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ABSTRACT

This document reports the findings of a survey designed to assess the extent and nature of the involvement of school board members and school administrators in the public school purchasing process. A total of 1,199 school board members and 177 school administrators were interviewed during the 4 days of the 1969 National School Boards Association convention. The randomly selected respondents represented school districts located in all 50 States that vary greatly in size of student population. The report's findings indicate that (1) school board members and school administrators are in close agreement concerning the involvement and importance of various school personnel in the school purchasing process; (2) school board members are generally involved in all phases of purchasing planning and decision making, regardless of school district size; and (3) school board members and superintendents comprise the nucleus of the school purchasing team in most instances. (JH)

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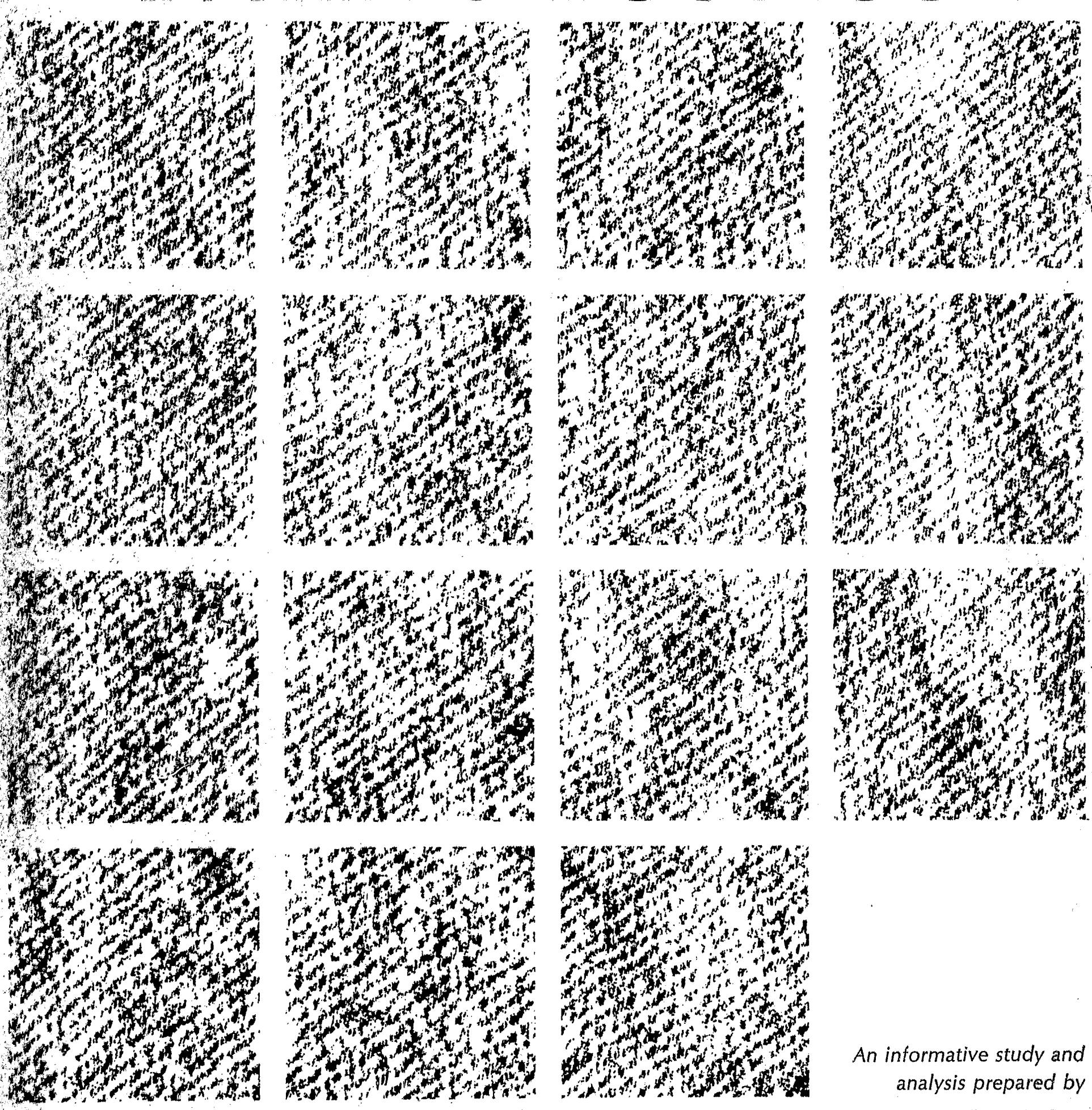
JULY 1969

WHO MAKES THE BUYING DECISIONS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?



An informative study and analysis prepared by

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

JUN 27 1969

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INTRODUCTION

The growth in the field of education has been nothing less than spectacular over the last decade. From the marketing standpoint, this growth has now become second only to our national defense budget in the amount of money spent.

With such rapid growth, it has been difficult to maintain marketing data that provides reliable and current statistical information on the school market. To help fill this void, the National School Boards Association has surveyed a large representative segment of the people vitally involved . . . school board members and administrators. Their answers to questions probing their involvement in the purchasing process for the schools of our nation have proven extremely interesting and, we believe, useful.

Of major significance is the strong degree of involvement of board members in handling their responsibility to spend tax dollars wisely. There is an almost overwhelming percentage of active participation in the buying procedure by members of local school boards. This degree of involvement is strong in school districts of all sizes, in spite of some previous beliefs to the contrary. The results of the survey also reinforce the general belief that school administrators are an important factor in school purchasing.

This study is the second in a series of statistical and research reports being developed by the National School Boards Association. We hope that the data contained in this report will contribute to a better understanding of the business operations of our schools and to the relative roles of the people involved.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Dr. Harold V. Webb
Executive Director

STORY OF THE SURVEY

This survey was conceived and undertaken as a result of numerous and continuing questions received by the National School Boards Association concerning the buying decisions in the public schools. The thrust of the survey, the questions asked and the format of the questionnaire were jointly determined by NSBA personnel and representatives of Institutional Consultants, Inc., marketing and research specialists.

The interviews for the survey were conducted by personnel of the Dade County, Florida, Board of Public Instruction.

SCOPE

Interviews were conducted during the four days of the National School Boards Association Convention in Miami Beach, Florida, April 12th through 15, 1969. Persons interviewed were selected at random from those engaged in various activities during the course of the Convention. This random selection produced 1,376 complete survey forms. Of the total, 1,199 questionnaires were answered by *school board members,* the remaining 177 by *school administrators.*

DISTRIBUTION

Respondents are from all 50 states of the U. S. as well as from the District of Columbia and Canada. Men and women were interviewed, although no attempt was made to qualify the answers by sex.

Since sampling was random, no effort was made to select respondents from specific sizes of school districts. The totals, however, cover responses from *every size of district.* For the report, the breakdown of district size was by student population. The ranges used were standard as employed in reporting by the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

SURVEY DATA

1,376 persons were interviewed

1,199 were *school board members*

177 were *school administrators*

Each individual was asked for the city and state in which he served, as well as the enrollment of his school district.

The total number of persons interviewed subdivided into the following groupings:

Number Interviewed

School Population	*Board Members*	*Administrators*	*Total*	*Percent*
1 to 299	13	0	13	1.0%
300 to 599	26	13	39	2.8%
600 to 1,199	95	16	111	8.0%
1,200 to 2,999	298	29	327	23.7%
3,000 to 5,999	264	47	311	22.6%
6,000 to 11,999	238	22	260	18.9%
12,000 to 24,999	141	42	183	13.3%
25,000 to 44,999	56	5	61	4.4%
45,000 and Over	68	3	71	5.3%
TOTALS	1,199	177	1,376	100.0%

The respondents represented in the survey come from all states and geographic regions:

New England
46 replies
3.3%

Canada
10 replies
.7%

Mountain
111 replies
8.2%

West No. Central
193 replies
14.0%

Middle Atlantic
294 replies
21.4%

East No. Central
342 replies
24.8%

West So. Central
100 replies
7.2%

South Atlantic
99 replies
7.2%

East So. Central
26 replies
1.9%

Pacific
155 replies
11.3%

(See Reference Map on Page 15)

PARTICIPATION IN PURCHASING

Question: Have you, during the past 12 months, participated in discussions relating to the purchase of products and/or services for your schools?

Answer: YES 91.6%

NO 8.4%

When the composite total is broken down into the two categories of respondents, answers vary as follows:

BOARD MEMBERS	YES	91.0%
	NO	9.0%
ADMINISTRATORS	YES	94.9%
	NO	5.1%

On the basis of school district population, participation is indicated as follows:

School Population	*Board Members Involved*	*Administrators Involved*
1 to 299	84.6%	0.0%
300 to 599	88.5	100.0
600 to 1,199	87.4	87.5
1,200 to 2,999	91.6	96.5
3,000 to 5,999	92.0	95.7
6,000 to 11,999	90.8	90.9
12,000 to 24,999	90.8	97.6
25,000 to 44,999	91.1	100.0
45,000 and Over	94.1	66.6

PRODUCT AREAS

Question: If yes to previous question (have you during past 12 months participated in discussions relating to purchase of products and/or services for your schools?), in which product areas did the discussions relate?

Product Area	*Percent of Board Members Involved*	*Percent of Administrators Involved*
Athletic, Gym & Playground Equipment	76.1%	67.2%
Auditorium Furniture & Equipment	61.0	51.4
Audio-visual Materials & Equipment	79.9	76.8
Books and/or Periodicals	77.3	65.5
Building Components & Materials	75.5	66.6
Classroom Furniture & Equipment	74.0	67.8
Electronic Equipment	65.7	61.0
Flooring & Floor Coverings	68.3	57.1
Folding Doors, Gates & Partitions	61.8	53.7
Heating, Ventilating & Air Conditioning	71.3	60.5
Insurance	80.2	71.2
Laboratory Equipment	65.7	54.8
Maintenance Equipment & Supplies	73.8	61.6
Music Equipment	68.1	61.6
Office Furniture & Equipment	65.8	59.3
Relocatable Classrooms	63.4	52.5
Seating & Desks	64.7	59.9
School Construction	78.2	65.5
Transportation Equipment	75.8	62.7

INITIATING THE IDEA TO PURCHASE

Question: Who, in your school district, initiates the idea for possible purchase of a product and/or service?

Answer: (Totals are greater than 100% because of multiple answers)

School board members responded—

235 (19.6%) said board members
618 (51.5%) said superintendents
306 (25.5%) said business managers
103 (8.6%) said assistant superintendents
54 (4.5%) said others (predominantly teachers)

Responses of board members by school district size—

District Student Population	*Board Members*	*Superin-tendent*	*Business Manager*	*Assistant Supt.*	*Others*
1 to 299	0%	69.2%	0%	0%	0%
300 to 599	23.1	84.6	0	0	3.8
600 to 1,199	24.2	61.1	18.9	7.4	3.1
1,200 to 2,999	25.5	55.4	20.1	6.7	1.3
3,000 to 5,999	16.3	50.8	22.7	9.8	.4
6,000 to 11,999	15.6	42.4	38.7	9.6	4.2
12,000 to 24,999	16.3	48.2	31.9	10.6	12.0
25,000 to 44,999	23.2	30.4	21.4	5.4	10.7
45,000 and Over	20.6	64.7	27.9	13.2	17.6

Administrators responded—

33 (18.6%) said board members
126 (71.1%) said superintendents
31 (17.5%) said business managers
28 (15.8%) said assistant superintendents
11 (6.2%) said others (predominantly teachers)

Responses of administrators by school district size—

District Student Population	*Board Members*	*Superin-tendent*	*Business Manager*	*Assistant Supt.*	*Others*
1 to 299	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
300 to 599	7.7	100.0	0	0	0
600 to 1,199	18.8	81.3	0	6.3	0
1,200 to 2,999	20.7	93.1	10.3	10.3	6.9
3,000 to 5,999	17.0	72.3	21.3	19.1	8.5
6,000 to 11,999	36.4	90.9	40.9	36.4	9.1
12,000 to 24,999	9.5	33.3	16.7	9.5	4.8
25,000 to 44,999	0	60.0	0	20.0	20.0
45,000 and Over	100.0	66.6	66.6	66.6	0

THE DECISION TO PURCHASE

Question: Are you involved in the actual decision to purchase products or services for your schools?

Answer: YES 91.6%

NO 8.4%

1,097 (91.5%) of the board member respondents answered Yes.

163 (92.1%) of the administrator respondents answered Yes.

Based on the size of the school districts, by student population, the respondents indicated their actual involvement in the decision to purchase, as follows:

District Student Population	*Board Members Involved*	*Administrators Involved*
1 to 299	84.6%	0.0%
300 to 599	92.3	100.0
600 to 1,199	91.6	100.0
1,200 to 2,999	95.3	93.1
3,000 to 5,999	93.9	80.8
6,000 to 11,999	85.3	95.5
12,000 to 24,999	92.9	95.2
25,000 to 44,999	96.4	100.0
45,000 and Over	80.9	100.0

SPECIFYING A PARTICULAR BRAND

Question: Do you have a voice in specifying the particular brand of a product to be purchased by your school district?

Answer:		
	YES	79.2%
	NO	20.8%

926 (77.2%) of the board member respondents answered Yes.

164 (92.7%) of the administrator respondents answered Yes.

Based on the size of the school districts, by student population, the respondents indicated their voice in specifying the particular brand of a product to be purchased, as follows:

District Student Population	*Board Members Involved*	*Administrators Involved*
1 to 299	69.2%	0.0%
300 to 599	88.5	100.0
600 to 1,199	85.3	100.0
1,200 to 2,999	85.9	86.2
3,000 to 5,999	80.7	93.6
6,000 to 11,999	66.4	86.4
12,000 to 24,999	74.5	95.2
25,000 to 44,999	71.4	100.0
45,000 and Over	60.3	66.6

THE FINAL DECISION TO PURCHASE

Question: Who, in the district, makes the final decision as to specific brand selection of a product or service to be purchased by your school district?

Answer: (Totals are greater than 100% because of multiple answers)

School board members responded—

957 (79.8%) said board members
168 (14.0%) said superintendents
94 (7.8%) said business managers
15 (1.2%) said assistant superintendents
30 (2.5%) said others

Responses of board members by school district size—

District Student Population	*Board Members*	*Superin-tendent*	*Business Manager*	*Assistant Supt.*	*Others*
1 to 299	92.3%	30.8%	0%	0%	0%
300 to 599	80.8	19.2	7.7	0	0
600 to 1,199	84.2	15.8	6.3	0	2.1
1,200 to 2,999	86.9	10.7	5.4	.7	.7
3,000 to 5,999	81.1	16.7	7.2	1.1	.8
6,000 to 11,999	73.1	15.5	10.1	1.7	2.1
12,000 to 24,999	73.0	6.4	13.5	1.4	9.2
25,000 to 44,999	82.1	16.1	10.7	0	3.6
45,000 and Over	70.6	19.1	2.9	5.9	5.9

Administrators responded—

82 (46.3%) said board members
64 (36.2%) said superintendents
18 (10.2%) said business managers
15 (8.5%) said assistant superintendents
5 (2.8%) said others

Responses of administrators by school district size—

District Student Population	*Board Members*	*Superin-tendent*	*Business Manager*	*Assistant Supt.*	*Others*
1 to 299	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
300 to 599	84.6	30.8	0	0	0
600 to 1,199	43.8	56.3	0	0	0
1,200 to 2,999	68.9	41.4	20.7	0	0
3,000 to 5,999	42.6	44.7	12.8	10.6	0
6,000 to 11,999	45.5	36.2	13.6	40.9	9.1
12,000 to 24,999	26.2	21.4	4.8	2.4	2.4
25,000 to 44,999	40.0	20.0	0	0	20.0
45,000 and Over	33.3	0	33.3	0	33.3

PARTICIPATION IN PRODUCT DEMONSTRATIONS

Question: Have you, during the past 12 months, sat in on a presentation or demonstration of a school product being considered for purchase by your district?

Answer:

YES	73.1%
NO	26.9%

841 (70.1%) of the board member respondents answered Yes.
165 (93.2%) of the administrator respondents answered Yes.

Based on the size of the school districts, by student population, the respondents indicated their involvement in presentations or demonstrations of products, as follows:

District Student Population	*Board Members Involved*	*Administrators Involved*
1 to 299	53.8%	0.0%
300 to 599	80.8	100.0
600 to 1,199	73.7	75.0
1,200 to 2,999	68.8	100.0
3,000 to 5,999	70.1	95.7
6,000 to 11,999	64.3	95.5
12,000 to 24,999	76.6	90.5
25,000 to 44,999	76.8	80.0
45,000 and Over	72.1	100.0

READERSHIP OF EDUCATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Question: Which of the following educational publications do you read?

Respondents indicated that they read these publications "Regularly" as follows:

Publication	*Board Members*		*Administrators*	
AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL	954	79.6%	167	94.4%
AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY	131	10.9%	118	66.6%
NATION'S SCHOOLS	615	51.3%	160	90.4%
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT	775	64.6%	166	93.8%

Respondents indicated that they read these publications "Occasionally" as follows:

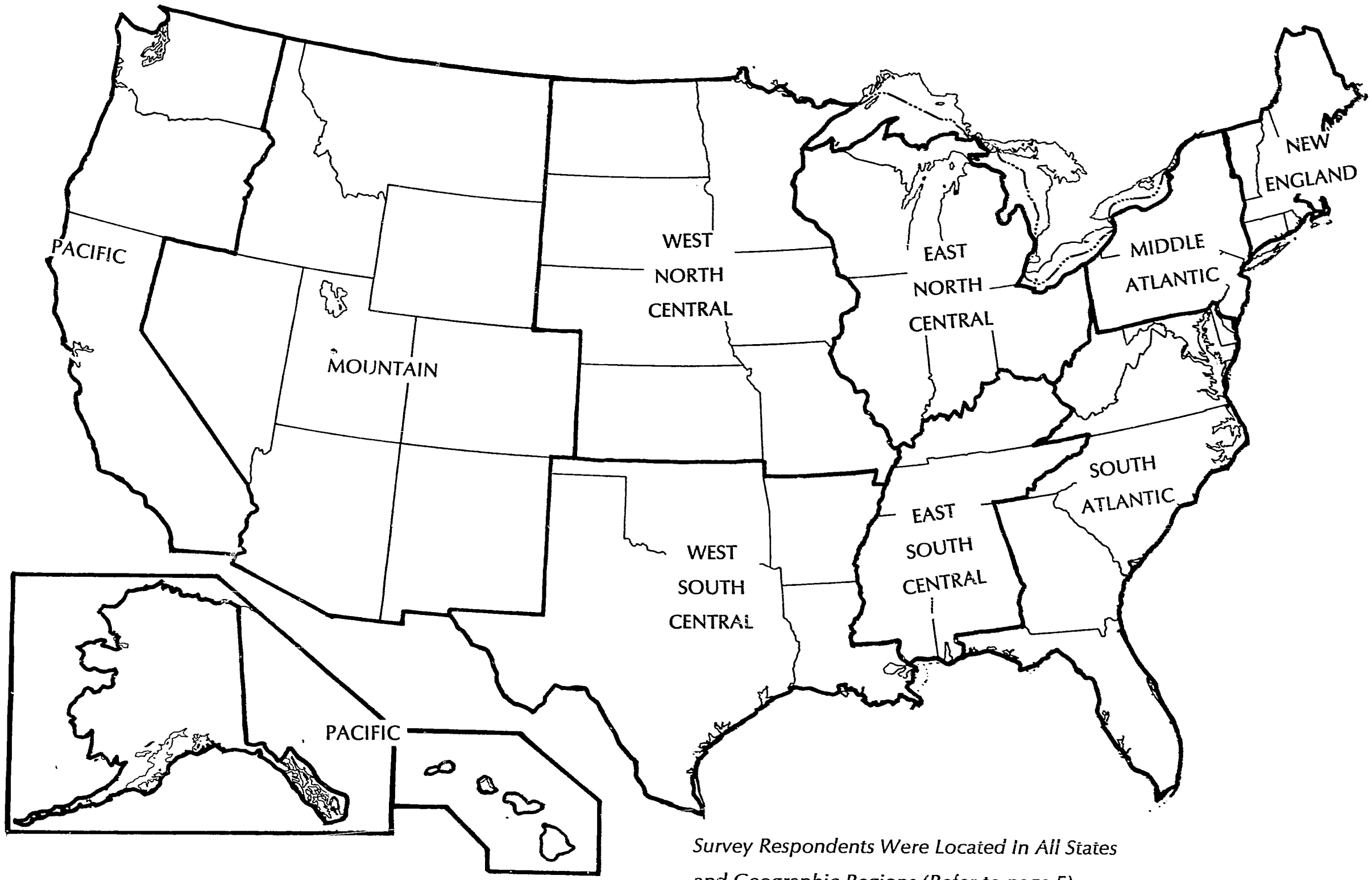
Publication	*Board Members*		*Administrators*	
AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL	68	5.7%	5	2.8%
AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY	20	1.7%	14	7.9%
NATION'S SCHOOLS	75	6.3%	7	3.9%
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT	88	7.3%	10	5.7%

CONCLUSIONS

It must be concluded from this study that school board members and school administrators agree rather closely on the involvement and importance of the various personnel in the operation of the buying effort in the schools.

The study further establishes that school board members are one of the most important elements in discussions and decisions regarding the purchase of products and services for their schools. When coupled with the superintendents, the combination comprises the basis of the school purchasing "team."

This survey establishes that the school board member is involved in all phases of the purchasing planning, decision making and consummation. It further determines that the major involvement of board members is present in school districts of all sizes. The greatest degree of involvement is in those districts with school populations of 1,200 to 25,000 pupils. It is interesting to note, however, that the very largest districts (45,000 pupils and over) report substantial involvement of board members in all phases of the decision-making process. It is also important to observe (See page 7) that the types of products in which board members and administrators are involved, represent most of the sizeable purchases of a school district.



Survey Respondents Were Located In All States and Geographic Regions (Refer to page 5)