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Site-based decision-making: the perceptions of teachers and administrators in Oakland County

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SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING: THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN OAKLAND COUNTY

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father and mother who instilled upon me the importance of education.

For her unwavering encouragement and support I dedicate this work to Martha R. Miller. Her love and patience helped make this accomplishment possible.

To Elissa, Dan, Dena, Annie, and Erin, I dedicate this work. Their pride and respect helped to make this achievement possible.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Background

The concept of employee decision-making is not new to American Labor. In 1898, employee representatives of Filene's Department Store of Boston, Massachusetts, were given control of some employee funds and the cafeteria (NEA, 1988).

During the first part of this century, there were many instances of shop committees which were designed to improve the productivity of the work force. Even though these committees discussed schedules, product design, maintenance, child care, training, health, and safety, they died out after World War II because of slackening product demand and the fact that some thought that they were designed to break the unions.

The United States system of educational management traces its origins back to the 1800s. It emerged from a decentralized system of one-room schools that became obsolete by the early 1900s. Unable to meet the demands of the changing society, legislatures created schools which were centralized to meet the needs of our changing society, thus establishing the centralized bureaucratic management system we have today (Prickett, 1990).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a rapid increase in the number of administrators and a strengthening of teacher unions. Because these groups viewed themselves as rivals, joint decision-making was rare. The decisions of administrators were "handed down" and teachers were expected to carry them out. Authority became more and more centralized and bureaucratized (Taylor & Levine, 1991).

A wave of worker participation swept the country in the 1970s with movements

like Quality of Work Life, Quality Circles, Employee Involvement, Labor-Management Participation Teams, and Co-determination (NEA 1988). It was during this time that school-based management got its start. It was called decentralization and school-site budgeting (Crosby 1991).

Three significant forces in the early eighties affected the move toward site-based management:

1. "A Nation at Risk" report which forced the country to look closely at its schools.
2. The "Excellence in Education" movement.
3. The Reagan administration.

"A Nation at Risk" highlighted the role of teachers in the failure of American education and the years 1983 to 1985 saw more than 700 state laws passed to upgrade the profession. The "Excellence in Education" movement wanted to improve the quality of education by requiring more math, English, and science, and more time in school. The Reagan administration was to emphasize educational leadership, promote academic quality, and cut funding (Hanson 1991). These reforms of the early 1980s suggested that a more centralized and bureaucratic regulation of teachers and their work would lead to school reform.

In the mid-1980s, a shift in educational attitudes occurred. The reports of the Carnegie Commission on Teaching as a Profession (1986); the Holmes Group (1986), a task force of education school deans; the National Governors' Association (1986); and the National Education Association/National Association of Secondary School Principals (1986) encouraged the development of a framework of collegial and participative decision-making at the school level. The Carnegie Commission advocated giving teachers a greater voice (Conley 1989).

The Carnegie report wanted teaching to become more professional. It advocated stricter standards, higher levels of compensation, and greater efforts to attract qualified teachers. It supported the concept of decentralized decision-making. According to the research, participation in making decisions by the professional staff has been an important variable in commitment and a motivation among teachers (Taylor & Levine 1991).

The essence, therefore, of site-based management is the creation of ownership for those responsible for carrying out the decisions by involving them directly in the decision process. The idea of site-based management can be defined as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members and students, are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level.

School reform and restructuring have mandated several concepts for educational change to enhance the ability of the school to facilitate the needs of the student. With emphasis on student achievement, educators should be prepared to implement the various components of site-based management (Leonard & Messner, 1991).

> The excessively centralized, bureaucratic control of urban schools must end. Effective local leadership is crucial. Every school should be given the freedom and flexibility required to respond creatively to its educational objectives and above all, to meet the needs of students. (Murphy, 1991, p. 64)

This statement by the Carnegie Foundation is to the point. This thinking has convinced many state governments to believe that a decentralized governance structure is needed so that schools, as singular educational institutions, can offer their local communities the educational programs and services they desire. This new legislation will enable and encourage educators, parents, and community members to establish partnerships for more

effective schools and school management in their area (Murphy 1991).

The literature, for the most part, seems to be vague when it comes to a definition of site-based decision-making. Several good working definitions have been found for site-based decision-making.

Site-based decision making has been defined as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members and students, are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level. The responsibility to assess needs, establish goals, facilitate program improvement, insure student learning and continuous professional growth, allocate resources, and account to the public rests with the principal and staff. This responsibility is defined and provided for by Board of Education Policy (Ambrosie & Haley 1991). This organizational model showed how dramatic restructuring can be if schools are managed under this definition of site-based decision-making.

Public Act 335 of the State of Michigan Section 1202 (a) stated:

> The board of a school district shall ensure that decisions made at the school building level are made using site-based decision-making that includes the participation of teachers, school administrators, parents, pupils, and others in the school community. (Michigan Education Association, 1994, p. 1.3)

The Michigan Education Association (1994) defined site-based decision-making as a:

> . . .joint planning and problem-solving process that seeks to improve the quality of work life in the school and the delivery of quality education. Site-based decision-making is an approach that involves various individuals at the local level collaboratively making decisions about their organizations, outcomes, and operations, vis-à-vis decisions concerning programs and budget. (p. 1.3)

The Michigan Education Association also gives six characteristics of the model site-based school. They are:

- The school is the primary unit of improvement;
- Schools and the district plan, design, and implement together;
- Authority, autonomy and accountability are decentralized;
- Decisions involve a wide array of persons;
- A team or site council is used for representation; and
- Decisions focus on programs and budget (MEA 1994).

The metaphor of "waves" has been used to characterize two principal movements in current educational reform. The first wave of reform resulted in state-level mandates, rules, and regulations that were expected to be adopted and implemented at the local school district or school-site level. The second wave, reinforced by the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy and a report on schools by the National Governors' Association, shifted emphasis from state-level initiatives to the restructuring of the system by which local schools are governed and decisions are made (Cistone, 1989; Midgley & Wood, 1993).

Restructuring efforts have varied in focus from revamping teacher preparation programs to changing individual schools. When concentrated on the school level, restructuring is referred to as school-based decision- making. This system is designed to improve education by increasing authority at the school site. Plans developed under this system call for decentralization of authority through teacher decisional participation and collegial planning among the teaching staff. School-based decision-making is an area of restructuring that has direct impact on schools, yet it has been the subject of surprisingly little research (Taylor 1992).

Site-based decision making is in concept and practice an integral component of school restructuring. Site-based decision making may exist in the absence of

restructuring and may be already ingrained in the governance of many American schools (Goldman 1991). The current system of school management evolved from the decentralized system of one-room schools more than 100 years ago. This legacy continues, for as surely as the decentralized one-room schools did not altogether meet the need of society in a rapidly growing industrial age, neither does our current system of centralized school districts meet the needs of a rapidly growing technological society (Prickett 1990).

The idea that American schools are no longer number one seems to many to be true. Our schools, the data shows, do not measure up to those in the rest of the world (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Others say, and data also supports, that today's students are better educated and better prepared than those of a few years ago (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). If educational reform is to succeed, it must be structured to enable teachers, administrators, parents and community members to address collectively the problems that face our schools (Kretovics, 1991).

Statement Of The Problem

The primary concern of this study was to discover the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward site-based decision-making. Recommended in P.A. 25, "building-level decision-making" is now one of the required components of the school improvement plan. P.A. 335-Section 1202 (a). stated:

> The board of a school district shall ensure that decisions made at the school building level are made using site-based decision-making that includes the participation of teachers, school administrators, parents, pupils, and others in the school community.

Not long after the school code called for site-based decision making, the legislature passed P.A. 112. Section 15 (3) (c) of P.A. 112 prohibited the bargaining of

the composition of a Site-Based Decision Committee. This past December of 1995, the Governor signed into law SB 679 which deletes section 1202(a) of the current school code that required each school district to use site-based decision-making. School districts are required to invite their school board members, school administrators, teachers and other school employees, pupils, parents and community residents and encourage them to voluntarily participate in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of a district's school improvement plan. The increasing use of site-based decision-making is a reality. Teachers and administrators are expected to take greater control of the day-to-day and the long-term operations of their buildings. The success or failure of this approach can depend on the teachers' and administrators' attitudes and perceptions toward the new and far-reaching challenges awaiting them. If the perceptions of those who are most affected by site-based decision making are understood, then the process of its success or failure may be understood.

Research Questions

This research study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent do educational professionals in selected school districts in Oakland County regard site-based decision making as positive?

2. Is there a difference between teachers and administrators on their perceptions of site-based decision making?

3. Can perceptions of site-based decision making be predicted from personal and professional characteristics of the respondents?

Significance of the Study

Teachers and administrators are expected to do more and more in such areas as school improvement initiatives, professional development, certification initiatives, curriculum initiatives, assessment initiatives, and pupil instruction time. In order to

alleviate much of their anxiety, educational professionals must understand site-based decision making. This understanding can be of great benefit to the educational process.

Definition Of Terms

The term listed below was conceptually defined for this study.

Site-based decision making: An organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members, students, and others are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level.
For the purpose of this study, the following terms: teacher empowerment, school-based management, shared decision-making, collaboration, total quality management, school level decision-making, site-based management, participatory management, site-based schools, and school governing council, shall be known as site-based decision-making.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were acknowledged for this study:

- Teachers and building level administrators from one county will be used in this study.
- This study examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators only. Other stakeholders in the educational community, including school board members, central office administrators, office and support staff, parents, and community members was not included in this study, although they should be included in site-based decision making.

Assumptions for the Study

The following assumptions were made for this study:

- Teachers want to participate in site-based decision making.
- Building level administrators are willing to allow teachers and other stakeholders to participate in site-based decision making.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

The restructuring movement has maintained a high profile among educators for more than a decade. School districts throughout the country are being held accountable for student outcomes. Innovations to improve these outcomes have been developed and implemented under the restructuring movement. After several years of district restructuring, evidence of the effects of these innovations should be measurable.

Site-based decision making is being implemented throughout the country. To determine if site-based decision making is having an impact on student learning, this literature review will concentrate on the following: effective schools, group communication and decisions, shared decision making, student achievement, restructuring, empowerment, site-based management, school improvement, group communication/decision making, student achievement, team and movement, change, communication, professional development, and councils.

Restructuring

The restructuring movement of the 1990s is the most significant and serious attempt at school reform of the past quarter century (Tye, 1992). During the 1980s, federal and state education agencies had invested heavily in attempting to stimulate and sometimes force improvements in schools (Midgley & Wood, 1993). Interest in restructuring evolved as a result of an evaluative retrospective of calls to reform, especially as a consequence of national reports and reactive state mandates. Restructuring implied fundamental school change. Districts were urged to give schools greater

autonomy and control over resources so they could find ways to meet high standards (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). This restructuring included making changes in curriculum and instruction, and determining how organizing and administering schools should provide supportive work environments for teachers (Dolan, 1994). The word most associated with school reforms during the first half of the 1980s tended to be "excellence" (Tye, 1992). Excellence was imposed as a "top-down" kind of reform which led to merit pay, career ladders, and monitoring programs being implemented to improve teaching (Midgley & Wood, 1993).

During the latter half of this decade, interest shifted to issues of restructuring. Beginning in 1986, the excellence movement took a noticeable turn away from reform and toward restructuring. This shift in focus grew from the belief that schools must change the way they organize the work of students, teachers, and administrators to meet society's demands and expectations (Ferrara, 1992). Some of the major results of restructuring initiatives included:

- increased involvement in decision making at the school site by parents and teachers;
- alignment of curricula throughout the state; and
- state mandated textbooks and compulsory state-wide competency testing.

The primary objective of the recent education restructuring movement is to improve learning. Improved learning generally means that high school graduates will have a solid command of basic academic skills (e.g., reading, writing, and computation); foundation skills that are both content related (e.g., English, mathematics, science, history, and geography) and work-related (e.g., listening, speaking, and working in teams). Students also should be more adept at leadership, problem solving, and creativity. Schools, in essence, provide students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to

become lifelong learners (Siegel & Byrne, 1994).

The way schools are organized has an influence on how students learn. According to Elmore (1992), changing the organization of schools should result in changes in teaching and learning. While this assertion seems to have face validity, retrospective examination of actual attempts to reform American education convinced Elmore that organizational change and teaching and learning were not always linked. It was not clear if changing teaching practice could lead reliably and consistently to well-defined changes in the structure of schools. It is unlikely that seizing on a single organizational solution will result in predictable changes in teaching practice. For example, age-grade (i.e. 6^{th}, 7^{th}, etc.) grouping practices are questionable if the object of teaching is students' conceptual understanding. Any one change in grouping practices might not necessarily result in changed teaching practices directed toward student understanding. If changes in grouping practices result in changes in students' experiences of learning, they have to be accompanied by other changes:

- changes in teachers' conceptions of what certain students can learn;
- changes in teachers' own conceptual understanding of the content;
- changes in the reward structure by which students' academic progress is assessed; and
- changes in the way students use their time, both in school and out of school.

Elmore (1992) stated:

> It may be true that teaching and learning are influenced in important ways by the organization of schooling. It is probably not true, however, that changing the structure of schools will lead reliably to change in teaching and learning. (p. 44)

He also asserted that, "The evidence is scanty that structural change leads in any reliable way to changes in how teachers teach, what they teach, or how students learn" (p. 47).

As noted by Glickman (1990), stakeholders in the educational process who are not involved in the restructuring movement have asked many of the following questions:

- Where is the substance of decentralization and empowerment?
- What is being restructured?
- How is education for students in these restructured schools any better than it was before? (p. 69)

Glickman (1990) described the University of Georgia's "Program for School Improvement (PSI)" in attempting to answer these questions. In 1983, Oglethorpe County High School began working with the PSA to develop a participatory decision making process led by teachers at the school. In the intervening years, the school increased instructional time, improved student achievement, and decreased its dropout rate. By spring 1989, the school had reduced its dropout rate by 50%, and the proportion of students passing the state's test of basic skills increased from 67% to 90%.

Fowler Drive Elementary School in Clark County began working with the University of Georgia's PSI in the fall of 1986. The goal of their professional staff was a total reorganization of the school into what they called the Community of Learners for Advancing Students Success (CLASS). By the end of the 1988-89 school year, the school experienced an 80% increase in student success rates, gains in teachers' conceptual thinking, and greater internal focus of control among students.

Morgan County Primary School entered the Georgia Program in 1988. They set goals to improve school climate, student self-concept, and attitudes towards learning. Preliminary results over two years included statistically significant improvements in school climate and a decrease in the number of students in the lowest quartile on tests of achievement (Glickman, 1990).

Reconstruction must occur on a school by school basis (Barth, 1990) As a result,

no single model for school restructuring can be created (Romanish, 1991). Reform cannot be achieved without working with school sites, but school sites are going to need a massive change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). If education reform is to succeed, it must be structured to enable teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to collectively address problems that face their schools.

Project SHAPE (Scott High Accelerated Program in Education) in Toledo, Ohio, was a two-year intervention and enrichment program for underachieving and educationally disadvantaged ninth and tenth graders at Scott High School. All participants in Project SHAPE were volunteers, and students' problems were addressed through a systematic program of structural reorganization which involved teacher empowerment, curriculum development, and involvement of students, parents, and community member (Kretovics, Faber & Armaline, 1991).

The results of standardized tests administered during the ninth grade showed no significant difference between the Project SHAPE students and a comparison group from another high school. After two months of participation in the program, Project SHAPE ninth-graders performed significantly better than the comparison group of ninth-graders on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Project SHAPE students had better school attendance and fewer suspensions during the first year than the comparison group (Kretovics, et al., 1991).

Empowerment

The most important elements of W. Edwards Deming's philosophy, as applied to schools, are:

1. A democratic, collegial atmosphere should prevail in schools. Ideas should be shared in a setting that recognizes and supports ongoing data collection and

assessment. All decisions and practices should be information driven; facts, reasoning, and evidence, not power, authority, or personality, should determine practice and govern decision making.

2. Management should eliminate threat, encourage continuous improvement, and recognize and use the expertise that employees have acquired in their job. This expertise, combined with the best research should be the basis for practice.

3. Improvement must become an obsession on which employees thrive. This can occur only when management makes every effort to enhance employees' capabilities as well as the quality of their lives through training, trust, and professional respect (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993).

If "excellence" represented the thrust of the reform movement, then "empowerment" would represent the restructuring movement of the 1990s. The theory of professional empowerment was that when given collective responsibility to make educational decisions in an information-rich environment, educators would work harder on behalf of their students. Schools were placed at the center of inquiry, and questions were raised about the conventional structures of schooling. Although many schools have attempted serious restructuring efforts, preliminary results from these efforts have been more rhetorical than real. Most schools involved in the empowerment initiatives did not appear to differ from schools that were not restructuring their organizations.

Although there is little doubt that "empowered schools" provide better educational environments than they did before they began the empowerment process, there was still little evidence to indicate substantial change in school climate (Glickman, 1990). Presumably, the purpose of educational change is to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures, programs and/or practices with better ones (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

Faculty empowerment is often narrowly construed as participation in decision making, but such participation does not necessarily equal power. True empowerment

involves professional training, authority over issues concerning professional life both at the classroom and school levels, and opportunities to acquire knowledge necessary to warrant such authority. An empowered faculty may create structures to allow collaborative planning and decision making, but it needs to receive the necessary training and support to develop as a group and acquire expertise on policy issues under consideration (Kirby, 1992).

There are many advocates for the empowerment of school staff. The assumption in the literature is that a positive work environment, brought about by school participants who are able to initiate and carry out new ideas, results in enhanced learning opportunities for students (Short, Greer & Melvin, 1994).

Empowerment still belongs to the principals. Teachers feel that their leadership is in the classroom and is on the increase nowhere else. However, principals still feel that teacher empowerment is on the rise. To bring this divergent thinking together will be a difficult task (Shen, 1998).

Site-Based Management

Growing concern among educators, policymakers, parents, and concerned citizens on how best to prepare America's youth for productive lives in the 21st century has given rise to a broad range of reform initiatives and policies aimed at restructuring the nation's schools (Drury & Levin, 1994). The need to reinvent education has also played an important role in site-based decision making in the United States. The myriad of problems whose roots lie at the schoolhouse door require paradigm shifts in the way in which we educate our young people. This effort would require a restructuring of a school governance system that would employ decentralized, nonbureaucratic administrative

process (Paul, 1997). Employee participation in shared decision making, school based management, and other collaborative decision making initiatives have all received increased attention as strategies to provide teachers with a greater voice in the decision making process, and should become the centerpiece of a district's approach to management (Balter, 1998). Among these strategies are initiatives involving the realignment of power relations among the stakeholders at the district and school level.

People are concerned most about things they own. This realignment of power gives the stakeholders psychological ownership (Bank, 1992; Shields & Knapp, 1997). This sharing of ownership should help to lead the stakeholders to teamwork and cooperation. Cooperation is an important requirement to site-based programs (Dobyns & Crawford-Mason, 1994). Referred to as school-based or site-based management, shared decision making, or, simply, decentralized management, this broad-based reform movement owes much of its popularity to the success of analogous restructuring in the business community (Drury & Levin, 1994; Peters & Waterman, 1982). This reform movement has added to an impressive body of research on school effectiveness that identified the school as essential in creating positive change (Drury & Levin, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1995).

Historically, school-based management is neither a new idea nor a new practice. Decentralized control existed from the beginning of public schooling in America to the turn of the 20th century. During the 20th century, increasing centralization and standardization had taken hold, and school-based management had to be "reinvented" (Drury, et al., 1994).

In recent years, both federal and state governments have sought to establish standards and to ensure accountability in public education by emphasizing outcomes

rather than process (Drury & Levin, 1994). There is no evidence that control by the state will improve education more effectively than the professional development of teachers. The lessons of educational history, the science of human motivation, numerous respected theorists, and the experience of countless teachers speak loudly to the need for professional development (Nelson, 1998). The administrative decentralization movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s has largely fueled the school-based management reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.

The National Education Association reports that fully 30% of the 5,747 local affiliates responding to a recent survey currently operate under some form of site-based management, and another 15% have plans to implement it in the immediate future (Drury & Levin, 1994; NEA, 1991). Another more recent survey conducted by the council of Great City Schools reports that 85% of member districts, including many of the largest districts in the nation, have implemented some form of school-based management (Drury & Levin, 1994).

Drury and Levin (1994) believe that those who envisioned school-based management as the cure for educational ills were mistaken. School-based management is not a panacea and there is little reason to believe that it will transform ineffective schools into effective ones. To date, there has been scant evidence that schools get better just because decisions are made closer to the classroom (Kentta, 1997; Latham, 1998).

The variety of objectives for site-based management efforts suggested that the restructuring movement was designed to address a wide range of issues and problems at the local site. Implementation, it is suggested, can improve school personnel morale, increase efficiency in utilization of resources and personnel, increase teacher professionalism, contribute positively to the professional climate within schools, and

improve student achievement.

Studies evaluating site-based management efforts concentrate almost exclusively on methods to produce change. They express a general notion that once processes of decision making change, schools can become more effective instruments for educating children. These studies fail to look at the effects of site-based management on educational outcomes:

> ...either because the site-based management advocates do not regard achievement as an important output measure or because there is faith that increased school discretion will increase student learning. As a result, little evidence exists to support the notion the site-based management is effective in increasing student performance. (Summers & Johnson, 1995, p. 24)

Summers and Johnson (1995) examined 20 relatively systematic studies for insights regarding the delegation of authority under specific site-based management programs, input into the programs, explicitly stated objectives, and educational outcomes. Four of the 20 studies showed student achievement as an important objective that had received relatively careful evaluation. In these evaluations, hard data was used to measure student performance, and some control factor other than site-based management was introduced to isolate the site-based management effect.

Summer and Johnson (1995) drew the following conclusions about the studies that they reviewed:

- Collected data were inadequate
- Statistical controls were largely nonexistent
- No repeated efforts had been made to classify various types of site-based management designs in some uniform way
- The time period may have been too short to recognize results of restructuring.

A study by Frederick (1994) sought to answer research questions designed to

determine if significant differences existed in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding instructional programming, finance/budget, personnel issues, and general shared decision making among administrators, teachers, and support staff. Frederick surveyed seven original site-based management schools within the Dayton, Ohio, Public School District. The survey was distributed to 445 educators with 294 completed and returned. Results of the data analysis indicated no significant differences were found in the beliefs of administrators, teachers, and support staff with respect to instructional programming, finance/budget, personnel, and general shared decision making. However, significant differences were identified among groups with regard to attitudes and behaviors in these areas.

Blake (1990) examined perceptions of and the degree to which a system of site-based management was favored by superintendents, assistant or associate superintendents, directors and managers, staff officers, and principals from 28 Oakland County, Michigan, school districts. The findings in this study came from three major groups: superintendents, assistant superintendents, and principals, who were considered key decision makers in the school districts. Blake (1990) concluded:

- The ideas expressed in the site-based management philosophy seem to be agreed to only in part by the key decision makers. While all agreed for the need of increased influence for the principals, both the superintendent and assistant superintendent stated that the assistant superintendent should have more influence than the principal. "Traditional influence patterns which are greater than the principals' influence indicates some skepticism with the site-based management principles". (p. 87)

- While the three major groups agreed on the need to increase the influence of the principal, they differed on the amount of influence that the principal has now. There is a difference in the perceptions of principals and superintendents regarding the amount of control principals have in their schools, with these differences causing serious educational problems.

- Data showed that problems between principals and directors/ managers or other central office administrators concerning the influence dimension were

not as important as expected.

- Based on the data from the three major groups "it seems extremely unlikely that a system of site-based management embodying the principles found in the literature could be implemented in a population similar to the one under study without a significant reorientation of thinking. None of the groups desired a set of influence patterns that supports such a change". (p. 88)

Site-based management requires the reform of an entire school system, not just individual schools, and it works only if it is the focal point of the reform effort, not just one of several concurrent efforts (Latham, 1998).

School Improvement Plans

The enactment of a school improvement law is an announcement of an intent to create change, and not the change itself. Reformers should direct their efforts toward changing the environment in which educators and children interact (DeMitchell, 1997).

In Kentucky, the practice of school-based decision making as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (Goode, 1994) was mandated by the legislature. In 1991, the Texas state legislature mandated site-based management in all public schools. The leadership teams at the site had power over some basic decisions on budget, staffing, and other matters (Smith, 1998). Public Act 25 (PA 25) of the Michigan Public Acts of 1990 mandated the development of three to five year school improvement plans for each district and all schools within each district. Each plan had to include a requirement for a core curriculum and an annual report for each school and school district that included aggregated and disaggregated (by gender and race) student achievement based on statewide assessment programs, tests, and/or nationally normed achievement tests. The district membership retention report, along with the percentage of parents, legal guardians, or persons in loco parentis with pupils enrolled in the school district who

participated in parent-teacher conferences was also a part of the improvement plan. A comparison with the immediate preceding school year of the required information was also mandated by PA 25. Section 1202a of PA 25 stated that the board of education of a school district shall ensure that decisions made at the school building level were made using site-based decision making that included participation of teachers, school administrators, parents, students, and other interested parties in the school community. The new School Code for Michigan, which went into effect July 1996, still requires a 3- to 5-year school improvement plan; however, the mandates for the use of site-based decision making have been eliminated from the law. Rather than a state mandate, use of site-based management and shared decision making is now left to individual school districts.

A study by Sweeney (1992) attempted to code and analyze the content of the following components of school improvement plans mandated by PA 25 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1990. These plans were submitted by 26 school districts to the Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency during the first year of the act's implementation. Her analysis provided the following:

- district and school mission statements by thematic emphasis on student, school or society
- size of school improvement teams
- goals by student outcomes, curricular categories and learning areas of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives, types of staff development, methods of evaluation and budgets that related to the goals. (p. 72)

Significant findings included the following:

- a majority of school mission statement assertions pertained to the students
- goals were identified by 96% of the schools' of which 49% of the goals pertained to student learning and 50.2% of the goals pertained to school operations

- 11% of the goals were stated in terms of student outcomes; within the subset of student outcome goals, 73% were categorized in the cognitive area of student learning with language art and mathematics having the highest frequencies, and 25% were in the affective areas of learning with self-esteem being the mode. (p. 72)

The purpose of the study by Crane (1995) was to code and analyze the content of six components of school improvement plans, using the same components that Sweeney (1992) used in her study. Crane (1995) wanted to compare data generated in Sweeney's 1990-1991 study that focused on the first years of Public Act 25's implementation, with 1992-1993 third year data to determine if significant differences in reporting had occurred between the two measurement periods.

Data generated from the published annual educational reports of the 1992-1993 school year from the same 26 school districts in Wayne County, Michigan that were used in Sweeney's study were analyzed by Crane (1995). The major findings of her study included:

- 26 school districts (100%) contained mission statements as compared to 24 of the 26 (92%) of Sweeney's report;
- student themes (54%) increased 13% over the previous study;
- cognitive area information (35%) exceeded the 1990-1991 report (26%) by nine percentage points; and
- student learning (55%) improved 5.2% over the 1990-1991 study. (p. 39)

Trovillion-Timm (1994) analyzed the school improvement plans in 20 school districts and 100 schools in Genesee County, Michigan for the year 1992-1993 as required by Public Act 25. Of the 100 schools in this county, 61 were elementary, 19 were middle and 20 were high schools. As in Crane's (1995) and Sweeney's (1992) studies data for the Trovillion-Timm's (1994) study were generated from annual educational reports on file in the Genesee Intermediate School District. Torvillion-Timm

(1994) noted that:

> The most notable result of the study was that in spite of living with Public Act 25 of 1990 for two years and annually resolving to carry out the law, schools or districts are far from complying with its mandates. (p. 288)

Student outcomes and goals in measurable terms has been one of the main components of PA 25. Trovillion-Timm (1994) study showed that 29% of the goals were stated as student outcomes and 57% of student learning goals were expressed as student outcomes.

Administrative support for school improvement was another area analyzed in the Trovillion-Timm (1994) study. Fiscal resources (e.g., time, supplies, staffing and scheduling) were included. Her analysis showed that 50% of districts listed monetary resources for building-level school improvement efforts and 45% included an actual budget for school improvement. This level of reporting did not appear to reflect strong administrative support for school improvement.

Effective Schools

Effective school proponent, Lezotte (in Stedman, 1987), contended his six factor formula was the key to successful schools. The factors he identified included:

- strong leadership by the principal;
- high expectations for student achievement;
- an emphasis on basic skills;
- an orderly environment;
- frequent systematic evaluation of students; and
- increased time-on-task. (p. 215)

Stedman (1987) suggested that effective school literature showed that the six-factor formula cannot be substantiated. Although many state departments of education

have established effective school programs and federal legislation has been proposed to fund school improvement projects based on this research, the lack of research raised serious questions about programs that have been based on this formula. The vast majority of the studies, including well-known ones conducted by such noted authorities as Edmonds, Brookover, Lezotte, and Rutter, actually provide little support for these factors. According to Stedman (1987) two main reasons explain this lack of support:

1. Many schools that exemplified the factors still had extremely low levels of achievement, with students averaging achievement scores several years below grade level. This finding suggested that merely adopting the formula is not sufficient to produce effectiveness.

2. A problem with the formula is that findings for many studies challenge these six factors. (p.216)

The lack of research support for the formula raises serious questions about programs that have been based on it. The true test of the effective schools formula is how well it works in practice.

In one of the best executed studies, Edmonds and Frederiksen (1981) compared seven effective elementary schools in Lansing, Michigan, to six less effective ones. This study was notable because the effective schools that were selected had brought educationally disadvantaged students to middle-class achievement levels. This study used a "blind" design which meant that the interviewers and observers did not know which schools were effective.

Contrary to traditional effective schools' formula, teachers in the ineffective schools:

1. held higher expectations for grade-level achievement;

2. were more likely to accept responsibility for their students' performance; and

3. reported more instructional involvement by their principals. (p.216)

According to Stedman (1987), teachers in the effective schools:

1. reported somewhat more time spent on instruction;
2. showed no difference in their expectations for student achievement;
3. demonstrated little difference in their classroom behavior. (p.216)

Central to the concept of effective schools is the leadership that is provided by the principal. The principal who espouses certain instructional outcomes is accepted by the teachers as representing the official position of the district, thus placing the principal in a position to bring about improvements (Steyfarth, 1991).

Groups Communication/Decisions

Through the use of good communication skills, much of the uncertainty and fear inherent in shared decision making can be alleviated. Communication has an important role in determining effectiveness of the decision making process. Hirokawa and Poole (1996) inferred that communication was an important, if not the most important, part of the process involved in good group decision making. Research on group communication treated groups as collections of individuals, although a group can be a single entity or an "agent" in at least some respect. Like an individual, a group may maintain a strong "entity" or it may be fragmented and noncohesive.

The weak link in the chain of reasoning connecting group theory to practice was the outcome measures employed in most group research. To determine whether the quality of decisions was influenced by group communication, groups were given play problems that had no real relevance to members and had simple answers that could be scored as right or wrong. The problem was that the correct answers bore little resemblance to real world outcomes. "In the real world," according to Hirokawa and

Poole (1996), "rarely any right answers were provided, just better or worse ones" (p. 245).

There is a lack of systematic studies on committee effectiveness. In spite of the potential impact of groups, less research has been devoted to learning about the role of groups and group processes and how to make the most effective use of groups in an organization. While information is meager about how to make groups and committees more effective, communication experts recognize the power of groups.

The highly effective group is considered to be a part of a larger organization. For most people, membership in several groups inside and outside the organization is the rule rather than the exception. This multiple membership means that no single group, even highly effective work groups, can dominate the life of any of its members. Each member of the organization feels pressures from membership in several different groups and may not be influenced solely by loyalty to any one group (Murphy and Likert, 1961). Loyalty to a group produces pressures toward conformity. A group may demand conformity to the idea of supporting, encouraging and giving recognition for individual creativity, or it may value rigidity of behavior, with seriously narrowing and dwarfing consequences (Kretovics, Faber & Armaline, 1991).

The changing role of groups in organizations provides an impetus for research on how group members manage problems in their external environment while simultaneously dealing with their internal dynamics. Groups are formed to make decisions, socialize new members, create and manage identities, provide support, coordinate work, and initiate social change. Group effectiveness depends on who the members are, what resources they bring, and how well they are able to work together. Many group problems are related to the interpersonal and group dynamics, but those

problems can be solved if they are identified and explicityly managed (Bolman & Deal, 1989).

Through group decision making each member feels fully identified with each decision and highly motivated to execute it fully. Group decisions encompass all possible variables that influence group interaction, including: group structure, properties of individuals, task and other situational variables, and the group's general environment (Hirokawa & Poole, 1996).

Once consensus has been reached on a decision, there is strong motivation for individuals to be guided by that decision as a result of membership in the group and their relationship to the other members. Each member of the group is highly motivated to implement decisions and achieve group goals.

Highly cohesive groups may become victims of "groupthink," a process in which critical thinking is suspended and decisions are made without adequate information or consideration of alternatives (Janis, 1972). According to Janis "groupthink" has eight characteristics:

1. the illusion that the group is invulnerable
2. collective efforts to rationalize and discount negative information
3. a tendency to ignore ethical or moral consequences of group decision
4. stereotyped views of other groups
5. active pressure to change the views of any deviate member
6. self-censorship of deviations from apparent group consensus
7. a shared illusion of unanimity
8. the emergence of "mindguards" who take it upon themselves to guard the group against information not in accord with the group consensus.

Hirokawa (1985) established four communication decision making functions that

could be used to predict high quality decisions:

I understanding the problem

II marshaling a range of alternatives

III assessing positive consequences of each alternative

IV assessing negative consequences of each alternative.

Shared decision making in a school system could use these same four functions that Hirokawa (1985) established as a process for making high quality decisions. Clearly defining and understanding the desired end results early in the decision making process, as well as asking the right questions, can help avoid many problems and resistance to decisional outcomes. Providing training for school personnel to work collaboratively can help create collegiality and cohesiveness in implementing the decisions.

Two barriers to effective decision making include:

- Teachers are not used to collaborating with their colleagues.
- Administrators do not trust teachers to make school-based decisions.

Conflict is inevitable, and giving into resistance instead of confronting it may not lead to effective decisions. While rarely considered positive, conflict is a signal that change in the decision making process is occurring. Resolving conflict may take time, but learning to manage this conflict can help build confidence and support for shared decision making (Harrison, Killion & Mitchell, 1989).

Teachers and Shared Decision Making

The national mood regarding education is one which calls for reform. Many communities have replaced top-down, highly centralized educational approaches of the 1970s and early 1980s with a decentralized model where the school building becomes the

focus of reform. This "grass roots" management approach is known as site-based decision making (Grips & Wilkes, 1993).

Teacher participation in shared decision making is not new but has received renewed attention and has become a dominant theme in the reform and restructuring movements of the late 1980s. Educators, legislators, and the public continue to confront issues surrounding an erosion of faith in American education and the challenge of improving American schools. Teacher participation in shared decision making was viewed as a school reform initiative that represented a form of restructuring centering on an alternative strategy for management (Ferrara, 1992; Ferrara & Repa, 1993). The reform efforts of the 1980s focused on organizational, curricular, and instructional changes necessary to improve the quality of education. National reform reports advocated enhanced teacher involvement in decision making as a means of fostering necessary changes within the schools (Rice & Schneider, 1994).

In the mid to late 1980s, the focus of reform shifted to teacher professionalism and site-based management. This wave of reform started in large urban districts. Typically, site-based management was emphasized with a focus on restructuring the teacher-administrator relationship, with more authority given to schools. Another emphasis was on teacher professionalism and school culture, which included methods to enhance norms of collegiality, continuous improvement, common technical language, and experimentation (Mohran, 1994). Schools empowered teachers with decision making opportunities in areas (e.g., budgetary matters, instructional practices, and curricular design) that had previously been the domain of central office administrators (Brown, 1994; Ferrara, 1992; Taylor & Levine, 1991).

Team members discovered that they were not sure of what constituted shared

decision making. Yet one of the keys to success in shared decision making was building a consensus about the process. A reason for this confusion was fear about shared decision making, which clouded understanding of the process. Much of this fear stemmed from uncertainty and confusion about the future as shared decision making represented a fundamental change in the way schools were managed. The roles and relationships of all stakeholders in the school community changed (Bauer, 1992). Decision making was a process designed to move educational decisions from central office to school level, with those closest to the students expected to apply their expertise in making decisions. This participation was designed to promote school effectiveness and to ensure that appropriate services were being provided to students and the school community.

Schools across the nation were experimenting with new forms of decision making. The Indiana Education Policy Center School of Education Office conducted a survey of 422 Indiana school board presidents, elementary school principals, and secondary school principals to determine if two of these new forms of decision making, school governance groups and formal affiliation with a restructuring movement could affect traditional patterns of influence and authority. Data suggested that although restructuring initiatives had facilitated significant changes in authority in some schools, the changes that had occurred were relatively minor (Vesper, McCarthy & Lashley, 1994).

Early restructuring literature did not call for teacher participation in decision making as an end in itself, but rather as a powerful vehicle for enhancing teachers' work with students. Leaders and policy makers in the restructuring movement were mindful that increasing teachers' participation should have as its goal increasing teachers' effectiveness in the classroom. Successfully restructuring schools to include teachers in

decision making required an important focus on student outcomes (Taylor & Bobotch, 1994).

The present emphasis on teacher empowerment and its implied enhancement of involvement in decision making raises questions as to whether national advocacy for increased professionalism among teachers has resulted in increased levels of decision making involvement and job satisfaction. Within the field of organizational studies, relationships between participative management and job satisfaction have been explored. Many researchers have shown that involvement in decision making affects job satisfaction and job performance (Rice & Schneider, 1994).

Through shared decision making, restructuring that is being demanded of our schools could be accomplished. By observing positive results from shared decision making, educational professionals could be motivated to change. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has created a number of programs to help principals and other members of the school community develop skills needed to bring about change through the use of shared decision making. *Taking the Initiative* is a program developed by this group that uses a vertical team approach to bring about change in a school. It was designed to help principals and school leadership teams acquire the ability to:

- give meaningful feedback,
- think creatively,
- plan,
- function as a member of a team,
- gather resources,
- deal with resistance to change and

- launch an initiative (Bradshaw & Buckner, 1994, p. 79)

Taking the Initiative was piloted in Kentucky, Florida, Tennessee, and Maryland to determine effective techniques and activities that could be used to help superintendents, principals and school leadership teams develop decision making skills.

In 1990, ratification of Senate Bill 2 provided flexibility with accountability to schools in North Carolina in developing school improvement plans for state accreditation. A need for training for all personnel involved was recognized. The specific training was left up to each individual school district.

In 1992, the superintendent of Nash-Rocky Mount School District challenged each of the schools in the district to develop school improvement plans with goals that would meet legislated standards for students achievement, attendance and postsecondary success. During the 1992-93 school year, school improvement teams; consisting of administrators, teachers, parents, and support staff; engaged in intensive planning.

As the teams prepared to implement their plans at the beginning of the 1993-94 school year, district leaders recognized an opportunity to bring together the school improvement teams to develop and refine individual and team skills. The Nash-Rocky Mount school leaders selected *Taking the Initiative* as the program that seemed to be able to best meet the needs for team building and motivation. The training model was adapted at the request of the school system and the training was conducted at the beginning of the 1993-94 school year. A total of 230 administrators and school leadership team members in the Nash-Rocky Mount School system in North Carolina completed the program.

Participants practiced new skills and received feedback on their ability to exhibit key behaviors. Leadership teams were given the chance to work on real issues from their schools. The superintendent provided support throughout the training and implementation

of the program.

The results of this training effort were positive, with participant surveys completed prior to and following the training indicating increased levels of perceived skills. Pretraining survey results indicated that participants approached training with positive feelings about their roles in the change process.

An analysis of survey results showed the training had the greatest impact on participants' feelings about their ability to:

- build support teams,
- create leadership teams,
- set priorities among initiatives,
- gather resources,
- launch an initiative,
- deal with resistance, and
- develop a long term strategy for implementing change. (p. 81)

Parallel training for school improvement teams within a district setting offers further opportunities to support site-based management efforts. *Taking the Initiative* provided a broadened leadership base at each school. Information and skill building activities needed to bring about significant change in each school also were provided (Bradshaw & Buckner, 1994).

Providing day-to-day resources for teachers is not the function of shared decision making. Encouraging and involving teachers in shared decision making means that central office and building administrators have to re-examine their plans and goals relative to personnel development. Time should be provided during the school day for teachers to meet in a collaborative setting. Scheduling time may have as much to do with

making the shared decision making process operable as the decision and commitment to support it. No practical way has been found to sustain shared decision making without confronting barriers to this process. A lack of training by teachers to work in collaborative teams and asking them to meet in decision making teams as an "add-on" to a teacher's day are two problems that inhibit the process. If teachers are considered key participants in instructional and curricular decisions, they must be recognized as people who shape the organization as well as the child (Berry, 1993).

The literature from successful businesses, such as IBM, offers evidence that when workers participate in decision making, their satisfaction and the quality of their work rises. Prior research has suggested that greater participation in decision making is positively related to increased productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Teachers can become more invested in their schools and in the success of their students if they participate in the decision making. By sharing leadership with their building administrators, teachers feel more ownership and commitment to the implementation of decisions (Barth, 1988).

Vroom (1960) has explored the relationship between decision making and organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, effectiveness, or productivity in a noneducational setting. These studies have indicated that employee job satisfaction is related to and affected by participation in the decision making process.

In an article by Taylor and Bogotch, (1994) findings from a study that addressed issues of teachers' participation in decision making and effects it had on job satisfaction, teacher and student attendance, and student achievement and behavior. Differential outcomes for teachers and students that could be attributed to teachers' participation in decision making were also examined in this study. Their study involved schools that

piloted the district's restructuring program as well as those that did not. The main findings that emerged from the study were:

1. Several dimensions of decision participation exists;
2. These dimensions correlate differently with the criterion variables;
3. Teachers' participation does not produce a statistically significant effect on outcomes for teachers or students in this district; and
4. Teachers in both participation groups report feeling decisionally deprived on all 19 decision making items.

Effects on teachers' job satisfaction and attendance are important issues regarding teacher involvement in decision making. The decision to adopt site-based decision making in schools should be based on the effects on students outcomes. Results of teachers' participation in decision making in a study by Taylor and Bogotch (1994) did not produce a statistically significant effect on outcomes for teachers or students. Greater teacher involvement in core technology decisions was expected to be associated with improved student achievements. Such an association was not evident.

Studies by Rice and Schneider (1994) and Taylor and Bogotch (1994) found that the greater involvement in the decision making process was associated with higher levels of self-reported job satisfaction. Taylor and Bogotch also found a positive relationship between participation in decision making and teacher attendance. According to Weiss (1993), shared decision making (SDM) often appeared to improve teachers' morale and their sense of ownership of school decisions. Her study provided evidence that teachers gain a sense of satisfaction by having input into decisions. They feel better respected and more professional. These findings appeared to suggest the importance of legitimate, authentic teacher involvement in decision making.

Gips and Wilkex (1993) examined effects of the initial implementation stages

involved in considering a change to site-based decision making in a single school district in Ohio. Teachers' concerns related to staff relationships within the school and work environment and to the acceptance or rejection of the change initiated were studied. Findings revealed that elementary school teachers were slightly more supportive of site-based decision making than secondary school teachers, with larger school size hindering implementation efforts. In general, teachers supported site-based decision making but had concerns over its implementation.

Findings of a study by Logan (1992) examined perceived effects of school-based decision making (SBDM) on school curriculum, particularly vocational education, and the decision making process. Sixty-nine secondary schools in Kentucky participated in SBDM during the 1991-92 school year, with 324 principals, counselors, English teachers, mathematic, teachers, science teachers, and vocational teachers completing surveys on their experiences. A major finding in this study resulted from a comparison of responses by job titles. Principals' responses perceived their influence on curriculum was significantly higher than counselors' and teachers' influences in these same areas. Principals' roles in their schools appeared to be directly affected by SBDM. Principals, who were seen as losing power, appeared to be more successful when they adopted SBDM. Principals needed to develop better skills to work collaboratively with committees. If principals feel more empowered by bringing additional decisions to the school level, they may be more willing to share this power with others.

Assessing teacher participation in shared decision making could be difficult, but Russell, Cooper and Greenblatt, (1992) believed that such assessment was necessary to examine the relationship between shared decision making and student achievement. The researchers developed an instrument called the Teacher Involvement and Participation

Scale, ver 2 (TIPS 2). This scale was developed after reviewing the literature. They discovered that implementation of shared decision making occurs in eight dimensions:

1. goals/vision/mission - the degree to which teachers are involved in framing the goals and mission of the school;

2. facilitation procedures and structures - the degree to which teachers have adequate time, reduced teaching loss waivers from contracts and regulations, and changed schedules to permit collegial work to occur;

3. curriculum/instruction - the degree to which teachers participate in determining the school program, curriculum goals, textbook selection, educational materials, and classroom pedagogy;

4. budgeting - the degree to which teachers participate in matters related to designing and implementing the school budget;

5. staffing - the degree to which teachers are involved with the administration in making decisions such as recruiting, interviewing, hiring and assigning staff;

6. staff development - the degree to which teachers can design and implement staff development activities that meet their own needs;

7. operations - the degree to which teachers are involved in managing the building; and

8. standards - the degree to which teachers share in setting standards for their own performance and for student performance and discipline p. 39-40).

Teachers and administrators can complete TIPS 2 and their responses can be compared to assess intraschool differences and measure intraschool teamwork, and determine if teachers perceived the time spent in meetings is an important use of their time. The TIPS 2 instrument could be used as an ongoing assessment to collect baseline and follow-up data, as well as to develop formative and summative evaluations of strengths and weaknesses of the site-based management programs. TIPS 2 has demonstrated high reliability and validity for the instrument as a whole and for each of the eight dimensions.

The TIPS 2 instrument, based on these eight dimensions, collected data on actual

experiences with shared decision making and enabled researchers to assess dimensions of decision making already in place and implementation for dimensions of decision making not currently being made collaboratively. The eight dimensions on TIPS 2 that emerged from the literature yielded important information regarding training needs for shared decision making.

Russell, Cooper and Greenblatt collected data on actual experiences with shared decision making and enabled researchers to assess dimensions of decision making already in place and implementation for types of decision making not currently being made collaboratively. On the national level, more discussion is emerging on shared decision making. Those involved in decision making at the school level will need training in assessing standards at the school site.

A question for educational researchers was whether increased teacher involvement in decision making actually resulted in measurable improvements in achievement for students. Finding instructional areas needing improvement could suggest strategies for enhancing professional development of teachers and administrators so that the relationship between restructuring and teacher/student outcomes could be strengthened. Failure to detect evidence of expected improvements in student achievement could provide compelling reasons to reexamine school restructuring models (Taylor & Bobotch, 1994).

Student Achievement

A major reason behind the current reform movement in education is the reaction of all stakeholders in education to the evidence of declining student performance (Summers & Johnson, 1995). The demand for improvement in academic achievement

levels in America's public schools has stimulated research into conditions that could lead to improvements in student outcomes (Dondero, 1993).

Few schools employ objective measurable criteria of student outcomes in their efforts to assess whether restructuring efforts are effective. The absence of quantitative evidence and existence of research literature devoted to describing empowerment and stakeholder involvement underscores the absence of focus on student achievement (Summers & Johnson, 1995; Drury & Levin, 1994).

Advocates of reform contended that a natural link existed between decentralized decision making and many positive student outcomes, including gains in achievement, lower dropout rates, increased attendance, and reduced disciplinary problems. However, Drury and Levin (1994) suggest virtually no empirical evidence is available that support these claims. Researchers (Summer & Johnson, 1995) have struggled with the lack of empirical data concerning the impact of school-based management on schools, teachers, or students. In part, this lack of evidence results from most school districts collecting and reporting data on student achievement and other outcomes in aggregate, causing difficulties in determining the effectiveness of individual school restructuring in these critical areas. Decentralized decision making has been linked to student performance gains according to Drury and Levin (1994). These researchers inferred that indirect support for school based management's effectiveness should include shared decision making as a mechanism for improving student outcomes.

Innovations in schools are expected to affect student achievement, but many additional factors could determine the impact upon achievement. Innovations like the five studied in an evaluation by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (Byrk, Easton, Rollow & Sebring, 1994) have been designed to have an indirect impact upon student

achievement. The school improvement efforts were categorized into five types of school improvement initiatives:

1. Environmental order - emphasis on safety, order, security and discipline;
2. Peripheral academic changes - add-on programs such as computer centers and art and music programs with little innovation;
3. Christmas tree schools - showcase schools with many new programs;
4. Emergent restructuring - purposeful and sustained discussion about school programs; and
5. Sustained systemic activity - shared, unified, coherent school vision.

These five types of school improvement initiatives were combined into three major approaches:

1. Improving social relations under which environmental order was listed;
2. Unfocused academic initiatives under which peripheral academic changes and "Christmas tree" schools were listed; and
3. Systemic approaches to school restructuring under which emergent restructuring and sustained systemic activity were listed.

These school improvement initiatives should result in schools with better organization that are staffed by prepared teachers. These school improvement initiatives could contribute to improved student behaviors that include increased attendance, fewer disciplinary actions, and improved achievement. Ultimately, change efforts initiated by local school councils, principals, teachers, and other educational stakeholders could affect instruction and learning for all students.

Although substantial changes in organizational operations were occurring two and three years into the process, the "bottom line of student achievement" was one of the last things to be affected (Byrk, et al., 1994). During the first year of reform, the major focus of the school system was on environmental order and improving social relations within

school communities. Once these tasks were accomplished, virtually all schools began focusing on one of the four remaining categories. The major distinction among the four categories was in choosing either unfocused improvement initiatives (types 2 and 3) or taking a more systemic route (types 4 and 5). According to Byrk, et al. (1994), approximately 26 to 35% of the schools were using unfocused initiatives, 36 to 45% were using a systematic approach, and 15 to 25% of the schools were focusing on features of both types for school improvement. Figure 1 compares schools with unfocused initiatives and schools using a systematic approach to school improvement.

Figure 1

Comparison of Schools Using Unfocused Initiatives and Systematic Approaches to School Improvement

Schools with Unfocused Initiatives	Schools with a Systematic Approach
Nonsupportive leadership • Principal tends to be autocratic • Principal avoids conflict • Principal feels participation management will fade Limited community contact • Marginal ties with the neighboring community • A sense of distrust between parents and teachers Isolated faculty • Few contacts with external educational organizations • Limited collegial planning among teachers • Little sense among faculty of a school mission • Relatively few teachers participate in individual professional development Few changes among teachers at the school Externalization of responsibility • Teachers report students are not capable of learning the material • Teaches report that students' attitudes and habits reduce their ability to learn • Teachers report that reform has not affected their classroom practices	Strategic educational planning • Schoolwide participation in development of the SIP • Broad teacher engagement with the planning process • Increased time commitment by faculty • Much attention to effective implementation of the SIP Engagement of parents and community resources • Positive relations with the surrounding community • Increased informal communication with parents • Substantial communication among LSC, community members, and teachers Professional Community • Restructuring and extension of teachers' roles • Active collaboration among teachers • A sense of collegiality in the faculty • Principal reports high teacher commitment • Broad teacher influence in decision making Orientation toward change • Teachers report instructional practices will change due to SIP

Note: Bryk, et al., 1994

The results of evaluation of the five types of innovations showed that short term trends in student achievement were not very informative at the end of the 1992 school year. There were also difficult technical issues in judging school progress from this data. Both the relatively high levels of student mobility and the substantial change in retention confounded efforts to draw conclusions about whether schools and student achievement are improving (Bryk, et al., 1994).

Studies often seek to determine causes and correlates of student achievement. Taylor and Bogotch's (1994) study examined the possibility that teacher participation could positively affect student achievement. The premise underlying the study was that after several years of district restructuring, the evidence of participation effects should be measurable. Taylor and Bogotch, using a large school district of 250 schools, distributed

1,654 questionnaires to regular education teachers in 24 schools. The sample of schools included elementary and senior high schools that were selected from two pools of schools. One group included schools that piloted the district's restructuring plans, with the second group of schools uninvolved in restructuring. The schools were matched on organizational and demographic characteristics including building level, student population, and percentage of free or reduced lunch participants. A total of 637 usable surveys were returned from teachers in these 24 schools.

The major findings that emerged from the study included:

1. Several dimensions existed in participation in shared decision making;
2. These dimensions correlated differentially with criterion variables;
3. Teachers' participation in shared decision making did not produce a statistically significant effect on outcomes for either teachers or students in the district; and
4. Teachers in both participation groups reported feeling decisionally deprived in all areas of decision making.

Results of this study were important for policymakers as the focus in the education community was on restructuring, with an interest in increased teacher participation in decision making. If the change needed to restructure education is underestimated, the reform movement will not succeed.

Teachers and administrators need to consider altering their methods of practice and begin to engage collaboratively in new professional learning. Teachers and administrators may require time and training before successful school restructuring can occur (Taylor, et al., 1994).

The Team

There are basically three ways of achieving one's goals: competitively, which

means working against others; independently, which means working without regard for others; and cooperatively, which means working with others (Greene, 1994).

The process of the site-based decision making team cannot be studied without looking at groups. In 1950, Bales gave the definition of a group:

> A small group is defined as any number of persons engaged in interaction with one another in a single face-to-face meeting or series of such meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person, even though it be only to recall that the other was present. (Shaw, 1976, p. 7)

It is not our purpose to give all the definitions of small groups but to give some understanding of the complexity of the term. Baron and Paulus offer the following definition:

> Groups are defined as a collection of two or more interacting individuals with a stable pattern of relationships between them who share common goals and who perceive themselves as being a group. (Baron & Paulus, 1991, p. 271)

Small groups may be classified in various ways. Site-based decision making teams are task oriented groups, whose primary purpose is to perform a specific job or task. The site-based decision making team is an exclusive group. An exclusive group is one in which the members get satisfaction from belonging and may get a feeling of importance. Also, the site-base decision making team is a formal group. A formal group is a group that has been deliberately formed with a rigid structure. There are certain rules and established procedures (Engle & Snellgrove, 1989).

There is an evolution of the group itself as its own characteristics change over time. According to Tuckman and Jensen (1977), a group may go through the following four stages of development:

1. Forming - Members get to know each other and establish ground

rules.

2. Storming - Members resist control of group leaders and show hostility.

3. Norming - Members work together and develop close relationships and feelings of camaraderie.

4. Performing - Group members work toward getting their job done.

Belonging to groups results in various advantages and disadvantages. People in groups will take risks that they would not normally take as individuals (Ragland & Saxon, 1989; Engle & Snellgrove, 1989; Freud, 1960). Group unity tends to suppress creative thinking and it can stop some people from giving their best opinion. It can even slow the growth of new thoughts and ideas (Engle & Snellgrove, 1989; Ragland & Saxon, 1989).

Ways of making a group more effective are to prepare an agenda and keep to it, provide information and materials before the meeting, set a time limit, seat the members in a circle, and rotate the leader and give everyone a turn (Engle & Snellgrove, 1989).

The leader of the group is central to its function. The leadership style is autocratic when the leader acts like a dictator. The leader who permits everyone to exert some influence is a democratic leader. The laissez-faire leader allows the group to do as they wish.

Leaders show good judgment and know how to get along with people. They are generally popular in the group (Ragland & Saxon, 1989). Leaders should exert influence, because without influence the concept of leadership would be virtually meaningless (Duke, 1998). Leaders have the capacity to empathize, create partnerships, and handle adversity. They have the ability to consider the strategic consequences of their decisions (Wesley, 1998).

Group effectiveness depends on its members and how well they work together. Problems that arise can be solved if they are recognized and managed. Effective groups and their leaders who are sensitive to their task and to the group process can be most productive.

The Movement

Site-based decision making has become a significant part of school improvement (David, 1996). This decentralization of power and its subsequent redistribution to the building level improves the quality of education for students, enhances the staff professionally, and involves to a greater degree the community in the operation of our schools (Harrison, Killion, & Mitchell, 1989).

The justification for the transferring of power to the school is based on several reasons. First, the inclusion of teachers in the decision making process is a good use of human resources because they have the expertise which allows for a sense of ownership and accountability (Prasch, 1990). Second, it can involve the principal, teachers, parents, students and the community in the governance of the school in a positive manner (Smith, Leskey, & Horgan,1991). Third, it allows for distributive leadership where the teachers as well as the principal can assume a leadership role. This collaborative behavior encourages risk taking and necessitates involvement and sharing (Thurston, Clift, & Schacht, 1993). Fourth, those who are nearest the students are in a more favorable position to evaluate their educational wants and needs and to determine the most appropriate learning method or environment (Ferris, 1992).

Kentucky, Colorado, Texas, Maryland, Chicago, and Cincinnati all have some form or another of site-based decision making (David, 1996). As interest in site-based

decision making grows, educators are noticing that there are more opportunities for job satisfaction and greater incentives for substantial change at the school site then ever occurred with top down reform (Alexander & Wagner, 1991). Real or inferred, the literature speaks of the many benefits of site-based decision making. High quality decisions are a result of site-based decision making. Employee morale and satisfaction are improved, and productivity and commitment are enhanced. It reduces the reluctance to change and even improves attendance (Mutchler, 1989).

The American Association of School Administrators in 1988 identified a number of advantages to site-based decision making, which:

- Formally recognizes the expertise and competence of those who work in the individual schools to make decisions to improve learning.
- Gives teachers, other staff members, and the community increased input into decisions.
- Improves morale of teachers because staff members see they can have an immediate impact on their environment.
- Shifts the emphasis in staff development because teachers are more directly involved in determining what they need.
- Focuses accountability for decisions. One individual, typically the superintendent or a building principal, has ultimate responsibility for any decision.
- Brings both financial and instructional resources in line with the instructional goals developed in each school.
- Helps to provide better services and programs to students.
- Nurtures and stimulates new leaders at all levels. As one task force said, "Super stars emerge from the process. There is a rebirth."
- Increases both the quantity and the quality of communication, which is more likely to be informal, in face to face meetings, for example.

Site-based decision making calls for a change in the internal structure of the district as well as the school. How the school operates and skills and expertise that

teachers and administrators possess all require modification as they move toward site-based decision making (Ambrosie & Haley, 1991).

Some stakeholders believe that the schools are run by superintendents, central office, personnel, and principals. People in these positions make policy that directs the operations of the district. Some stakeholders also believe that teachers run the schools because they control the learning process (Cooper, 1989). The answer that the reforms look to is site-based decision making. The research indicates that both teachers and administrators benefit from site-based decision making. Their collaboration creates a better school environment. A better school environment creates a better place for students to learn (Huddleston, Claspell, & Killion, 1991), a place where students can show a marked increase in their knowledge (Solkow-Brecher, 1992). As Conley of the University of Arizona stated in 1989,

> The reports of the Carnegie Commission on teaching as a Profession (1986); the Holmes Group (1986), a task force of education school deans; the National Governors' Association (1986); and the National Education Association/National Association of Secondary School Principals (1986) encouraged the development of a framework of collegial and participative decision making at the school level. The Carnegie Commission, for example, advocated 'giving teachers a greater voice in the decisions that affect the school,' after noting that many school staff members see the bureaucratic structure within which they work becoming even more rigid, and the opportunities for exercising professional judgment becoming even more limited. (p. 366)

Change

Site-based decision making is a management strategy which can be referred to as a promising approach to changing the traditional school management structure. It gives realistic hope of improved student and teacher performance that could positively influence the learning of all students (Antelo & Ovando, 1991). In this search for improved student performance, many school boards and state legislatures have called for

a change in the way schools are governed (Leonard & Messner, 1991). Whether this change will lead to a more effective education depends on a number of factors including the idea that some reform fails. Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles in 1992 list the following reasons for the failure of school change on reform.

1. Resistance is inevitable because people resist change.
2. Every school is unique.
3. Plus ca change, plus c'est la même chose.
4. Schools are essentially conservative institutions, harder to change than other organizations.
5. You just have to live reform one day at a time.
6. You need a mission, objectives, and tasks laid out well in advance.
7. You can never please everyone, so just push ahead with reforms.
8. Full participation of everyone involved in a change is essential.
9. Keep it simple, stupid: go for small easy changes rather than big, demanding ones.
10. Mandate change, because people won't do it otherwise (p. 746).

These types of statements are often used and a frequent causal agent of failure (Fullan & Miles, 1991).

People feel a comfort level inside paradigms, which are models or patterns of thinking and behaving. They create the rules and regulations and establish the standards that define success. Problems are solved within the boundaries of these paradigms. Thus paradigms often keep people from accepting change (Bradley, 1993).

After more than 10 years, the Rochester, New York school community is still changing the culture of its schools. The change has been arduous, and visible improvement has been slow in coming. It is premature to declare their reforms a failure

(Goens, 1998; Murray, Grant, & Swamiwathan, 1997).

Change is difficult for people to deal with. When what is traditional is being transformed, there is a natural inclination to resistance (Mutchler, 1990). People in general are very good at avoiding change, and even better at this avoidance if they do not understand or desire the change (Goodlad, 1992). Arthur W. Combs in 1988 while discussing change states:

> When people encounter problems they feel unable to deal with, they feel threatened. However, when they are confronted with problems that interest them and with which they feel able to cope with successfully, they feel challenged. (p. 40)

When the employees at the site participate in the decision making, the belief is that better decisions are made (Alexander, 1992; Mooer, 1993). Those at the site making the decisions are more likely to experience a sense of ownership (Butler-Williams,1990; Powell,1991). If real change is intended, then those at the building level are the ones who must facilitate that change. When they are given the opportunity to do so, then they have been made part of the process. They are now a part of the change. The bailiwick that was once central office now must extend into the community for the school. The vehicle of attaining goals must be the professionals at the school building level (Doyle & Pimentel, 1993).

Squires and Kranyik (1996) list the following six items as professed benefits of site-based decision making:

1. Stakeholders, particularly parents and teachers, will be able to influence school policy decisions;
2. Employee morale and motivation will be boosted;
3. School wide planning processes will be strengthened;
4. Instruction will improve;

5. Effective schools' characteristics will develop;

6. Students' academic achievement will improve.

The literature does not seem to support the credibility of items. Simply placing site-based decision making in a building does not automatically guarantee success. Commitment to the concept must be present in order to achieve success (Squires & Kranyih, 1996; Wohlstetter, 1995).

This authority falls on the building council who receives its power from state law or from school board policy. Some councils have the power to set their own agenda, while others work in more restrictive environments. The composition of these councils varies. While most councils include teachers, parents, and the principal; it is not uncommon to find support staff, community members, students, and business representatives (Lindle, 1996; David, 1996).

Regardless of who sits on the site-based decision making council; teacher, parent, administrator, or student; all have full time responsibilities outside of this committee. The decisions and the discussions that surround them take considerable time. If the work load of the participants cannot be restructured to meet these time consuming demands, it is little wonder why these groups are reluctant to tackle the big problems.

Board policy, state law, and teacher contracts in many areas make site-based decision making difficult. There could be problems if the wrong group is challenged by the site-based decision making council (Geraci, 1996). In order to obtain greater flexibility, the site-based decision making council should work closely with the superintendent and the school board as well as the teachers' union to remove as many of these constraints as possible (Mitchell, 1990). Gleason, Donohue and Leader in 1996 stated:

> In 1992 and 1993, the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union contract established school based management and shared decision making as a citywide policy. According to the contract, school site councils:
>
> - were responsible for setting the direction of the school through an educational plan, unprecedented hiring authority, and increased control in budgeting;
> - could seek waivers regarding practices that impeded innovation in school reform;
> - could access a wide variety of professional development activities. (p. 24)

This type of collaborative approach could lead to the development of a successful site-based decision making council.

When a district embarks on site-based decision making, it should have planned carefully. The district should determine what problems or issues it would want to address. Then, when the district allows the school to embark on its site-based decision making journey, it should offer assistance. It should help prepare the teachers, administrators and others on the committee as to what to expect from this change in the management of their building. Ultimately, the district should assist in keeping the focus of the school and the site-based decision making committee on the teaching and learning process. In other words, the site-based decision making school is there to benefit and facilitate the needs of the students they serve (Conway & Calzi, 1996).

Communication

Site-based decision making is a change in the decision making process. With this change comes the objective of positive student achievement. If the school's educational performance is to improve, there needs to be an exchange of information (Fernis, 1992). The school will have to disseminate information to all the site-based decision making

participants. This will enable them to become informed decision makers (Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995). Communication among all the site-based decision making personnel is essential. They must truly believe that they can influence decisions and be successful (Wohlstetter, 1995, p.).

The community of people at the site where the decisions are made should continuously look for ways to communicate and allow all to voice their opinions (Caldwell, 1992; Neal,1989). If this communication is to be achieved, the opportunity to air feelings is very important. When dealing with divergent groups, disparate opinions and a variety of feelings emerge. These feelings and opinions must be aired in order to maintain honesty and trust (Bergman, 1993; Kessler, 1992). If communication breaks down, it is a clear sign of the inability of the site-based decision making team to deal with the cultural change which surrounds them (Banach, 1991).

In their book *The Exemplary Middle School*, Alexander and George (1981), while discussing middle school curriculum, make the following statement on communication and learning skills:

> The most commonly understood goals of public schools has been the development of basic communication and learning skills. We use this compound term to refer both to specific communication skills, such as speaking and listening, and specific learning skills, such as reading. We also recognize that communication skills are usually also skills of learning, and vice versa. For convenience, the major skill areas are identified here in the following categories: (1) reading and related study skills; (2) speaking, questioning and listening skills; (3) writing skills; (4) quantitative skills; (5) use of major learning tools; (6) problem solving and other higher intellectual processes. (p. 68-69)

This underscores what educators have known for years. What is tried and true seems new to educators when the paradigm is shifted. Constant, accessible, and honest communication is central to site-based decision making (Littky & Fried, 1988).

Anzar High School in central California has made the commitment to site-based

management. After a number of miscommunications and misunderstandings in their first years, the "Anzar Communication Guidelines" were developed. The concept of quality communication is so central to their school that the "Communication Guidelines" is the heart of the schools' culture. A few of the guidelines are:

1. I commit to practice these guidelines.
2. We are all part of the same team; we collectively own the problems, and we collectively solve them.
3. We will allow conflict/differing ideas to exist. Tension is normal. I will be accountable for speaking my ideas.
4. We will help and support others.
5. I will be honest. (Barnett, McKowen & Bloom, 1998, p. 48-49)

The personnel at Anzar have committed themselves to the problem-solving process, and to improving communication. They feel that this commitment has allowed them to create an effective approach to site-based decision making.

Professional Development

Teacher preparation comes close to matching the weather as something everyone talks about, mostly complains about, but does little to change (Bracey, 1997). Most teachers, even the most experienced, believe that teaching is inherently difficult. They believe that teachers never stop learning to teach and recognize that help is needed at times. Giving and receiving help does not imply incompetence, but is a part of a common quest for continuous improvement. Establishing collegiality and communication among teachers allows them to develop more confidence and certainty about what they are trying to achieve and assess the effectiveness of their efforts (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). The survival of ideas and concepts rests in the successful utilization of training and

development (Thomas, 1992). Professional development efforts work because they can be created by educators for educators (Feldman, 1998). No one knows better than teachers what teachers need to become more skilled practitioners (Chase, 1998).

In the early 1930s, the Progressive Education Association developed the Eight Year Study. The director of the evaluation staff for the project was Ralph W. Tyler. One of the outcomes of this project was the development of the inservice workshop. Tyler (1986) states:

> The inservice workshop was invented during the project to furnish time and assistance to teachers in developing instructional programs and materials and in acquiring new knowledge and skills for their work. (p. 38)

Tyler will call this

> one of the five most significant curriculum events in the twentieth century. (p. 36)

What was true then is true now. If site-based decision making is going to be successful, there needs to be training of teachers, administrators, parents, and all other participants (Gibbs, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1993).

There is frequent mention of staff development, teacher training, workshops, inservice and professional development, all of which are training components of site-based decision making. The reports are somewhat ambiguous as to what should be offered and how it should be delivered. Wood and Caldwell (1992) states:

1. Roles for Central Office Personnel

    - provide staff development to accomplish desired goals and objectives of approved school improvement plans;

2. Roles for Principals

    - ensure that staff development programs designed for their staffs are related to their school improvement goals;

    - participate in staff development with their faculties;

3. Roles for Teachers

    - conduct inservice for their peers;

4. Roles for Staff Development Personnel

    - collect and coordinate inservice needs from teachers, school planning teams, principals, and district level administrators to support each school improvement plan;
    - work with principals to plan and manage inservice training for their school staffs related to assessed needs;
    - work with central office administrators to plan and manage training for principals, district level personnel, and the board;
    - train district trainers and coaches to support staff development plans;
    - assist in the evaluation of school based inservice training;
    - design and deliver new teacher and principal staff development programs;
    - identify and keep school faculties aware of trends, programs, and research related to student achievement. (p. 44)

Much of the professional development is designed to fit the needs of a particular school or district; however, the specific areas that would need training are teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment. There should also be instruction in group decision making, conflict resolution, interpersonal relationships, consensus building, leadership skills, budgeting and interviewing (Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995). This professional development should be long term and should include practical activities with opportunities for follow-up or retraining so as to have lasting effects (Huddleston, et al, 1991; Mahon, 1991).

Parker (1993) suggested that "Meaningful school reform means engaging all whose lives intersect with the school community" (p. 230). To develop the skills that these people will need to operate the site-based decision making process, they must learn curriculum and acquire a wide array of instructional techniques that improve the

achievement of students (Kretovics, Farber, & Armaline, 1991). Failure to give adequate training in site-base decision making and its related areas would be a mistake (Harrison, et al., 1989). Training is an important part of the site-based decision making process so that the new concept and attitudes, the attainment of knowledge necessary to move the site-based decision making process forward to fruition, will occur (Sparks, 1993; PTA Today,1991). In schools where site-based decision making is successful, professional development is a priority (Hiatt, 1994; Krug, 1993).

Councils

The site-based decision making team is in most cases called a council. Who makes up this council and what powers it has are as varied as the definition of site-based decision making itself. The site-based decision making council may have the power to hire and fire, it may share this responsibility with the principal, or it may operate in an advisory capacity (David, 1996; Wohlstetter, 1995). The size of the council may also vary, but most feel that at the building level it should be eight people (Geraci, 1996; Guskey & Peterson, 1996).

Scarr (1992) pointed out that

> Self-regulating work teams, found in an increasing number of American corporations, have been proven able to monitor themselves more effectively than supervisory control. (p. 268)

This building level site-based decision making council can be divided into subgroups (Scarr, 1992). The areas in which the council and its subgroups may work are varied (Bahrenfuss, 1992; Wood & Caldwell, 1992). Wohlstetter (1995) pointed out:

> The most effective school councils were those that served largely to coordinate and integrate the activities of the various decision making groups operating throughout the school. These councils provided the direction for the changes taking place and allocated resources to support

> them; they focused on the needs of the school as a whole rather than on the needs of the individual academic departments or teaching teams. Because entire faculties were involved in the decision making process, the multiple teams and subcommittees also reduced the workload on individual teachers and broadened the commitment to reform. (p. 23)

The council itself should have a collegial climate, and decisions should be made by consensus (Squires & Krangik, 1996). This should allow for all of the council members to be able to give input into the decisions. No matter what the council's interpretation of consensus is, there should be an atmosphere which will allow for input among the members even if the council operates by majority vote (Lindle, 1996). Site-based decision making can fail if there is no support system (Squires & Kranyik, 1996). It may not succeed if all the power is placed in a single council (Wohlstetter, 1995).

If the site-council has the endorsement and the active participation of the principal, it is less likely to be attacked and more likely to succeed (Maeroff, 1993). In the decision making process, the central office must yield to the site-councils (Murphy, 1993).

The site-councils are made up of the principal, teachers, support staff, parents, members of the community, members of the business community, and perhaps students (Antelo & Ovando, 1991, Fitch, 1991; McHenry, 1990). Representatives are either elected (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988), appointed or mandated by law (Fitch, 1991). Teachers show a much greater desire to participate on site-based decision making councils that are concerned with classroom instruction. They express less interest in participation in administrative and managerial decisions (Smylie, 1992). Parents must be included on the site-based decision making councils, with schools providing a mechanism for parents to challenge curriculum and become involved in the process (Belter, 1997; Fege, 1997; Brandt, 1998). This involvement can increase parent participation and

visibility in the school (Mason, 1998).

Parents, teachers, principals and others who make up the school community should be empowered to exercise their professional judgement and establish partnership (Murphy, 1991). They should, as Ornstein (1992) stated,

> Retain the ability to make, or at least influence, decisions about curriculum and instruction, school organization, and allocation of resources. Governors, legislators, and state education officials can mandate reform, but new policies and goals must take root at the school level. (p. 51)

Although informed site-based decision making councils can make meaningful educational contributions, the success or failure of education does not rest with any one person (Arthur, Litteton & Boyd, 1992).

Vision

Commitment to an idea needs a vision. This idea needs to be articulated. The vision should be shared with a broader community if it is to grow. Once it is communicated, the vision needs the collaborative skills of those involved.

Educators may begin to view themselves as supporters rather than judges, as mentors and coaches rather than lecturers, as partners with parents, students, administrators, teachers, businesses, and entire communities rather than isolated workers within the walls of the classroom (Bonstingl, 1992). The vision should clearly articulate the importance of the site-based concept (Kazis, 1996).

Banks & McGee (1993) points out that Ron Edmonds, Larry Lezotte and others found that key elements to effective schools "correlate with a clear school mission, strong leadership within the building, a supportive and safe school climate, specified classroom curricula and instructional methodologies, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive school/community relations."

A clear school mission or goal does not happen without a clear vision. Where site-based decision making has been successful, there has been a vision and visionary leaders. However the vision had to be clearly shared, regardless of how it was developed (Banach, 1991; Moore, 1993).

This idea of commitment, sharing, and collaboration in developing the vision of site-based decision making was what Cuban (1993) called:

> The power of pedagogy. Reformers believe content is more important than teaching. They are wrong. At the heart of schooling is the personal relationship between teacher and students that develops over matters of content. (p. 184)

This same relationship developed with the site-based decision making team.

Isaacson and Bamburg (1992) stated that:

> Shared vision can help transform difficult physical, mental, and emotional labor into creative acts. Shared vision, buffered by the mutual respect for personal visions, can bind educators to one another in ways we desperately need. Shared vision can become the heart of a learning organization. (p. 44)

With this strong concept of vision, site-based decision making can become a reality (Maeroff, 1993). We must involve all stakeholders in the educational community. While teacher interactions with students are important, the roles that support staff and administrators have in helping teachers do their job must be recognized. Parents, students, and other community members need to be directly involved in the course schools are taking. This collaboration can occur if changes are recognized that must be made to promote this type of cooperation (Downey, Fraser, & Peters, 1994).

Summary

A review of the background of the restructuring movement is important to

understand why there was a strong call for reform in the 1980s. The work of school restructuring has changed and deepened over the last 10 years. A decade ago schools were involved in curriculum and testing mandates aimed at improving schools. Now schools are attempting to reinvent teaching and learning, roles and responsibilities, and relationships with parents and communities. Serious restructuring depends on knowing why change is sought and what it is supposed to mean for children and their learning (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

The reform movement in education has resulted from the reaction of educational stakeholders to the evidence of declining student performance. The demand for improvement in public schools has stimulated research into determining strategies that could lead to improved student achievement.

Teacher empowerment and site-based management were two reforms that were implemented to improve student achievement. The assumption was that given this type of empowerment, educators should work harder and smarter on behalf of their students. While faculty in empowered schools could provide improved educational environments than they did before they began the empowerment process, empirical evidence does not support the contention that substantial changes have occurred in school climate (Glickman, 1991).

Site-based management, as originally mandated under Public Act 25, was part of the school improvement plan. The purpose of the law was intended to enable all staff members, parents, students, and community members to be stakeholders in the educational process. These groups were encouraged to become actively involved in shared decision making and site-based management. Although school improvement plans were implemented, with schools evaluated on their effectiveness using Lezotte's formula

for "Effective Schools," research on the effective school literature does not support Lezotte's seven factor formula.

Studies evaluating site-based management efforts concentrated almost exclusively on methods to produce change. Although educational experts have inferred that implementation of site-based decision making processes can help schools become more effective in educating children, research has failed to examine the effects of this type of management on student outcomes.

Student outcomes and goals in measurable terms is one of the main components of PA 25. Studies have analyzed goals by student outcomes, with percentages of goals focusing on student outcomes ranging from a low of 11% to a high of 29%.

Teacher participation in shared decision making became a dominant theme in the reform and restructuring movements. Advocates of the reform movements contended that a link existed between decentralized decision making and positive student outcomes, which include gains in student achievement, lower dropout rates, increased attendance and reduced disciplinary problems. Research, however, has failed to substantiate many of these claims.

Shared decision making requires group communication skills. According to group theory, information on the interaction of group members is scarce. Yet, little attention is paid to how they have arrived at these decisions.

Communication has played an important role in determining effectiveness of the decision making process. Little research has been devoted to learning about the role of groups in organizations. The changing roles of groups need to be studied to determine how group members manage problems and make decisions.

An essential question for educational researchers was whether increased teacher

involvement in decision making actually resulted in measurable improvements in student achievement. Few schools employ objective criteria to measure student outcomes in attempting to assess the effectiveness of restructuring efforts.

With little evidence either supporting or refuting site-based management, shared decision making has become a uniting issue in the current reform movement and is being adopted by, or imposed on, schools nationwide.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the study that was used to collect and analyze the data needed to answer the research questions. The chapter describes the research design, population and sample, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding site-based decision-making relating to the level of involvement, level of training, ability to share information, and ability to facilitate and manage change. As the independent variable was not manipulated and an treatment or intervention was provided to the participants, a nonexperimental, descriptive research design was used. This type of design is appropriate when trying to determine if there is a relationship between variables at a specific point in time. An original questionnaire developed by the researcher was used in this study as the primary data collection tool.

Population

Professional staff members, building principals, and assistant principals in eight Oakland County school districts were asked to participate in the study. For the purpose of this study, building principals and assistant principals were referred to as a single group, building administrators. Professional staff members included teachers, counselors, librarians, and other staff members who were certified teachers. To ensure that teachers

and administrators were familiar with shared decision making and site-based management in their school districts, the population was restricted to those teachers and building administrators who had been in their buildings for one year or more.

Sample

The superintendent of each of these districts was asked to allow the researcher to select the schools to be sampled. Teachers and administrators in the schools selected for this study were limited to those who were certified and working at the building level at both elementary and secondary schools.

To obtain a representative sample of school districts in Oakland County, the county was divided into quadrants that were geographically equal in size. The largest and smallest district in each of the quarters were included in the study. From each of the eight school districts, two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school were selected for the study.

From the targeted area of Oakland County, eight school districts were selected. The county was divided into quarters, with the largest and smallest district in each of the quarters selected for inclusion in the study. A total of eight school districts; four representing the smallest school districts of Oakland County:

- Brandon, northwest quadrant;
- Oxford, northeast quadrant,
- Novi, southwest quadrant; and
- Clawson, southeast quadrant.

Four school districts represented the largest school districts:

- Waterford, northwest quadrant,

- Pontiac, northeast quadrant. (Declined to participate)
- Walled Lake, southwest quadrant, and
- Troy, southeast quadrant.

From each of these school districts two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school were surveyed to provide a broad cross-section of the school district. The survey contains both demographic and attitudinal questions on site-based decision-making.

Because Pontiac School District declined to participate, a total of seven school districts were included in the study. Pontiac School District was located in an urban area and their absence may have affected the outcomes of the study.

Instrumentation

An original instrument was developed for this study by the researcher. The survey included a short demographic survey and an attitudinal questionnaire regarding site-based decision making. The items on the attitudinal questionnaire were created from information obtained in an extensive review of literature on site-based management. The participants were asked to rate each of the 24 items in this section of the survey using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. A neutral point was provided for respondents who did not have an opinion on any specific item.

To provide evidence of construct validity, a principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation was used to determine if factors would emerge that could be used to explain a sufficient amount of variance in perceptions of site-based management. The results of this factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Factor Analysis

Factor	Items on Factor	Eigenvalue	Percent of Explained Variance
Knowledge of site-based management	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24	12.32	51.3
Authority	4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 23	1.57	6.6
Total			57.9

Two factors, knowledge of site-based management and authority, emerged from the factor analysis, explaining 57.9% of the variance in perceptions of site-based management. The eigenvalues associated with these two factors were greater than 1.00 indicating the amount of variance explained by knowledge of site-based management and authority was statistically significant. These factors were used as subscales in statistical analysis to answer the research questions.

To determine the reliability of the two subscales, measures of internal consistency were obtained using Cronbach alpha procedures. The alpha coefficients for knowledge of site-based management ($\alpha = .95$) and authority ($\alpha = .86$) indicated the two subscales had adequate reliability.

The first seven questions were designed to collect relevant demographic information about the participants. The demographic information requested included the number of years in the field of education, gender, educational background, ethnic background, level of assignment, and position. Each of these items were answered using either forced-choice or fill in responses.

Data Collection

Superintendents and administrators selected for the study received a letter explaining the purpose of the study. This letter also sought permission to distribute survey packets to teachers in the school district. With the permission of the superintendent, two elementary, one mid-level, and one high school were selected for inclusion in the study.

Following approval of the Behavioral Investigation Committee (BIC), the researcher distributed survey packets to all teachers in the selected schools. The survey packets included a cover letter and a copy of the survey. The cover letter provides the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation in the study, and telephone numbers to call in the case of questions regarding the survey and/or their participation in the survey. The directions on the survey provide assurances that all information provided by the participants was anonymous.

The researcher met with the principal in each building to discuss how the surveys would be distributed. In approximately 50% of the included schools, the principal distributed the survey packets to his/her certified teaching staff. In these schools, the principal also assumed the responsibility for collecting the completed surveys and returning them to the researcher. In the remaining schools, the researcher went to teacher meetings to distributed the survey packets. He introduced himself to the staff and briefly explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions for returning the completed surveys.

As the surveys were not coded in any way, there was no attempt to follow-up on nonreturned surveys. All data collection was completed in June 1996.

Data Analysis

The data from the surveys were entered into a computer file for analysis using SPSS - Windows, ver. 8.0. The statistical analyses were divided into two sections: the first section provided a description of the sample. Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency and dispersion were used to describe the sample in terms of their personal and professional characteristics. Inferential statistical analyses were used to answer the research questions. The inferential analyses included one-sample t-tests, t-tests for two independent samples, and stepwise multiple linear regression analyses. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made using an alpha level of .05. Figure 2 presents the statistical analyses that was used to answer each of the three research questions.

Figure 2

Statistical Analysis

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
1. To what extent do educational professionals in selected school districts in Oakland County regard site-based decision making as positive?	Perceptions of site-based decision making • Knowledge of site-based management • Authority	One-sample t-tests was used to determine the extent to which educational professionals differ from the neutral point on the two subscales measuring site-based decision making.
2. Is there a difference between teachers and administrators on their perceptions of site-based decision making?	Dependent Variable Perceptions of site-based decision making • Knowledge of site-based management • Authority Independent Variable Type of respondent • Administrator • Teacher	t-Tests for two independent samples was used to compare responses on the two subscales measuring site-based decision making by the type of respondent, administrator or teacher.
3. Can perceptions of site-based decision making be predicted from personal and professional characteristics of the respondents?	Dependent Variable Perceptions of site-based decision making • Knowledge of site-based management • Authority Independent Variable • Age • Educational Level • Building Assignment • Position	Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to determine which of the independent variables can be used to predict perceptions on the two subscales measuring site based decision making.

Chapter IV

Results of Data Analysis

The results of the data analysis that were used to describe the sample and answer the research questions that were developed for this study. The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of teachers and administrators in Oakland County elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools toward site-based decision-making.

A total of 650 surveys was distributed to teaching staff and administrators in seven school districts in Oakland County, Michigan. Completed surveys were returned by 343 teachers and administrators in seven school districts for a response rate of 52.8%.

The data analysis is divided into two sections. The first section presents a description of the sample, with the second section providing results of the inferential statistical analyses that were used to answer the research questions.

Description of the Sample

The participants provided their gender on the survey. Their responses were summarized using frequency distributions. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 2

Frequency Distributions
Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	231	67.3
Male	112	32.7
Total	343	100.0

The majority of the participants (n=231, 67.3%) reported their gender was female. The remaining 112 (32.7%) indicated their gender was male.

The educators in the study were asked to indicate their ethnicity. Their responses were summarized using frequency distributions. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency Distributions
Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
African American	8	2.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	.3
Caucasian	329	95.9
Hispanic	4	1.2
Other	1	.3
Total	343	100.0

The majority of the respondents (n=329, 95.9%) reported their ethnicity as Caucasian. Eight (2.3%) of the participants were African American, with 4 (1.2%) indicating their ethnicity was Hispanic. One (0.3%) teacher reported his/her ethnicity as Asian/Pacific Islander and 1 (0.3%) indicated "other" as his/her ethnicity.

The participants were asked to indicate their educational level on the survey. Frequency distributions were used to summarize their responses. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency Distributions
Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor Degree	32	9.3
Bachelor Degree + 15 hours	62	18.1
Master Degree	152	44.3
Master Degree + 30 hours	70	20.4
Educational Specialist	14	4.1
Ph.D./Ed.D.	4	1.2
Other	9	2.6
Total	343	100.0

The largest group of respondents (n=152, 44.3%) reported they had earned a master degree, with 70 (20.4%) indicating they had a master plus 30 hours. Sixty-two participants (18.1%) indicated they had a bachelor degree plus 15 hours and 32 (9.3%) had obtained a bachelor degree. Fourteen (4.1%) educators had received an educational specialist degree and 4 (1.2%) reported completion of a doctorate. Nine (2.6%) teachers and administrators indicated "other" as their highest educational level, but did not provide additional explanation regarding the type of degree.

The participants provided the educational level to which they were assigned. Their responses were summarized using frequency distributions. Table 5 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 5

Frequency Distributions
Assigned Level

Assigned Level	Frequency	Percent
Lower Elementary	59	17.2
Upper Elementary	32	9.3
Middle School	91	26.5
Multi-Levels	11	3.2
High School	150	43.7
Total	343	100.0

The largest group of respondents (n=150, 43.7%) indicated they taught at the high school level, with 91 (26.5%) reporting they were at the middle school level. Fifty-nine (17.2%) reported they were teaching at the lower elementary level and 32 (9.3%) were at the upper elementary level. Eleven (3.2%) teachers in the study were teaching at multiple levels.

The positions of the respondents were obtained on the surveys, with frequency distributions used to summarized on their responses. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequency Distributions
Position of the Respondent

Position of the Respondent	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	296	86.3
Professional Support Staff	29	8.5
Administrator	16	4.7
Other	2	.6
Total	343	100.0

The majority of the participants reported they were teachers (n=296, 86.3%) and 26 (8.5%) were professional support staff. Sixteen (4.7%) administrators participated in the study. Two (0.6%) reported their position as "other," but did not provide an explanation regarding their specific position within the school.

The participants were asked to indicate the number of years they had been in education. Their responses were provided filling in the exact number of years. This data were summarized using descriptive statistics which are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics
Years in Education

Number	Mean	SD	Median	Range	
				Minimum	Maximum
343	17.89	9.38	19	1	46

The respondents had been in education for a mean of 17.89 (sd=9.38) years. The median number of years in education was 19, with experiences ranging from 1 to 46 years.

Research Questions

Three research questions were posed for this study. Each of these questions were answered using inferential statistical analyses, with all decisions regarding the statistical significance of the findings made using an alpha level of .05.

Research question 1: To what extent do educational professionals in selected school districts in Oakland County regard site-based decision making as positive?

The mean scores on the two subscales measuring perceptions of site-based decision making were compared to the neutral point of "3" to determine if the educational professional in the study were significantly above the neutral point. Mean scores greater than 3.00 reflected positive perceptions regarding site-based decision making. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

One-Sample t-Test
Perceptions of Site-Based Decision

Site-Based Decision Making	Number	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	t-Value
Knowledge of site-based decision making	343	3.67	.81	3.00	15.40*
Authority	343	3.35	.72	3.00	9.03*

*p≤.05

Knowledge of site-based decision making. The obtained t-value of 15.40 was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 342 degrees of freedom. The mean score for the educators of 3.67 (sd=.81) was significantly higher than the neutral point of 3.00. This difference indicated that educators were positive about their perceptions of

their knowledge of site-based decision making.

Authority. When the mean score of 3.35 (sd=.72) for perceptions of authority associated with site-based management were compared to the neutral point of 3.00, the resultant t-value of 9.03 was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 342 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that educators were positive in regards to their perceptions of authority associated with site-based decision making.

Research question 2: Is there a difference between teachers and administrators on their perceptions of site-based decision making?

Because of the differences in the number of respondents in each category; teachers (n=296), professional support staff (n=29), and administrators (n=16), a nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to compare perceptions of site-based management. Table 9 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 9

Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance
Perceptions of Site-Based Management by Type of Educator

Perceptions of Site-Based Management	Number	Mean Rank	Chi-Square
Knowledge of Site Based Management			
Teacher	296	170.14	3.85 (NS)
Professional Support Staff	29	155.74	
Administrator	16	214.56	
Authority			
Teacher	296	169.68	2.44 (NS)
Professional Support Staff	29	164.16	
Administrator	16	207.91	

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance provided no evidence of statistically significant differences on their perceptions of site-based management among the educators relative to their positions within the schools. Based on

these results, perceptions of knowledge of site-based management and authority associated with site-based management were similar among the teachers, professional support staff, and administrators.

> *Research question 3*: Can perceptions of site-based decision making be predicted from personal and professional characteristics of the respondents?

The two subscales, perceptions of knowledge of site-based management and authority associated with site-based management, measuring perceptions of site-based decision making were used as dependent variables in separate stepwise multiple linear regression analysis. The independent variables used in each of these analyses included years in education, educational level, building assignment, and position within the school. Independent variables that were not measured on a continuous scale were dummy coded to allow their use in the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis. Table 10 presents the results for perceptions of knowledge regarding site-based decision making.

Table 10

Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression Analysis
Perceptions of Knowledge of Site-Based Management

Independent Variable	Constant	b Weight	Beta Weight	r^2	t-Value
Level of Assignment	4.46	-.16	-.31	.10	-6.06*
Years in Education		-.02	-.15	.02	-2.89*
Multiple R					.34
R^2					.12
F Ratio					22.64
DF					2/340

*p≤.05

Two independent variables, building level and years in education, entered the regression equation, explaining 12% of the variance in perceptions of their knowledge of site-based management. The associated F ratio of 22.64 was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 2 and 340 degrees of freedom. This finding provided evidence that level of assignment and years in education were accounting for a significant amount of variance in knowledge of site-based management.

Level of assignment entered the regression analysis first, explaining 10% of the variance in knowledge of site-based management. The t-value of -6.06 obtained for this variable was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. This result indicated that higher scores on their perceptions of their knowledge of site-based management were associated with teachers and administrators at the elementary school level.

Years in education explained an additional 2% of the variance in knowledge of site-based management. The t-value of -2.89 yielded on this analysis was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. Based on this finding, participants with less experience in education had more positive perceptions on their knowledge of site-based management.

A comparison of the Beta weights showed that level of assignment was a stronger

predictor of perceptions of knowledge of site-based management. The remaining independent variables did not enter the regression equation indicating these variables were not significant predictors of perceptions of knowledge of site-based management.

The second stepwise multiple linear regression analysis used perceptions of authority as the dependent variable. The same independent variables; years in education, educational level, level of assignment, and position; were used in this analysis. Table 11 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 11

Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression Analysis
Perceptions of Authority Associated With Site-Based Management

Independent Variable	Constant	b Weight	Beta Weight	r^2	t-Value
Level of Assignment	3.97	-.14	-.29	.08	-5.54*
Years in Education		-.01	-.11	.01	-2.04*
Multiple R					.31
R^2					.09
F Ratio					17.52
DF					2/340

*p≤.05

Two variables, level of assignment and years in education, entered the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis, accounting for 9% of the variance in perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. The F ratio of 17.52 obtained on this analysis was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 2 and 340 degrees of freedom. Based on this finding, these two independent variables were explaining a statistically significant amount of variance in perceptions of authority associated with site-based management.

Level of assignment entered the regression equation first, explaining 8% of the variance in perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. The

associated t-value of -5.54 was statistically significant at an alpha level of.05, indicating this independent variable was explaining a significant amount of variance in perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. The negative relationship between the two variables showed that higher scores on perceptions of authority associated with site-based management were associated with participants in elementary schools.

Years in education was the second independent variable that entered the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis, explaining an additional 1% of the variance in perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. The t-value of -2.04 obtained on this analysis was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. Based on this finding, participants with less experience in education were more likely to have positive perceptions of authority associated with site-based management.

A comparison of the Beta weights showed that level of assignment was a stronger predictor of perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. The remainder of the independent variable did not enter the stepwise multiple regression equation indicating that they were not significant predictors of site-based management.

Summary

The results of the data analysis that were used to describe the sample and answer the research questions have been presented in this chapter. The conclusions and recommendations regarding shared decision making in site-based management can be found in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Site-based decision making is a joint planning and problem solving process that seeks to improve the quality of work and the delivery of education in the school. Site-based decision making is a process through which those individuals who are responsible for the implementation of a decision at the building level are actively and legitimately involved in making this decision. As such, it represents an approach to problems and issues. Specific programs and policies are the outcomes of the site-based decision making process.

The process of site-based decision making permits and even encourages change. This research attempted to determine, the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward site-based decision making.

The restructuring movement has resulted from the strong demand for educational reform in the 1980s. Schools have been involved in curriculum and testing mandates aimed at improving student outcomes. Schools are beginning to implement strategies to reinvent teaching and learning, restructure roles and responsibilities, and improve relationships with parents and communities. Serious restructuring depends on understanding the underlying reasons for change and what the results of this movement mean for children and their learning (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Educational stakeholders, reacting from their reactions to evidence indicating declining student performance, are demanding improvement in public schools. This demand has stimulated research into investigating strategies that could lead to improved student achievement.

Two reforms that were implemented to improve student achievement were teacher empowerment and site-based management. If educations were empowered, they should work harder and smarter on behalf of their students. While faculty in empowered schools were expected to contribute to improved educational environments, empirical evidence does not support the contention that substantial changes have occurred in school climate (Glickman, 1991).

As originally mandated under Public Act 25, site-based management was included as part of the school improvement plan. The purpose of the law to promote collaboration among stakeholders in the educational process. These stakeholders included staff members, parents, students, and community members. These groups were encouraged to become actively involved in shared decision making and site-based management. Although school improvement plans were implemented and schools were evaluated on their effectiveness using Lezotte's formula for "Effective Schools," research on the effective school literature does not support his seven factor formula.

Methods to produce change were the focus of studies that evaluated site-based management efforts. Although implementation of site-based decision making processes was expected to help schools become more effective in educating children, research has not examined effects of this type of management on student outcomes.

Student outcomes and goals in measurable terms is one of the primary components of PA 25. When educational goals were analyzed by student outcomes, the percentages of goals indicated in school improvement plans that focused on student outcomes ranged from a low of 11% to a high of 29%.

Teacher participation in shared decision making became a dominant theme in the reform and restructuring movements. Advocates of the reform movements contended that

a link existed between decentralized decision making and positive student outcomes, which included gains in student achievement, fewer dropouts, increased attendance, and reduced disciplinary problems. Research, however, has failed to substantiate many of these claims.

Shared decision making requires group communication skills. According to group theory, information on the interaction of group members is scarce. Yet, little attention is paid to how they have arrived at these decisions.

Communication has played an important role in determining effectiveness of the decision making process. A paucity of research was found that focused on learning about the role of groups in organizations. The changing roles of groups need to be studied to determine how group members manage problems and make decisions.

An essential question for educational researchers was whether increased teacher involvement in decision making actually resulted in measurable improvements in student achievement. Few schools employ objective criteria to measure student outcomes in attempting to assess the effectiveness of restructuring efforts.

With little evidence either supporting or refuting site-based management, shared decision making has become a uniting issue in the current reform movement and is being adopted by, or imposed on, schools nationwide.

Methods

A nonexperimental, descriptive research design was used to examine the perceptions of educators; including building principals, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, librarians, and other staff members who were certified teachers; in eight Oakland County school districts on shared decision making as a primary factor in restructuring in their schools. A total of 650 surveys were distributed to teachers and

administrators, with 343 returning their completed surveys for a response rate of 52.8%.

These educators completed an original survey that measured two independent subscales, knowledge of site-based management and authority, to determine perceptions of site-based management. In addition, a short demographic survey was included to provide a profile of the respondents.

Findings

The majority of the educators were female and Caucasian. Most had completed a master's degree and were working in high schools. The largest group of respondents indicated their positions as teachers, followed by professional support staff and administrators. The respondents had been in education for an average of 17.89 (sd=9.38) years.

Research questions. Three research questions were answered in this study using inferential statistical analysis. An alpha level of .05 was used as the decision criteria for determining the significance of the statistical analyses.

Research question 1. To what extent do educational professionals in selected school districts in Oakland County regard site-based decision making as positive?

The mean scores on each of the two subscales measuring perceptions of site-based decision making as a primary factor of restructuring were compared with the neutral point of 3 using t-tests for one sample. The results of these analyses showed that both perceptions of knowledge of site-based decision making and authority were significantly above the mean. The educators in this study appeared to have positive perceptions regarding site-based decision making.

Research question 2. Is there a difference between teachers and

administrators on their perceptions of site-based decision making?

Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance procedures were used to compare teachers, professional support staff, and administrators on their perceptions of knowledge of site-based management and authority. The results of this analysis provided no statistically significant differences among the three groups of participants, indicating that all of the respondents had similar perceptions of site-based management.

Research question 3. Can perceptions of site-based decision making be predicted from personal and professional characteristics of the respondents?

Stepwise multiple linear regression analyses were used to determine which of the personal and professional characteristics could be used to predict perceptions of knowledge of site-based management, and perceptions of authority. Level of assignment and years in education were significant predictors in a negative direction of perceptions of knowledge of site-based management. Elementary school educators and those who had been in education for fewer years were more likely to have positive perceptions regarding knowledge of site-based management.

The second stepwise multiple linear regression analysis used authority associated with site-based management as the dependent variable. The results of this analysis showed that authority could be predicted by level of assignment and years in education. The negative relationship with authority associated with site-based management provided evidence that educators who were at the elementary school level and those who had fewer years of experience in the field of education were more likely to have positive perceptions of authority associated with site-based management.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were obtained:

Educators in Oakland County Schools were positive in regards to their perceptions of their knowledge of and authority associated with site-based management. Building level administrators need to support the use of site-based management, allowing teachers and professional support staff to provide input into the decision making process. While all groups were positive about the use of site-based management, principals had the highest mean scores indicating a more positive perception of this component of restructuring.

For restructuring efforts to be effective, all staff members must be included, with these staff members willing to accept both the responsibility and authority associated with decision making. Previous research has supported the need for principals and teachers to work together collaboratively to promote effective learning and teaching in their schools. Sharing decisions regarding curriculum and instruction can promote a team concept that could lead to better student outcomes and relations with parents and community members.

Educators, who are working in elementary schools, are more likely to have positive perceptions regarding shared decision making. These schools are generally smaller and the staff is more cohesive. The number of administrators is usually limited to one principal in each building. In middle and high schools, the teachers and professional staff are more departmentalized, often causing isolation among staff members. The administrative staff is larger in middle and high schools producing greater separation between the two groups in these schools. These separating factors can limit the collegiality among educators beyond the department level. In these large schools,

teachers and professional staff members often elect representative to participate in shared decision making. These councils may have the best interests of all the teachers in mind, but often make decisions that reflect their own personal views. In elementary schools, all teachers can participate due to the small staff size.

Participants with fewer years in education had more positive perceptions regarding both knowledge of site-based management and perceptions of authority associated with site-based management. Teachers and administrators who have been in education for more years are likely to be somewhat jaded when new administrative philosophies and theories are introduced into their schools. They have lived and worked through other types of administrative programs that have either produced no results or failed in their attempts to improve student outcomes and school climate. Educators with less experience may be more open to innovative ideas, such as shared decision making, as they have not had to endure other experimental movements in their schools. When teachers and administrators see that participating in shared decision making can make a difference in academic outcomes, parental involvement, and increased collaboration among staff members, their initial negative perceptions may become more positive.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research were developed from the findings of this study:

- Replicate this study using the same survey, but with a different sample to validate the outcomes of the present study.
- Examine the effects of shared decision making on perceptions of job satisfaction and teacher burnout to determine if greater involvement and collaboration among staff can contribute to a more student-centered school environment.

- Determine if schools that use shared decision making and site-based management differ in perceptions of school climate and communication from schools that do not use these administrative concepts.

- Investigate the parent involvement in schools that use site-based management that include parents on decision making committees and schools where parents are not included in decision making committees.

- Study the effects of including ancillary staff (e.g., custodians, secretaries, clerks, kitchen help, etc.) on shared decision making committees to determine if this type of involvement can help improve school climate and student outcomes.

- Examine the effects of legislation, state school board mandates, and court decisions regarding the use of site-based management on standardized test scores, student graduation rates, and teacher satisfaction.

- Compare the perceptions of teachers and administrators in site-based managed schools between school districts that support site-based management with financial support for meeting times and professional development and school districts that impose site-based management with no financial support for these activities.

Appendix A

Survey Packet

May 14, 1996

Dear Colleague:

I am a doctoral candidate from Wayne State University working on my dissertation in educational administration. The topic I am researching is "Site-based Decision-making: The Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators." I am defining site-based decision-making as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometime community members, students, and others are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level.

I would appreciate your completing the enclosed survey. Your responses will contribute to the current body of knowledge and will be anonymous. It should take ten minutes to complete all of the information requested.

Please complete and return the survey to your principal in the time allotted. Your participation is voluntary. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact me.

Thank you in advance for taking time to respond to this survey. Your views are crucial and important to me.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Peters
Doctoral Candidate

Enclosure

Site-Base Decision-Making Survey

This survey is part of a study on site-based decision-making. Please take time to fill out the enclosed questions. For the purpose of this study, site-base decision-making shall be defined as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members and students, are empowered to determine and manage the education programs at the school building level. This surey is anonymous and your participation is voluntary. Thank you!!

In what school district do you work? _____

How many years have you been working in the educational field? _____

Gender: (check one) ❑ Female ❑ Male

Education: (check one)

❑ Bachelor's degree
❑ Bachelor's degree + 15 hours
❑ Masters degree
❑ Other (please specify) _____
❑ Masters degree + 30 hours
❑ Educational specialist
❑ PhD or EdD

Ethnic Background (check one)

❑ White
❑ African-American
❑ Asian/Pacific Islander
❑ Native American
❑ Hispanic
❑ Other _____

Level of Assignment (check one)

❑ Lower elementary
❑ High school
❑ Upper elementary
❑ Multi-levels
❑ Middle school

Position:

❑ Teacher
❑ Administrator
❑ Professional staff (i.e., social worker, psychologist)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Listed below are 24 statements concerning site-based decision-making. How do you perceive these statements as they relate to site based decision-making in your school? Please circle the number that most closely matches your agreement to each of the following:

The site-based decision-making approach:	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Promotes empowerment of the entire educational community	5	4	3	2	1
2. Encourages shared information	5	4	3	2	1
3. clarifies what is required and/or expected of the staff and community	5	4	3	2	1
4. Increases an understanding of funding/financial support	5	4	3	2	1
5. Facilitates an understanding of the school's mission and goals	5	4	3	2	1
6. Encourages shared decision-making	5	4	3	2	1
7. Encourages the development of goals and objectives based on the needs of the staff, students, and community	5	4	3	2	1
8. Encourages positive public opinion	5	4	3	2	1
9. Encourages teacher training	5	4	3	2	1
10. Encourages educational excellence for all children	5	4	3	2	1
11. Allows for an understanding of governmental mandates	5	4	3	2	1
12. Allows union involvement	5	4	3	2	1
13. Gives authority to the site-based team	5	4	3	2	1
14. Encourages involvement in the make-up of the site-based team	5	4	3	2	1
15. Encourages minority involvement	5	4	3	2	1
16. Encourages administrator training	5	4	3	2	1
17. Encourages people to be involved	5	4	3	2	1
18. Creates a collegial atmosphere	5	4	3	2	1
19. Encourages staff and community to work together in an organized manner	5	4	3	2	1
20. Allows input before making decisions	5	4	3	2	1
21. Encourages staff development	5	4	3	2	1
22. Tends to remove barriers that reduce efficiency	5	4	3	2	1
23. Encourages involvement in purchasing educational supplies	5	4	3	2	1
24. Promotes awareness of and sharing with others	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Correspondence

SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 29, 1996

Dr. Robert Skinner, Superintendent
Clawson Public Schools
626 Phillips
Clawson, MI 48017

Dear Dr. Skinner,

Ted Peters is a teacher with the Southfield Public School District who is working on his doctoral dissertation in educational administration. He needs some assistance in completing his research and will be contacting you in the very near future for permission to survey some teachers and administrators in your district.

If you remember your own dissertation days, I know you will appreciate how important this help is in completing these studies.

I would consider it a favor if you could give Ted your blessing and whatever cooperation you are able to give at this time.

Sincerely,

Marlene

Marlene E. Davis
Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent
School District
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Superintendent:

I am a doctoral candidate from Wayne State University working on my dissertation in educational administration. The topic I am researching is "Site-based Decision-making: The Attitudes and Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators." I am defining site-based decision-making as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members, students, and others are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level.

I would appreciate it if you would allow me to conduct some of my research in your school district. The teachers and administrators in two elementary schools, a mid-level school and a high school will need to be surveyed. I would appreciate your allowing me to contact the principals and ask them to assist me in this research. I have enclosed a copy of the survey. It should take their staff about ten minutes to complete all of the information requested during a staff meeting.

I have enclosed a letter which gives me permission to contact the principals in your district and ask them for their assistance. Please sign it and return it in the stamped envelope. Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider my request. Your assistance is crucial and important to me.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Peters
Doctoral Candidate

Enclosure

Frederick J. Peters

Dear Mr. Peters:

I have read your letter about surveying the principals and teachers in four of our schools, two elementary, one mid-level, and a high school. You will be asking questions about their perceptions of site-based decision-making.

I give you permission to contact my principals and their teachers. It is understood that you will make no one feel that is a directive from me. It is the decision of the principals and their teachers as to whether they wish to participate in your study.

You have my approval and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Superintendent
_____ School District

April 23, 1996

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral candidate from Wayne State University working on my dissertation in educational administration. The topic I am researching is "Site-based Decision-making: The Attitudes and Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators." I am defining site-based decision-making as an organizational model in which teachers, administrators, and sometimes community members, students, and others are empowered to determine and manage the educational programs at the school building level.

I would appreciate it if you would allow me to conduct some of my research in your school building. I would appreciate your administering the survey to yourself and all other principals and teachers who are assigned to work in your building. You will also be provided a stamped self-addressed envelope to return this instrument. It should take your staff about ten minutes to complete all of the information requested during a staff meeting.

I will be contacting you in the next few days about allowing me this opportunity to work with your staff. Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider my request. Your assistance is crucial and important to me.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Peters
Doctoral Candidate

Enclosure

Wayne State University
Multiple Project Assurance # M 1261
IRB B03

HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE
Room 2238 Gordon H. Scott Hall
540 E. Canfield Avenue
Detroit, MI 48201
Phone: (313) 577-1628
FAX: (313) 577-1941

MEMORANDUM

TO: Frederick J. Peters, Education
20302 Rippling Lane
Northville, Michigan 48167

FROM: Peter A. Lichtenberg, Ph.D. Peter A Lichtenberg
Chairman, Behavioral Investigation Committee

SUBJECT: Exemption Status of Protocol # H 06-05-96(B03)-X; "Site-Based Decision-Making: The Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators in Oakland County"

SOURCE OF FUNDING: No Funding Requested

DATE: June 12, 1996

The research proposal named above has been reviewed and found to qualify for exemption according to paragraph #2 of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Health and Human Services, CFR Part 46.101(b).

Since I have not evaluated this proposal for scientific merit except to weigh the risk to the human subjects in relation to potential benefits, this approval does not replace or serve in place of any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

This protocol will be subject to annual review by the BIC.

cc: Dr. Mark Smith/Education

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Abstract

SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING:
THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS
IN OAKLAND COUNTY

by

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May 1999

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Site-based decision making is a joint planning and problem solving process that seeks to improve the quality of work and the delivery of education in the school. Site-based decision making is a process through which those individuals who are responsible for the implementation of a decision at the building level are actively and legitimately involved in making this decision. As such, it represents an approach to problems and issues. Specific programs and policies are the outcomes of the site-based decision making process. The process of site-based decision making permits and even encourages change. This research attempted to determine, the perceptions of teachers and administrators toward site-based decision making.

A nonexperimental, descriptive research design was used to examine the perceptions of educators; including building principals, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, librarians, and other staff members who were certified teachers; in eight Oakland County school districts on shared decision making as a primary factor in restructuring in their schools. These educators completed an original survey that measured two independent subscales, knowledge of site-based management and

authority, to determine perceptions of site-based management. In addition, a short demographic survey was included to provide a profile of the respondents.

Educators in Oakland County Schools were positive in regards to their perceptions of their knowledge of and authority associated with site-based management. Building level administrators need to support the use of site-based management, allowing teachers and professional support staff to provide input into the decision making process. While all groups were positive about the use of site-based management, principals had the highest mean scores indicating a more positive perception of this component of restructuring.

For restructuring efforts to be effective, all staff members must be included, with these staff members willing to accept both the responsibility and authority associated with decision making. Previous research has supported the need for principals and teachers to work together collaboratively to promote effective learning and teaching in their schools. Sharing decisions regarding curriculum and instruction can promote a team concept that could lead to better student outcomes and relations with parents and community members.

Autobiographical Statement

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