



ISBA Members Share Thoughts on Membership Experience

By Terry Spradlin, Executive Director



As shared in my last column of *The Journal*, the Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year as *the* membership organization for school board members. I wish to acknowledge Mr. Scott Wilson, Ph.D. student in Curriculum Studies at the Indiana University School of

Education, for the contribution of his column, “The Founding and Early Years of the Indiana School Boards Association” included in this edition of *The Journal*. Mr. Wilson’s column highlights that in the 40-year period from 1935 to 1975, ISBA evolved from membership inclusion in the Indiana Town and City School Administrators Association, to an organization that developed its deep roots in representing 100 percent of all school boards as members and a powerful voice in Indiana’s K-12 education policy arena. I also extend gratitude to the I.U. School of Education, an ISBA associate member, for its partnership with ISBA and commitment of resources to research ISBA’s history originating in its school on the Bloomington campus. In particular, we thank Dr. Jill D. Shedd, Assistant Dean for Teacher Education, for support

of this historical research. Dr. Shedd is also the Executive Director of the Indiana Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (IACTE), President of the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corp., and member of the ISBA Legislative Committee.

Today, ISBA maintains 100 percent school board participation in membership, including the addition of 283 newly-elected (or appointed) school board members from across the state. Approximately 200 of these new members participated in the New Board Member Academy clinic sessions in January and February to develop a foundational understanding (the “roots”) of the precepts of effective board governance. ISBA will continue to offer a sequence of webinars through this summer to further support our new board members. We have also been planning meaningful and timely content for the rest of our events (webinars, seminars, workshops, and the Annual Fall Conference) and for all of our members.

We are committed to serving you to the best of our ability and being attentive to your perspectives, comments and any concerns about your membership organization. In this regard, we conducted the 2018 ISBA Membership Survey. This was a second consecutive year for administration of the Membership Survey. During a similar window in 2017 a baseline survey was conducted and the results were used to inform a strategic planning process of the ISBA Board of Directors and Staff, with a new three-year

plan adopted on June 15, 2018. In addition, the survey results led to creation of the e-newsletter, *e-Dition*, and the development of a new “Budgeting and Financial Oversight for School Board Members Resource Guide.”

RESULTS OF THE 2018 ISBA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

The 2018 ISBA Membership Engagement Survey window opened November 14 and closed on December 7, 2018. The online survey covered 21 questions, including four open-ended questions. A total of 331 members participated in the survey, up from 277 respondents the prior year. The email invitation was sent to 1,496 members, resulting in a 22.1% response rate (compared to 18.15% in 2017). Of the total respondents, 61% were first or second term board members; 93 (36%) respondents were board members in their third term or more. The I.U. Center for Survey Research once again performed the coding, tabulating, and formatting results of open-ended questions, and assisted with formatting of overall survey results. We thank Lilian Yahng, Director of Research & Development and the Research Laboratory, and Maren Witte, Graduate Assistant, at the Center for Survey Research for lending their expertise to ensure a sound survey instrument and accurate reporting of the results.

A leading core question of the survey asked members about their perceptions of the Indiana School Boards Association across a number of dimensions. The results of this question are illustrated in Table 1.

Agreement responses to all parts or dimensions of this question increased from the 2017 survey. A total of 96% of respondents expressed agreement that they are regularly informed about ISBA programs and services. A total of 88% of respondents agreed that they are supported as a member through the programs and services available from ISBA and that they value their membership in ISBA. A growth of 12 percentage points (from 75% to 87%) occurred with the statement: “I benefit from my membership in ISBA.” One area that ISBA hopes to continue to show gains in with subsequent survey results is in the area of membership connectedness and engagement.

Two subsequent open-ended questions asked about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the ISBA and its programs and services it provides to its members. Regarding strengths, respondents emphasized regular communication and outreach, legislative services, legal updates, continuing education and professional development, and availability of staff to answer questions as needed. Regarding weaknesses, the top response was “no recommendations,” but also the travel distance, costs,

or timing of meetings, and that more online options are desired. Furthermore, respondents expressed a desire that membership become more highly engaged in grassroots advocacy. Finally, 31 respondents indicated that meeting content is redundant or overlapping.

Another question that we have evaluated closely was open-ended question asking for topics and issues that members would like addressed at ISBA events in 2019. Tabulated results for this question are found in Table 2.

ISBA used the input on event content to offer the School Safety and Cyber

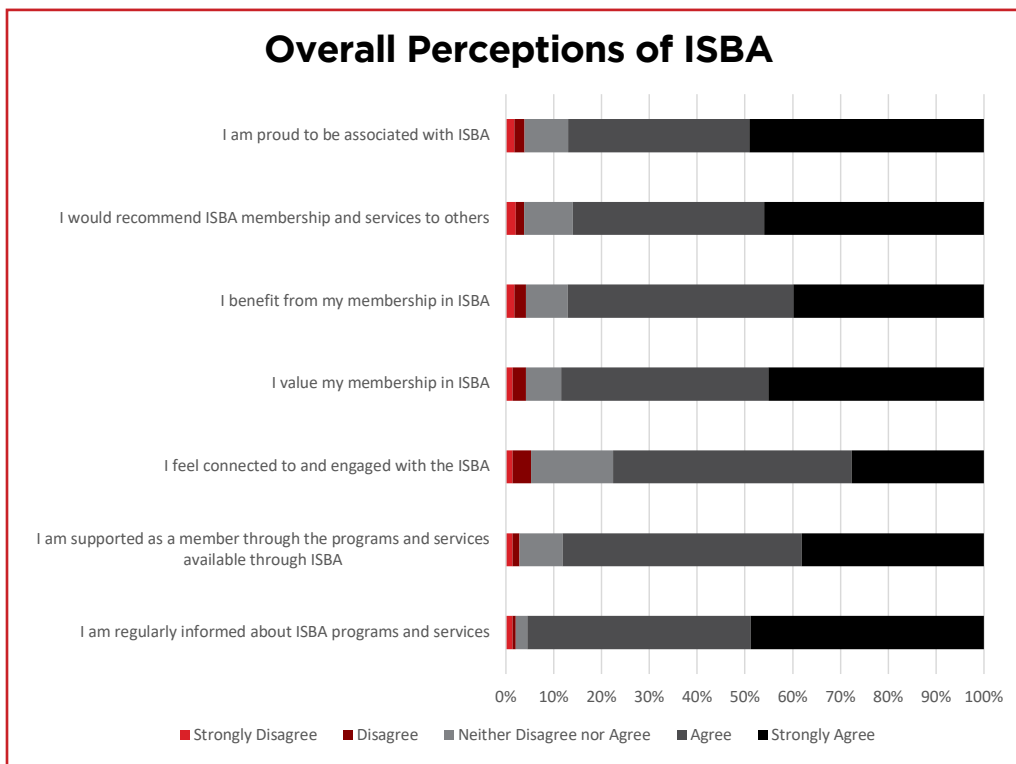


Table 1.

Security Seminar held on January 11, 2019, and attended by 225 people. Next, the results of the question were used to inform the creation of new strand and topic themes for the 2019 ISBA-IAPSS Annual Fall Conference. In addition, the feedback will help us plan for other webinars and seminars throughout 2019. Results of other questions clearly illuminated that ISBA members would like more board training, professional development, and education policy chats (like the one held on December 17, 2018, on effects of the Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher program on student achievement) delivered through a webinar format (see Table 3).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Thank you to the 331 ISBA members who took time to complete the 2018 Membership Survey. We will continue this survey again in November, while using the most recent results to focus our efforts to enhance the programs and services that support you. I hope you can take pride in the history of your association, take advantage of the programs and services offered today to you and your fellow board members, and are excited about the future of the Indiana School Boards Association. Working together we can undoubtedly achieve our vision of being the preeminent resource in school governance and a respected advocate of public education. I hope to see you at the ISBA Spring Regional Dinner Meetings commencing on May 6, 2019. 🍀

What topics and issues would you like addressed in webinars and/or seminars in 2019?

RESPONSE CODE	% RESPONSES	% RESPONSES
School finances, TIF, teacher pay	25%	43
Other (safety/security (18); video recording meetings/webinars (6); strategic planning (5); PR and media relations (11))	23%	40
Nonresponse, don't know, no recommendations, or unclear answer	16%	27
Legislative updates	15%	26
Role of board/board members and getting people involved	14%	25
Curriculum, vocational training, testing and graduation	13%	23
Funding	13%	23
Current topics (general) and local issues	13%	22
Legal issues (unspecified) and Open Door	9%	16
Lobbying/advocacy	9%	15
Charter schools/private schools	5%	9
Superintendent relations	5%	8
ESSA, grading of schools	3%	6
Best practices	3%	6
Technology in schools	2%	3
Referendums	2%	4
Suggestions on logistics of trainings	2%	4

Table 2.

Preferred Methods of Communication

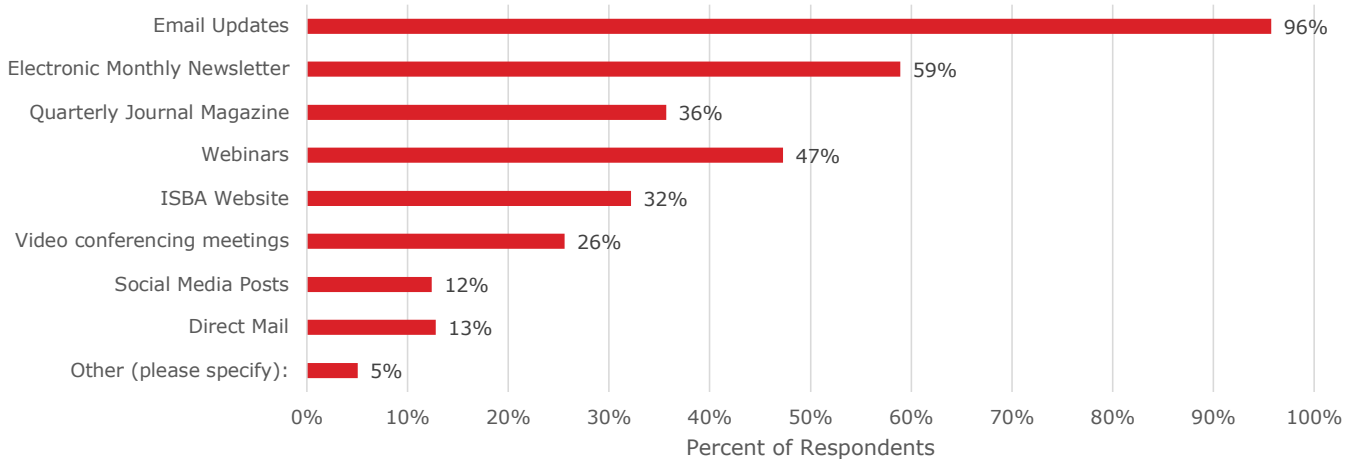


Table 3.