	3%
Applied knowledge and skills learned	25	17%	104	70%	15	10%	5	3%
It made an overall positive impact on our governance team	27	18%	74	50%	22	15%	24	16%

***Finding:***

The data in Table 5 suggest that the MiG program met or exceeded the three goals for a large number of participants. By adding the figures in the first two columns of the table “It exceeded expectations” and “A significant amount; it made a difference,” impressive figures resulted.

First, relative to gaining knowledge, over 90 percent of the respondents indicated that the MiG program met or exceeded their expectations. Following closely behind, 87 percent indicated that when it comes to applying the knowledge and skills, MiG again, met or exceeded expectations. Finally, and the most challenging of the three, two-thirds of the responding participants stated that the impact that MiG had on their own governance team equaled or exceeded what was expected.

Based on the hierarchy of knowledge, application and impact, the data resulted in the order one would expect. One first needs knowledge and skills in order for application to become possible. Then to make a positive impact, application must have occurred. From these data, one could state that over 90 percent of the MiG graduates gained the knowledge and skill base intended, and, of these, almost all applied them in some form. The boards from two-thirds of the group felt the impact of this effort.

**Part II.** In addition to the indicated degrees of goal attainment addressed in Part I above, the responding board members then identified which of the three program goals was most dominant for them. They answered the question, “Of the three, which one is most descriptive of the results of your participation?”

Table 6: Number and Percent of Respondents Indicating Which of the Three Levels of Impact was the Most Dominant

<b>Program Goals</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gained Knowledge	71	48
Applied Knowledge	41	28
Impact on Local Board	37	25

**Finding:**

As indicated in Table 6, for 53 percent of the MiG graduates, extending their learning beyond the knowledge stage was more dominant than the simple act of gaining knowledge. About 28 percent of the respondents indicated that applying what was learned dominated their experience, while 25 percent extended it still further when they stated that the experience had a positive effect on their boards back home.

*Researcher’s Reflection*

*The writer of this report has specialized in educational change for a number of years. Commonly known among change theorists is that any impact beyond learning for understanding is very limited without a coaching component. I believe these data speak to the strength of MiG, inasmuch as there are no built in, formal coaching activities. As shown in Part I, 87 percent indicated some level of application, with 68 percent reporting a positive impact back home. This just doesn’t happen with typical professional development programs. Perhaps the length of time the participants were in the program, along with the network development, contributed to impact beyond the classroom as the dominant outcome for more than half of the responding graduates. This would indicate positive implications for the inclusion of a coaching component.*

## Question 5: How much impact did each of the nine MiG modules have on the participants?

A more specific focus than in previous questions was given to answer this question. Here, each participant was asked to rate each learning module independently in terms of: (1) significant impact, (2) some impact, or (3) little or no impact. An “unable to recall” choice was also offered. Each module was accompanied by an abstract statement to assist the respondents’ recollection of each learning module. The abstract statements are provided in Appendix A, page 3, of the questionnaire.

Table 7: Degree of Reported Impact of Each MiG Module

Module	Significant Impact		Some Impact		Little or No Impact	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Foundations of Effective Governance	101	66%	48	31%	4	3%
Setting Direction	88	58%	55	36%	10	7%
Human Resources	85	56%	50	33%	15	10%
Community Relations and Advocacy	77	51%	61	40%	14	9%
Policy and Judicial Review	71	47%	66	43%	13	9%
Finance and Facilities	71	46%	71	46%	11	7%
Governance Integration	62	41%	66	43%	17	11%
Collective Bargaining	61	40%	67	44%	23	15%
Student Learning and Achievement	37	25%	83	55%	26	17%

### **Finding:**

Table 7 reports the number and percent of respondents categorized by “Significant Impact,” “Some Impact,” “Little or No Impact.” The modules are arranged in Table 7 in rank order under the column “Significant Impact.”

Granted, the selection is a bit arbitrary, but the nine percentages in the “Significant Impact” column can be placed into three clusters: (1) 50 percent and above, (2) percents in the 40’s, and (3) one outlier, “Student Learning and Achievement” at 25percent. These clusters are offset by the heavy lines in the table.

Looking at these clusters carefully, those learning modules receiving at least 50 percent “Significant Impact” are those dealing with big picture issues. They deal with establishing a vision (*Foundations of Effective Governance* and *Setting Direction*) and those that deal directly with people (*Human Resources* and *Community Relations*).

The second cluster containing those learning modules with percentages of “Significant Impact” in the 40s, with one exception, are those that are more specific... *Policy*, *Finance*, *Collective Bargaining*. The second cluster is more business focused than the first cluster. The lone exception to the “business” classification in the second cluster is the *Governance Integration* module.

The outlier of the nine modules, *Student Learning and Achievement*, received a rating of “Significant Impact” by only 25percent of the respondents. Of all modules, this is the only one that deals directly with curriculum and instruction.

### *Researcher's Reflections*

*The respondents displayed their ability to be discriminating when responding to this section of the questionnaire. With over 90 percent indicating the high quality of the overall program and large numbers reporting an impact on their boards back home, still no module received more than two-thirds of the responses indicating "Significant Impact." This is the level at which continuous improvement kicks in. All modules can be improved.*

**Question 6: Given the 37 MiG Graduates who gave the overall program the highest possible rating (i.e., a rating of 6), how did they rank/rate/evaluate the program elements in Part 2 and the learning modules in Part 5 of the questionnaire?**

**Part I:** Thirty-seven of 114 responding participants gave the highest rating possible (a 6 on a scale of 1 to 6) to the question, “...How valuable was the MiG training program for you?” The description of a 6 rating was, “The program was invaluable. It was a truly worthwhile learning experience. I highly recommend it.” The rating following a 5 closed its description with, “I confidently recommend the program.” Comparing these two, the highest rating was really high!

After having given the overall 1 to 6 rating, the graduates then rated the effectiveness of eight components of the training. Three choices on a rating scale were offered. The question becomes, “Which of the eight components were highly rated by those who gave the ultimate rating of the overall training?” In the graduates’ words, “If I gave a 6 to the overall training, which of the eight learning modules am I most likely to rate highly?”

This table lists, in rank order, the eight program elements, also including how many of the 37 gave the highest marks to each component. This is the way to read the table, using “Difficulty of content” and “Pacing” as examples:

*Of the 37 MiG graduates who gave the overall program the highest rating possible, 36 of them (97 percent) gave the highest rating to “Difficulty of content.” Thirty-four (94 percent) of the 37 gave the highest rating to “Pacing.” Etc., etc. . . .*

Table 8: Number of Highest Ratings Given to Program Elements by the 37 MiG Graduates Who Gave the Overall Program the Highest Possible Rating

Program Elements	N	Percent of 37
Difficulty of content	36	97%
Pacing of the sessions	34	94%
Way in which modules connect	28	76%
Quality of presenters	26	70%
Relevance of training activities	25	68%
Involvement of participants	24	65%
Practicality of content	22	60%
Materials for training	19	53%

**Finding:**

Two elements, “Difficulty of content” and “Pacing of the sessions,” far and away are more directly related to maximum 6 ratings than are the other six elements. While a cause and effect relationship cannot be assumed, meaningful dialog is invited relative to whether these two elements might be of greater significance than the quality of the materials used for training, the least related of the eight.

**Part II:** Continuing with Question 6, Part 5 in the questionnaire, eight learning modules were presented. Participants were asked to indicate the degree of impact that each had on their role as a board member. Using the same 37 individuals as were included in the table above, this table shows how each module fared.

Table 9: Number of Highest Ratings Given to each of Nine Learning Modules by the 37 MIG Graduates Who Gave the Overall Program the Highest Possible Rating

Learning Modules	N	Percent of 37
Foundations of Effective Governance	30	81%
Setting Direction	27	73%
Community Relations and Advocacy	27	73%
Human Resources	24	65%
Governance Integration	23	62%
Finance and Facilities	21	57%
Collective Bargaining	20	57%
Policy and Judicial Review	20*	54%*
Student Learning and Achievement	13	36%

\*This percent is not the same as the one just above it because the base numbers are different; not all 37 rated every module.

**Finding:**

The module that got the highest ratings from the group who rated the program the highest was “Foundations of Effective Governance.”

The four modules with the highest ratings from this “select” group of MiG graduates are also the highest four from the total group of 156 reported in Question 5. These are off set by the heavy line in the table.

*Researcher’s Reflections*

*From the perspective of one responsible for the quality of the questionnaire, I was disappointed that only 114 responded to the overall quality question. Undoubtedly, the way the question was put on the page caused several to overlook the item. I say this because undoubtedly, had all responded, there would have been more than 37, and these results would be more credible. Nevertheless, when the ultimate advocates identify the “best of the program,” paying attention to what they say is in order.*

*Some questions that I would pose given these results might be...*

- *Why did this rank order occur as it did? Are we overdoing the materials portion (expensive and time consuming)?*
- *Is the Student Learning and Achievement module less important than the others (few rated it high; yet all gave the whole program a 6)?*
- *If these data suggest that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” which of these parts require the greatest attention to get the biggest bang for our buck?*

## **Question 7: What general comments and suggestions for improving the program via open-ended responses did the MiG graduates contribute?**

Responses in an open-ended format were elicited at two places in the questionnaire. First, each module, with a brief description, was listed and suggestions for improvement asked for. Second, in a general way, the last page, indicated as optional, asked for “What I liked,” “What I did not like,” and “Suggestions for the future.” Given the limited amount of space for answering, brevity was implied.

Working with Open-ended Comments: The nature of open-ended comments makes it very difficult to tabulate responses in a meaningful way. Each respondent has his or her own view of the program, with different words to describe the same feelings; thus, the pluses, minuses, and suggestions take on a myriad of forms. Thus, to try to say, “... so many said this and ... so many said that” is not very meaningful. Fifteen pages of contributed comments don’t make for very exciting reading either, especially with endless repetition.

To get the most from this type of response, therefore, it is best to first establish common themes. Say to yourself, “After having read the hundreds of comments, what am I hearing?” “If I were to give a five-minute presentation regarding the respondents’ message, what would I say?”

When the themes have been established, then, “Within each theme, what do I hear? Is it a positive tone? Is it a negative tone? Are there specific statements that capture the essence of the feelings being expressed?” Here are a couple of other guidelines regarding working with open-ended comments:

- It is incumbent upon the analyst to present the comments with, as nearly as possible, the same tone as was presented by respondents. If successful, then the responses add significantly to the substance of the other findings. If the tone is that of the analyst, then the result is biased reporting.
- The value of this information is not merely based upon how many times something was said or not said. This is especially true when the respondents are offering suggestions for improvement. A great suggestion can come from one person.
- When we refer to open-ended comments in text, we are talking about the comments, not the number of people. One person can offer four comments, while another offers one, and, still, another chooses not to respond. To continue, there were five comments with two individuals supplying all five. The five comments do not mean five people.
- CSBA should take a little time to read the comments. What an outside analyst sees in these remarks may not be the same as what a more knowledgeable stakeholder would get. Do not depend entirely on what is written below to capture completely and accurately the essence of the respondents’ contributions.

## **Common Themes**

From the hundreds of statements made, the common themes appear to be these:

### **1. This is a superior program.**

To support the 92 percent of the respondents who, as reported in Question 1, gave high marks to the program, the closing section of the question that asked, “What do you like about the program?” had 203 responses, compared to 44 who contributed something they didn’t like about the program. These statements, on both sides, could be very general, as in “This was a great program,” or quite specific like “I don’t like role playing.” But generally, for every five positive statements, we had a negative one. And remember, a negative statement does not mean the provider did not like the program. The “great program” statement above could be accompanied by the “role playing” statement. Also, a few of the critical statements were about a specific instance such as, “I didn’t care for graduation day. It could have been better planned.” Thus, it would have no connection to the program itself.

Quoting from one respondent, *“This is one of the finest courses I have ever taken. I feel that one cannot function to full ability without this course. I have served many years on my present board and I feel like I understand boardsmanship much better. I cannot praise you all highly enough. The presenters were all skilled in the subject matter and were excellent ‘actors’ in presenting the information. I have never had as fine a course as this one. Five stars to you all!”* Just a little secret . . . this respondent had over 40 years of experience serving on a board.

### **2. Interacting with other board members with the opportunity for networking is one of the best things about the MiG program.**

Regardless of how it was said, it was clear from the statements that the opportunity to interact with board members from other districts was one of the most significant aspects of MiG. *Problem solving, arriving at creative solutions, networking,* were all highlighted. In an open-ended format, at least 50 participants offered this as “one of the things I liked best,” and oftentimes, that comment was the only one on the page. Very simply put when asked what they liked one graduate stated, “Being with others going through the same thing I was;” this was the normative response.

### **3. Participant friendliness is one of the key variables that participants cite as important for a successful experience.**

In this document, “participant friendliness” captures those issues that make it easier/more convenient/advantageous to participate in MiG. Oftentimes these issues would surface in the “what I didn’t like” section or in “suggested program changes.” These statements didn’t come in droves, like the complimentary statements referred to above, but they do contain a common message, “Think about us when you plan your program.”

Listed below is a sample of personal issues that fit the category of participant friendliness. None was mentioned a large number of times, but they were mentioned often enough to warrant one's attention.

- Reduce Saturday time (quit earlier); no sessions with three-day weekends
- More night offerings
- Offer on line
- MIG graduate audit available (at no expense)
- University credit for participation
- Expand locations
- A shorter program for the more experienced board members
- Shorten the total program time (time was a factor for a lot of graduates)

#### **4. Practice good pedagogy.**

All of us in the capacity building business can benefit from reminders regarding our presentation techniques, especially when there is so much content, and it is easier to lecture it than to teach it. Based upon previous comments and quantified results in the questions above, MiG is very sensitive to that issue, but there were concerns expressed, more than just a few, to serve as these reminders. While the statements were normally contributed in a general way, I believe the most profitable way would be to cross-reference the comments with each of the modules, with the intent of self-reflection. In no particular order, comments clustered this way:

- Repetition of content was indicated as being common across modules. Sometimes it was fine; other times, no.
- Speakers cannot be allowed to be boring ("boring" was the commonly used word by those for whom that was an issue).
- Please, no time fillers (seven or eight cited role playing as a time filler; there are those who do not like role playing, and they feel strong about it).
- Watch pacing and timing carefully, overall and during each session. There were some parts that were too long and some too short.
- This is a long program. Variation of presentations was called for by some.
- Make certain all materials are up to date. These statements were typically made in the context of *Policy* and *Student Learning and Achievement*.

#### **5. Put into practice the important elements of the principles of change.**

If the expectation for MiG participants is to behave differently back home (more effectively and efficiently), then we know from research regarding how successful change occurs that some kind of follow up and support after having completed a module is necessary. This would be especially true for those who participate individually, without the support of another from their district.

This was requested by several respondents when asked about how to improve the program. Because this is a two-year program, and often there is considerable time between sessions, some form of follow up after each module would be welcomed.

## ***Program Improvement Suggestions***

Suggested improvement was requested in two places on the questionnaire, one specifically, when each module was listed, and the other generally. The general suggestions were covered above. Regarding specific module suggestions, a synopsis of comments is given for each. Totally, 157 specific suggestions were given. Incidentally, almost all of the modules had some general suggestions to expand the module in some way.

Undoubtedly, many of the comments dealt, not with the MiG program specifically, but rather with a particular issue that the respondent was dealing with at the time. Thus, consider each of these on its own merit because most of these would have been offered by no more than three or four folks. The exceptions are *Student Learning and Achievement* and *Finance and Facilities* where the comments were similar and where there were more of them.

<b>Modules</b>	<b>Number of Suggestions</b>	<b>Nature of Suggestions</b>
<i>Foundations of Effective Governance</i>	5	An extremely important module; could speed it up....
<i>Setting Direction</i>	7	More on strategies; how to integrate all plans in the district; could use a presentation from a really good futurist
<i>Student Learning and Achievement</i>	20	Role of the board in this area; much more on NCLB; need current information; something on charter schools; clear up API/AYP/CHSPE/STAR; too dry
<i>Finance and Facilities</i>	20	Spend more time on this one; more specificity; how to cut a budget; creative types of financing; less lecture
<i>Human Resources</i>	14	Superintendent/board relations; hiring/firing superintendents; role of employment of second level administrators, e.g., deputy superintendent; contracts, including second level contracts; some on county office work
<i>Policy and Judicial Review</i>	8	More on policy; how to stay current; much more on the Brown Act; include actual case reviews
<i>Collective Bargaining</i>	13	Negotiation styles and types; helping boards deal directly with teachers; how unions function; dealing with health care; how to set priorities; transferring from the traditional adversarial position to a more positive style of bargaining
<i>Community Relations and Advocacy</i>	11	Give more emphasis with more specificity; how to promote education in a variety of venues; assisting boards meet compliance issues; dealing with groups of parents who have one intense issue; public relations techniques; building community support for the budget; developing a communication plan; some focus on small communities; strategies for dealing with communities with a high limited English population
<i>Governance Integration</i>	3	Need a general understanding of what the Ed Code is (the who, what, where, when, why); a more complete MiG wrap-up is needed; how to handle turbulent board meetings; the board president's role

## ***Unique Issues Posed by Participants***

On occasion, a respondent(s) would comment or suggest something that didn't quite fit a theme, but seemed appropriate to include. This section contains a sample of those statements, stated verbatim.

1. *"Because I was the only board member trained, my understandings, skills, and experiences, put me on a different playing field than the other four."*

Implied here is that participation in the program by single individuals could cause a chasm between them and a "less informed" board. If this is the case, this kind of comment should not go unattended.

2. *"Treasure or provide strong incentives for school boards to provide for new board members. Right now, no incentive exists for superintendents to empower new board members. An uneducated, uninformed board encourages 'rubber stamping' superintendent recommendations."*

This is another reminder that individual participation can create a wedge among the participants in a local district.

3. *"Encourage teams to take training so we have common experiences. Offer some real discounts when the superintendent and a majority of the board take the training together."*

*"Effectiveness correlates with the number of board members who participate and the degree to which they can influence board members who do not."*

Here are two samples of often-mentioned remarks that participation as a team is extremely worthwhile. Comments similar to the above were plentiful. Add to that, another insightful response that argues for encouraging multiple participation from a district by suggesting that some form of monetary discount be given when a majority of the board enrolls.

4. *"Because of the 'big picture' nature of board work and, in my experience, the 'detail' work in finance, collective bargaining, and human resources, it was hard for me to know where the line should be drawn in those areas. I still struggle with this."*

Some confusion of role in various areas was not an unusual acknowledgment by those responding. Perhaps these feeling sparked the "We need more of this and less of that" comments.

5. *"Be aware of the different responsibilities and role of county boards. Presenters need to know these differences as well."*

This came from only one person, but knowing the role that our county offices play, local boards would be well-served with this knowledge. This kind of comment reminds us of the incredible number of tentacles throughout our profession.

6. *"I think if a board member is new, he/she should have more basics on certain facets of school finance. This was a slow learning curve for me and I felt a bit 'out of the loop' on some discussions."*

Always helpful is the reminder that we don't come out of the starting blocks at the same time in the same way. We ask our teachers to allow for individual differences in the classroom. We, too, should practice what we preach in a program as significant as MiG.

7. "What have you done to recruit minority presenters?"

An additional statement or two from this respondent made it clear that minority presenters were conspicuous by their absence.

*Researcher's Reflections*

*One must always remember that open-ended comments on a questionnaire are optional, regardless of what the directions say. When respondents take the time to write something, one can surmise that the feeling tone is different than when one simply checks a box. Without rereading all comments or counting how many times the group said something, what did I hear relative to these contributions?*

- This is a great program but it can be improved.
- Interacting with board members from elsewhere is one of the special benefits.
- Always pay attention to the logistics; earlier I called it "participant friendliness."
- Continuously review the module content; not annually... continuously.
- Promote teaming if at all possible.
- Consider developing a formal follow up/support element to the program.
- Review the *Student Learning* module carefully with the intent of revision.
- Pay attention to individual comments (e.g., graduate credit or minority presenters or perks if participating as a team).
- Encourage your presenters to embrace continuously improving the quality of their work. They are superb! All can improve.

## Summary of Answers to Questions

Answers to the seven questions about the MIG program comprised the content of this report. Questions 1 through 7 are listed below, with a two or three sentence answer for each.

<p><b>Question 1:</b> Generally, how do the graduates feel about the MIG program?</p>	<p>The MIG program got very high marks. Ninety-two percent gave the program a 5 or a 6 on a six-point scale.</p>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> What were the stronger and relatively weaker elements of the MIG program?</p>	<p>Strongest: Difficulty of content; pacing Weaker: Practicality of content; relevance of activities</p>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> How much impact did the MIG program have on the participants and their work as board members?</p>	<p>The greatest impact was “gaining knowledge,” “applying skills,” and “gaining confidence addressing the board.” The least impact was “influencing the board.”</p>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> Of the three hopeful effects upon participants, (1) knowledge, (2) application, and (3) impact on their respective governance teams, how much difference did MIG make, and of the three, which was the most dominant?</p>	<p>Ninety-one percent stated that the knowledge gained met or exceeded their expectations. The ability to apply the content was met or exceeded by 87 percent. Two-thirds indicated that the impact on their governance team met or exceeded their expectations.</p>
<p><b>Question 5:</b> How much impact did each of the nine MIG modules have on the participants?</p>	<p>Four of the modules received the highest rating by at least 50 percent of the participants: these were Foundations, Setting Direction, Human Resources, and Community Relations and Advocacy. The lowest rated was Student Learning and Achievement with 25 percent giving it the highest rating.</p>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> Which of eight selected variables that contribute to the overall quality of the MIG program are the most closely related to high participant ratings?</p>	<p>(1) Difficulty of content, (2) connectivity, and (3) pacing were ranked highest by those 37 individuals in the sample who gave the quality of MIG the highest possible rating.</p>
<p><b>Question 7:</b> What general comments and suggestions for improving the program via open-ended responses did the MiG graduates contribute?</p>	<p>From the several hundred open-ended comments that were contributed, the common themes are these: (1) This is a superior program; (2) Interacting with other board members with the opportunity for networking is one of the best things about the MiG program; (3) Participant friendliness is one of the key variables that participants cite as important for a successful experience and participant friendliness captures those issues that make it easier/more convenient/advantageous to participate; (4) Practice good pedagogy; and (5) Put into practice the important elements of the principles of change.</p>

# **APPENDIX A**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR THE INQUIRY**