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Site-Based Management: A Review of the Literature Part II: Past and Present Status

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Site-based management, as indicated in Part I of this two-part series, is a frequently used approach to educational reform (Fiske, 1995). The major objective behind the site-based management approach is to move decision-making control from the central office of a school system to the local school level (i.e., at each school campus) (Short & Greer, 1997). Operating under a decentralization model, site-based management assumes a multiplicity of educational goals (Cheng, 1996). In Part I, we examined the following topics to provide readers with a context in which to place the educational reform of site-based management: (1) theoretical reflections regarding educational reform; (2) systems theory and schools; (3) the nature of school reform; (4) modern school reform reflections; (5) systemic and inclusive restructuring; (6) reform through collaboration; (7) rationales and stimuli for educational change; (8) impact of erroneous beliefs on school reform; (9) initiating change; (10) implementing change; (11) maintenance of change; (12) restructuring, to what degree; (13) recent school research, restructuring themes; and, (14) restructuring success related to the change process and school organization. Through an analysis of the literature in those areas, we attempted to demonstrate a clear need for the educational reform of site-based management. In Part II, we will discuss, in depth, the literature specifically on site-based management, using the following subheadings: (1) how widespread is site-based management; (2) legislation and implementation of site-based management across the United States; (3) site-based management as educational reform; (4) definitions and assumptions of site-based management; (5) key fundamentals of site-based management; (6) conceptual variations within site-based management; (7) variations in the implementation of site-based management; (8) site-based decision-making and spheres of influence; (9) empowerment associated with site-based management; (10) site-based management and the improvement of student performance; (11) factors of successful implementation of site-based management; (12) benefits of site-based management; (13) challenges to site-based management implementation; (14) lessons learned from site-based management; (15) monitoring and evaluation of site-based management; (16) emergent research regarding site-based management; and, (17) research concerns of site-based management. Through this two-stage description of the basis for site-based management as an educational reform initiative and of the current status of site-based management as an educational reform initiative, readers should have a deep understanding of this initiative, as well as an understanding of our belief that site-based management has promise as an educational reform initiative.

How Widespread is Site-Based Management?

The push towards decentralization raises questions about how wide-spread site-based management has become. All states reported having some site-based decision-making entities in local schools according to a study conducted by the U. S. Department of Education (1996). The U. S. Department of Education indicated that in 1993-1994 an average of 56% of public schools in the United States had a site-based decision-making body in place. Within each state, decision-making committees were present in over 50% of the schools. Nebraska showed the lowest number of established committees with only 22% of its schools reporting the implementation of site-based

management. West Virginia indicated the highest number of schools implementing site-based management with 86% of its schools reporting established decision-making committees.

Variation in the percentage of schools from state to state implementing site-based management may be due to legislation mandates in each state according to the U. S. Department of Education (1996). For example, the Chicago School Reform Act that was passed by the Chicago legislature in 1988 included a component that made the establishment of school decision-making councils imperative (Hess, 1994). Texas legislation of 1991 required districts in the state to implement a plan for site-based decision-making (Lutz & Iden, 1994). Title 1 programs may also play a role in initiating site-based decision-making through federal mandates to establish site-based consultative councils (U. S. Department of Education, 1996).

Most site-based decision-making committees in United States public schools include stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and administrators. According to a nation-wide study conducted by the U. S. Department of Education (1996), during the 1993-1994 school year, 96% of school-based committees included administrators and 95% included teachers. To a lesser degree parents played a role on school-based committees at 79%. Lagging behind in involvement at 37% were community and business representatives, yet their input on curriculum planning issues were considered by 83% of those schools who had these stakeholders on their committees. Budget planning was a role of 66% of the established committees, whereas involvement in decisions regarding personnel patterns was reported to be happening at only 34% of the campuses with committees (U. S. Department of Education, 1996).

Legislation and Implementation of Site-Based Management Across the United States

Chicago, Illinois faced educational reform due to legislation passed by the Illinois General Assembly in 1988. Public Act 85-1418 purposefully sought to lessen centralized control of schools and replace it with local school governance (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998). The law attacked the unsuccessful attempts of the Chicago school system from two different angles. Participation of parents, community members, teachers, and administrators was encouraged by allowing them significant authority and new resources to solve local problems (Bryk et al., 1998; Finn & Walberg, 1994). In addition, Bryk and his colleagues (1998) stated that innovative district-wide goals and objectives were established to improve student achievement.

The Chicago Reform Act brought about a complete democratic reorganization of the nation's third largest school system, and that reform still continues to evolve today (Blasé & Blasé, 1997). Hess (1995) stated that this reform represents "the devolution of authority from a large, centralized school district and its bureaucracy to a local, democratically elected governance unit at the school level" (p. 1). Chicago's Reform Act mandated that school committees constitute the governance structure of the district (Blasé & Blasé, 1997). Six members of each council were to be parents, whereas two other seats went to community representatives. Two teachers and the administrator were included, along with one student at the high school level. As was evidenced in Chicago's reform, parents and community members made up the majority of school-based committee members. These committees were given the authority to hire and evaluate the principals, approve and modify the school improvement plan, and budget the school's discretionary funds (Blasé & Blasé, 1997). According to Hess (1991), "Chicago school reform converted parents and community representatives from being advisors with some power to make decisions into being deciders with ultimate authority on most issues" (p. 151).

Easton and other leading researchers (1993) studied school reform in Chicago schools for several years. They found four types of school governance in existence. The first type was limited governance in which the principal's leadership is never challenged. Blasé and Blasé (1997) referred to these committees as "rubber stamp committees" (p.83). The second type of governance was moderate governance. Moderate governance is not much more active than limited governance, but there usually exists a parent or community member who exercises his/her right to influence decisions. Balanced governance, the third type described by Easton and colleagues (1993), is one in

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which all decisions are shared, and all committee members have an influence on decisions made. Finally, excessive governance was also noted in Chicago's reform. In this type of governance, the principal enacted unstable leadership, and fighting amongst committee members regarding power issues was frequent. Easton and his cohort (1993) reported that balanced governance was found in the majority of school councils in Chicago.

In retrospect, the Chicago School Reform Act was an ambitious piece of legislation. This Act called for broad educational organization restructuring, extending outside the school to include community organizations, business groups, local colleges and universities, and labor unions (Bryk et al., 1998). Within any other United States urban city, there has been no comparable school reform to date.

Following the Chicago School Reform Act was the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990, which sought education reform for the entire state. Having declared the public education system unconstitutional, the Kentucky Supreme Court designed a new educational system with radical reforms in finance, curriculum, and governance (Lindle, 1995/1996). The Kentucky Education Reform Act was built on three main principles: (1) all children can learn, (2) instructional strategies to facilitate teachers into attaining high levels of student achievement are acknowledged, and (3) what children learn should be relatively constant across the state (Finn & Walberg, 1994). To achieve these principles, the law dictated new governance and funding for the Kentucky state school system.

To meet the goal of world-class standards for Kentucky education, several initiatives were put in place. Performance outcomes were identified and aligned to student assessments, while in addition, a school accountability system of reprisals and rewards was established (Finn & Walberg, 1994). In addition, Finn and Walberg stated that the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process had been mandated through the formation of school-based committees. Kentucky legislators believed that those persons who were the most accountable and responsible should be making the decisions that affect students. By 1995, according to Edwards (1995), almost all 800 schools in the state's 176 districts had implemented site-based decision-making. Also provided for by law was the enactment of categorical programs such as preschool, technology, professional development, increased instructional time in the classroom, and parent and community support (Finn & Walberg, 1994). The Kentucky Education Reform Act recognized that government, teachers, parents, and students are all essential stakeholders in the restructuring process and all ultimately accountable for its success or failure.

Included in the site-based decision-making committees in Kentucky schools are the principal, three teachers voted for by other teachers, and two parents voted for by members of the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) (Edwards, 1995). Over the years, some disagreement has occurred regarding the make-up of the site-based committees. School paraprofessionals and other non-certified staff nor community and business members have a place on the school-site councils (Lindle, Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996). Among the responsibilities of the committee are selecting the principal, making personnel assignments, choosing textbooks and instructional materials (Finn & Walberg, 1994; Kentucky Department of Education, 2000). According to the Kentucky Revised Statutes (1995), these councils have control over eight policy areas: curriculum, staff assignment, student assignment, school schedule, instructional practices, discipline, extracurricular programs, and alignment of programs with state standards.

Although site-based decision-making has not been successful in all Kentucky schools, a majority of the schools have experienced an improved educational system for their students. Lindle (Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996, p. 23) remarked that their success has been due to several factors, including representation of stakeholders, support of political structures, focus on substantive educational issues, and democratic processes involved in committee decision-making. Kentucky educational reform has been both complex and unique. According to Finn and Walberg (1994), regardless of how comprehensive educational reforms may appear to be, situations and unforeseen problems will always materialize. Predicting all the consequences of educational reform is a near impossibility, let alone the small anomalies that are a natural component of transformation.

Numerous individual cities in the United States have implemented site-based management, even though such implementation was not a mandate made by legislation. In 1988 the Indianapolis Public Schools in Indiana initiated site-based decision-making after speaking with teachers' associations (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), 1993). After receiving positive feedback, the Indianapolis school district offered workshops for teachers, administrators and school board members to help develop skills in site-based decision-making. Another public school system that initiated site-based management at the local school level was the St. Paul school district in Minnesota. According to NCREL (1993), discussion regarding site-based management began in 1979, yet implementation did not come about until 1989. Schools interested in being a site-based campus had to apply to a committee known as the Professional Issues Committee for approval (NCREL, 1993). Cincinnati, Ohio's public school system underwent radical reform in the early 1990s. Many central office positions were eliminated and school-based councils were established (NCREL, 1993). These committees were designed with the intent of involving all stakeholders, just as the other cities previously mentioned.

In each of the school districts where site-based management has been implemented, site-based decision-making committees are a common factor. A common belief of site-based management is that decisions affecting students should be made by those persons closest to them (Bryk et al., 1998; Cheng, 1996; Finn & Walberg, 1994; Hatry, Morley, Ashford, & Wyatt, 1993; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993). School councils empower teachers, parents, and principals in a school to make decisions about what happens in their school building (Kentucky Department of Education, 2000), thus enabling them to meet the needs of their students and improve their education more effectively.

Definitions and Assumptions of Site-Based Management

Site-based management goes by many different names including school-based management, school-site autonomy, school-site management, school-centered management, decentralized management, school-based budgeting, site-based decision-making, responsible autonomy, school-lump sum budgeting, shared governance, the autonomous school concept, school-based curriculum development, and administrative decentralization (Clune & White, 1988). School-based management also refers to school restructuring (Fullan, 1993). In addition to its many names, it also has many definitions. Because of the varied definitions of site-based management, it is operationalized differently in numerous locations (Sirotnik & Clark, 1988). There is no standard operating model of shared governance (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). Empirically and theoretically, site-based management remains elusive, but definitions have been accumulating over time. Marsh (1992) stated, for example, the "operational definition of SBM... is decentralizing power, knowledge, information and rewards within school organizations" (p.10). For Etheridge, Valesky, Horgan, Nunnery, and Smith (1992), SBM was defined as "a formal inclusionary process whereby principals, teachers, parents, students, and community residents [stakeholders] participate in decisions" (p. 10). Candoli (1991) addressed site-based management as "a means for achieving a balance between accountability and freedom in all parts of the educational system" (p.34). Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) called site-based management an "organizational approach" (p.9) to reform. Though each definition is different, each definition promoted a major shift in the locus of decision-making control and changes in the make-up of those persons who make decisions (Weiss, 1992). Site-based management is generally described as an alteration in school governance that increases the authority of all stakeholders at the school site and in the school community (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1989).

Key Fundamentals of Site-Based Management

Despite the differences in the definitions of site-based management and its varied implementation, the overall philosophy underlying the definitions and implementations is quite similar (Clune & White, 1988). Two central themes, school autonomy and shared decision-making are at the center of this educational reform initiative (David,

1989). Several educational scholars share similar viewpoints regarding SBM:

“The backbone of school-based management is delegation of authority from district to schools” (David, 1989, p.46).

“The essence of school-site management is a shift of decision-making from the school district to the individual school” (Garms, Guthrie, & Pierce, 1978, p.278).

“At its core, school-site management is about decision making and decision makers. It is a process for devolving decision-making responsibility to the stakeholders at the school building level” (Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988, p. 3).

In addition to the afore mentioned viewpoints of site-based management, there also exist those analysts who described the importance of the inclusion of a varied group of stakeholders that is associated with site-based management:

“The key issue in site-based management is... management through the participation of the school system’s professional staff” (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993, p. 1).

“Essentially, the SBM approach involves creating formal structures...composed of building administrators, teachers, and parents at each school” (Malen et al., 1989, p. 251).

Conceptual Variations Within Site-Based Management

Regardless of the common elements agreed upon related to site-based management, variations continue to exist in the approaches to this method of restructuring. According to Wohlstetter (1990), many people see site-based management as a political issue. Those persons who are in this group see SBM as a “political phenomenon involving the transfer of power to local councils” (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993, p. 9). “SBM is a form of school governance” (Smith, 1993, p. 1) and, according to Malen et al., (1989), its focus is on the changing of authority configuration.

A second group of analysts views site-based management from a somewhat different angle. This group sees site-based management as an issue of democracy, an opportunity to “open up school systems to involve groups previously not involved in school governance” (Wohlstetter, 1990, p. 2). These reformers view “participatory decision-making as a collaborative approach in which superordinates and subordinates [including community members] work together as equals in an attempt to identify, analyze, and solve problems that face the organization” (Wood, 1984, p. 63). Murphy (1991) stated that analysts in this group believe that grassroots democracy proffers the most hope for enhancing education for students and that by living in a democratic culture, students will realize the connotation of democracy in society.

Leadership and organizational perspectives of site-based management are also observed by researchers (Murphy & Hallinger, 1993). Wagstaff and Reyes (1993) described SBM as a management concept in which the individual school becomes the essential decision-making unit within the educational organization, and thus, governance is redefined through the system. Conway (1984) perceived SBM as a form of organizational operations, whereas Lindquist and Mauriel (1989) more specifically observed site-based management as a “decentralized organizational structure” (p. 404).

Lastly, there are those persons who cling to site-based management as a “value position as well as a process designed to achieve certain purposes” (Burke, 1992, p. 36). Burke perceived SBM as a moral issue. Three beliefs about shared decision-making appear to hold true to those who adhere to the value position of SBM. Regardless of

instrumental outcomes, significant participation of stakeholders is always appropriate. Because teaching is an ethical activity, decisions affecting students in the classroom should be directed by the teachers themselves. Finally, site-based decision-making serves as a moral set of guidelines by which students can adjust their conduct.

Variations in the Implementation of Site-Based Management

Site-based management is implemented in a variety of ways in districts and schools across the United States. One of the reasons for the differences in implementation is a variation in focus. According to Clune and White (1988), many districts judge SBM as more of a mind set or disposition than a structured system. Malen et al. (1989) stated that “the emphasis is more on the spirit of the approach than the details of the arrangements” (p. 8). From this statement, Malen and colleagues indicated that key parameters are set in place by districts regarding site-based management, but explicit details of the governance process is left up to the individual school (Hill & Bonan, 1991). In a study conducted by Smith (1993), the conclusion was that districts supplied insufficient clarification of the roles teachers were to play in the decision-making process, and that districts gave little assistance as to how site-based management should be implemented. Ambiguity left by the districts caused teachers to build their own varying definitions of site-based management (Smith, 1993). During the investigation of Chicago’s school reform conducted by Hess (1992), he found that the first two years of site-based management were a time of “informal negotiations” (p. 8) during which shared decision making began to take on meaning.

Another cause of the variations in site-based management rests in the fact that districts initiate diverse implementation strategies (Murphy & Hallinger, 1995). Some districts have chosen an incremental implementation of SBM, whereas others established consultative relations before moving on to more shared measures (Hill & Bonan, 1991). Also noted by these authors is that some schools volunteered to participate in shared decision-making, whereas others were coerced into doing so. Clune and White (1988) added that the number of schools from district to district implementing SBM varied greatly.

Adding to the variance of focus regarding site-based management was the role played by the local education agencies. Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) reported that some local education agencies tended to focus on just one link of SBM, such as decentralization, whereas others focused on other links such as the issue of involving stakeholders in various areas of decision-making. Consistency from one local education agency to another within any given state did not exist, therefore varying degrees of site-based management were being implemented with no uniformity.

In addition to a variation in focus, the complexity of shared governance also brought about varied implementation of site-based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995). In some districts, the major focus of school governance involves restructuring the teacher/administrator relationship by creating equitable influence relationships between the administrators and teachers (Marsh, 1992). Marsh also indicated that other districts focus more on external influences when implementing site-based management, such as involving the parents and key community members in school decisions. Even when all stakeholders are actively participating in the decision-making process, representation still varies from school to school (Murphy & Beck, 1995).

Complexity of shared governance also involves the latitude of involvement provided for under the decision-making process. Stakeholder involvement can include simply the offering of opinions by committee members to the administrator through to the complete involvement in the making of final decisions (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). Imber and Duke (1984) suggested that such variance in the scope of stakeholder involvement can affect the manner in which a problem is defined, what alternatives are suggested to solve the problem, and how a final option is ultimately selected. What is true for the scope of stakeholder involvement also holds true for all other aspects of site-based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995). The model being implemented in one school is quite likely being implemented differently at another school. Thus, no customary adaptation or mode of site-based management exists. Operating

under the umbrella of site-based management, schools have varying degrees of control over and involvement in decisions regarding curriculum, budgeting, instruction, and personnel (Wagstaff & Reyes, 1993). Wagstaff and Reyes also specified that the manner in which teachers and parents were being involved in decision-making varies greatly from one educational institution to another institution.

Site-Based Decision-Making and Spheres of Influence

Investigators have delineated three broad spheres of influence, or domains, of site-based management—budgeting, curriculum, and personnel (Gips & Wilkes, 1993). In addition, goals and organizational structure have been added to these domains by Hill and Bonan (1991). Freedom to develop goals is perhaps one of the most important aspects of self-governing schools. Clark and Meloy (1989) remarked that well-developed goals include the values on which collaborative action can be taken. They also represent “agreement of principles” (Hill & Bonan, 1991, p. 29) that aid in the solution of daily matters. Ultimately, control over its mission enables a school to create a distinctive culture and climate that allows it to meet the needs of the local community (Dade County Public Schools, 1989).

No area of site-based management has received as little attention as control over missions, goals, and values (Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). Most teachers operating under site-based management are limited to being included in decisions involving operational issues rather than having a voice in overall vision and direction of the institution (Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). Because school boards continue to formulate and define districts’ goals, an idea exists that local schools need not concern themselves with focusing on goals (Lindelow, 1981). In addition, many educators view a major component of site-based management as developing the school improvement plan and believe that the school mission and goals will emerge from the development and implementation of these plans (Trestrail, 1992). However, developing a school improvement plan without predetermined goals is like putting the cart before the horse. The hope that a mission and goals will naturally follow the development of an improvement plan is overly optimistic (Murphy & Beck, 1995).

Another aspect of site-based management is control over the budget. Autonomy in the sphere of finance is affected in numerous respects. Brown (1990) pointed out that SBM brings about a change in the manner in which resources are allocated to schools. Site-based management calls for districts to allocate a lump sum of money to the schools, not to determine how that money is to be spent (Clune & White, 1988). Such an allowance by site-based management permits stakeholders at the school-level to decide how the money will be dispersed. Hannaway (1992) noted that the larger the sum of money allocated to a school, the greater the amount of decentralization.

A key subissue underlying the spending of schools’ money is the extent to which those schools are able to spend the money as they wish, such as purchasing from vendors outside the district (Guthrie, 1986). Wohlstetter and Buffet (1991) stated that schools operating under site-based management generally have greater flexibility regarding how they spend their money and who they purchase from than schools operating under the traditional model of school governance. The greater the decentralization in a district, the greater the ability for empowered site-based managed schools to purchase what they need to meet their students’ needs (Hill & Bonan, 1991).

Closely connected to control over the budget is control over the hiring of school personnel. In districts with the least amount of decentralization, hiring is generally left up to the district, whereas districts that are highly decentralized give nearly full control to its schools over the hiring of staff and faculty (Lindelow, 1981). In successfully site-based managed campuses, Lindelow (1981) found that administrators and teachers, along with community members select candidates to interview and make a final decision, which is sent back to the district. Some decentralized districts permit their schools to choose how they use personnel funding, such as purchasing books or materials or hiring paraprofessionals instead of teachers with the money. In the most extreme cases of site-based management, control over the hiring of the principal is a decision left up to the site-based decision-making committee

(Chapman, 1990).

A third aspect of school-site autonomy is the ability to choose curriculum that meets objectives set by the board and district administration (Lindelow, 1981). School-based curriculum allows the site-based decision-making committee to determine which instructional materials should be used for instruction (Steffy, 1993). Clune and White (1988) reported, “Schools [operating under SBM] make decisions regarding the selection of textbooks, the selection of learning activities and supplemental instructional materials to be used, and determine the nature of alternative programs to be offered in the school (pp. 14-15).

The more in-depth the implementation of site-based management in a district, the more opportunities local communities have to be involved in the selection of theoretical approaches used in the schools (Watkins & Luci, 1989) and in choosing professional development that helps teachers meet the needs of the students. In addition, Guthrie (1986) stated that site-based management implemented extensively allows for effective monitoring and evaluation of local learning and teaching by the particular school.

A final sphere of influence related to site-based management is school organization. Site-based decision-making committees are free to change the fundamental delivery of instruction and the traditional set-up of the classroom (Short & Greer, 1989). Schools expansively implementing site-based management at the elementary level are drastically altering the manner in which students are grouped to form classes, such as changing age and ability combinations (Murphy, 1991). Murphy also mentioned that secondary schools with widely implemented site-based management have offered alternative instructional programs, core curricula, and outcome-based education to their students.

Empowerment Associated with Site-Based Management

Teacher and principal empowerment have great potential for assisting significant and enduring school improvement (Lagana, 1989). Empowerment is defined by Lagana (1989) as the “opportunity to take risks and to compete without repercussions of failure” (p. 52). Short and Rinehart (1992) suggested that empowerment is a process that includes collaborative decision making, teacher influence, professional autonomy, professional development opportunities, and a sense of self-efficacy. Empowerment facilitates growth for participants regarding decisions about their work and practice. Bredeson (1994) proclaimed that empowerment is autonomy that others recognize to be a progression, a sense of identity, an opportunity for autonomous professional behavior, and as a professional work environment. Finally, Lightfoot (1986) defined empowerment as “the opportunities a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority” (p. 9). Empowerment connotes a focused process that entails detailed communication and training. Involvement is what initiates empowerment and partnerships.

Empowerment of teachers, parents, and the community has been linked to effective school practices. Bredeson (1989) claimed that such schools have a positive climate, commitment, professionalism, ownership of problems, and independent problem solving. In addition, he found a relaxing of the hierarchical lines of governance, an increase in teacher collaboration, and a willingness campus-wide for all voices to be heard.

Nias (1989) pronounced that teachers who have been given opportunities to enter into discussions with other teachers and administrators, assume leadership roles, and are included in developing policies, goals, and objectives for the school are also more of an influence outside the classroom. Kreisberg (1992) has placed teacher voice at the heart of teacher empowerment. He believes that empowerment breaks the isolation that generally surrounds teachers’ professional experiences.

As teachers become more involved in the decision-making process, they gain more of a voice. Even as long ago as the late 1970s, participatory decision-making was taking place in schools across the United States.

Crockenberg and Clark (1979) noted that involvement of teachers and other stakeholders was limited by the nature of a particular issue, the degree to which teachers would be affected by the decision, and the teachers' willingness to take on the responsibility associated with shared decision-making. Allen (1993) conducted more recent research in which he found that even when teacher participation is encouraged within a school culture, not all teachers will accept the invitation to participate. He suggested that some teachers do not want to be involved in decision-making due to their philosophy regarding others' points of view, lack of interest in the issue under discussion, feelings of insincere invitation to participate, intimidation by others, lack of information available about a specific issue, and uncomfortableness with openly offering their opinions in the particular setting.

Site-Based Management and the Improvement of Student Performance

Advocates of site-based management argue that student performance is more likely to improve when educational governance is brought down to the decentralized school level as opposed to remaining at the centralized district level (Peterson, 1991). According to Peterson, principals and teachers will be more sensitive to the particular needs of students at a given school than will district-level administrators and personnel, because stakeholders at the local campus level know the needs of their students and campus best. Even sound educational reforms may falter if teachers who will be implementing the changes have not been involved in developing and planning those changes (David, 1989). Because site-based decision-making tends to improve morale, White (1989) stated that schools are able to attract and retain quality teachers, which ultimately effects student performance and achievement.

Some school districts have experienced improved test scores since implementing site-based management. A large, urban school district in Maryland recorded significant improvement in test scores district-wide after implementing a restructuring effort that included site-based decision-making (Murphy, 1990). In addition to test scores, there appears to also be some indirect evidence of increased student performance related to the implementation of SBM. Brown (1987) suggested after conducting a case study of two Canadian school districts that decentralized decision-making created an effective educational environment more conducive to learning. Students showed progress in areas such as usefulness and effectiveness of courses and the schools' emphasis on basic skills. According to Rosenholtz (1985), shared decision-making has led teachers to have an increased clarity of instructional purpose and method, which has led to improved instructional effectiveness. David (1989) pointed out that teachers who have substantive rather than advisory roles show greater satisfaction with their teaching positions.

On the other hand, some researchers have suggested that site-based decision-making has not significantly improved student performance (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Ogletree & McHenry, 1990; Peterson, 1991). According to Ogletree and McHenry (1990), the implementation of site-based management in Chicago was not always popular with the teachers. Many teachers did not believe that the school reform effort had caused significant increases in student achievement. Hess (1992) also discovered that Chicago schools had not experienced significant student improvement. Malen and other leading researchers (1990) indicated that the lack of improved student achievement came from piecemeal implementation. Due to lack of cohesion regarding implementation amongst Chicago schools, numerous site-based decision-making committees were still under control of the principal. Taylor and Bogotch (1992) suggested that participation in campus decision-making did not improve outcomes for students. The anticipated connection between participation and student improvement did not emerge. In Kentucky, Harp (1993) found that test scores at schools implementing site-based management indicated no distinct improvement over schools that had not made any changes.

Through the mid 1990s, some researchers showed minimal improvement in student achievement due to site-based management. However, several analysts have noted that the connection between site-based management and student achievement was being measured solely on test scores. Duttweiler and Mutchler (1990) called test data as the sole indicator of student achievement "inadequate" and "inappropriate" (p. 42). They suggested a much broader array of student assessment to assess more accurately the impact of site-based management. In addition, Malen et al.

(1989) proposed that the true impact of site-based decision-making is symbolic more than substantive on a school campus. According to Malen and his colleagues (1989), the fundamental purposes of site-based management are to help educators feel less stress, realign the school with the values of the community, and restore faith in the educational system. Epps (1992) also noted that parental and community satisfaction with student performance is a goal of decentralization reform.

Factors of Successful Implementation of Site-Based Management

Several site-based management guidelines for successful implementation have been suggested by pioneers of shared decision-making. Hall and Galluzzo (1991) recommended small, incremental steps to change as opposed to wide, sweeping changes that will be unfamiliar to teachers, staff, and the community. They stated that a school's needs should first be analyzed, then actions can be taken to meet those needs. As the faculty, staff, and community adjust to initial changes, additional components can then be added. Stine (1993) pointed out that no one right way exists to implement site-based management, however, he believed that specifics should be agreed upon at the outset—who is to be involved, desired size of the committee, and how to gather a representative group. In addition, Stine (1993) determined that the manner in which decisions will be decided also needed to be specified before the implementation of site-based management. Allen and Glickman (1992) reported that procedures, roles, and expectations needed to be made clear to all parties involved. Lack of clarity will lead to lack of progress. These researchers (Allen & Glickman, 1992; Hall & Galluzzo, 1991; Stine, 1993) also suggested that the committee needed to understand whether their role was an advisory one or one in which they are empowered to make decisions. Trust and support is a factor for success acknowledged by Hall and Galluzzo (1991). A lack of trust between administrators and teachers causes apprehension and site-based management is difficult to implement. Lack of support by administrators at the district level can also lead to failure, according to Hall and Galluzzo (1991).

Blasé and Blasé (1994) described several characteristics of schools with effective shared governance initiatives. They indicated that the members of the site-based councils at these schools are representative of the school community at large, and the chairperson of the council is seldom the principal. Special subgroups focusing on specific school related issues emerging from the site-based councils are formed randomly and include parents, teachers, students, faculty, and staff. In addition, Blasé and Blasé (1994) noted that principals of effective schools extend decision-making rights to the council representatives to equalize the authority of teachers and administrators. The principal is usually a member of the council, but is seen as one of the many as opposed to the leader of the council. Regular meetings of the council held at convenient times is another characteristic of schools successful in implementing site-based management. Furthermore invitations are issued and agendas are given to all school personnel. Blasé and Blasé (1994) pointed out that the meetings are conducted in a nonthreatening manner and action research is used to solve problems. Three additional characteristics according to Blasé and Blasé (1994) include shared school goals centered around instructional improvement, major staff development programs, and a focus of the council that goes well beyond mere technical and managerial matters to include instructional budgeting and personnel hiring issues.

Beyond the school setting, the school board and superintendent must also be supportive of the site-based management paradigm. They must trust the principals and site-based decision-making committees to implement the goals of the district at the individual schools in an effective manner (Myers & Stonehill, 1993). Guthrie (1986) stated that each school should have some form of annual performance and planning report that encompasses the extent to which the school is meeting its goals, how monies are being spent, and future plans for the school. Furthermore, training in the areas of decision-making, group dynamics, and problem solving for site-based decision-making committee members should be provided during the early implementation stages of site-based management (Myers & Stonehill, 1993). Myers and Stonehill also suggested additional training for principals to aid in improving leadership skills.

Some evidence, albeit quite limited, exists that site-based management is linked with better student attendance, lower suspension rates, and lower drop out rates (Mohrman, 1994). Some school districts across the United States have noticed a statistically significant increase in classroom performance and overall student achievement. The ABC Unified School District in Cerritos, California is cited as an example by Mohrman (1994), claiming improvements in student test scores due to the implementation of site-based management in its schools. Benefits of SBM include improved student learning, empowerment of stakeholders, and improvement in school climate (Liontos, 1994). In some situations, site-based management allows decisions to be delegated primarily to the principal without other stakeholder input, whereas under other circumstances, schools may implement governance through partnership and major faculty involvement (Hatry et al., 1993). Differences that affect decentralization efforts at various school levels include the size of the school, number of students and teachers, range of subjects taught, and methods of instruction, each carrying their own benefits from site-based management (Hatry et al., 1993).

Power shifted to the individual school offers significant benefits over focusing power at the district level. According to Stewart (1997), site-based management reflects the democratic ideal through participatory decision-making, because those persons affected by the decisions being made are involved in the decision-making process. Thus, teachers who participate in the decision-making process are more likely to have democratic classrooms than teachers not involved in school decision making in which students and the teacher work together to determine their needs, and they are all involved in developing some of their objectives and instructional activities to meet those established needs. In addition, site-based management incorporates new leadership roles, with school principals performing as facilitators, resource people, and managers of change (Stewart, 1997). Robertson, Wohlstetter, and Mohrman (1995) indicated that factors such as knowledge and skills, information, and leadership effectively enhance the implementation of curricular and instructional initiatives by teachers. Considering the findings of Guskey and Peterson (1996), schools often do not place adequate emphasis on curriculum and instruction when a lack of expertise is present amongst the faculty. Wohlstetter (1995) reported that faculty dynamically involved in successful site-based management consistently participated in staff development related to curriculum and instruction. The new leadership roles linked with site-based management indicate that leaders need to be concerned with involving all stakeholders in decision-making, nurturing fellowship, and sharing power with others (Wheatley, 1992).

Other benefits of site-based management have also been cited by Liontos (1993), the capability to improve the value of decisions; augmenting the reception of a decision and its implementation; bolstering staff morale, dedication, and collaboration; building trust, facilitating the acquisition of new skills for staff and administrators; and increasing school efficiency. Increased discretion over decision-making provides incentives for school staff to be more efficient according to White (1989). White also found that increased autonomy at the school site may help attract and retain quality staff. Lange (1993) studied six schools over a fifteen-month period that had switched to site-based decision-making. He found that when autonomy on the campus was acquired, better decisions were made than would have been made under a centralized school management system. Rosenholz (1987) suggested that autonomy improves performance.

In addition, Lange (1993) also discovered that trust improved school-wide as school personnel gained a greater understanding of the complexities involved with SBM and principals learned to revere the judgments of their faculty. Also in agreement with the previously mentioned benefits of site-based management are the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) (1988). In addition, these educational organizations added that as teachers and parents become more aware of the school's financial status, spending limitations, and the costs of its programs, the more apt teachers and parents will be to create realistic budgeting.

Similar to statements made earlier, these statements should be viewed tentatively by readers because, with

few exceptions, these statements are not based on quantitative, empirically-verifiable data. Interviews, observations, and document analysis, though valuable, are quite limited in any degree of generalizability. Thus, the assertions mentioned in this section, though seeming quite plausible, have not been directly verified.

Challenges to Site-Based Management Implementation

Gips and Wilkes (1993) asserted that “decentralizing schools to a site-based model will not happen without resistance” (p. 1). Brown (1990) concurred:

The range of courses of opposition spans board members, central office personnel who may encounter loss of control of some functions, principals who do not welcome decentralization sometimes because of small school size, teacher associations who may lose control of some functions, staff unions who may be concerned with job security and due process, and individual parents who may not accept the change (p. 215).

Analysts have suggested that school boards often find site-based decision-making committees to be a threat to their own power (Guthrie, 1986). Therefore, doubt exists about whether school boards will be willing to delegate their decision-making ability to the degree site-based management requires (Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989). Lindquist and Mauriel (1989) did point out that literature does exist which makes evident the resistance of site-based management by school boards.

Another entity that stands to lose a certain amount of control under site-based management is the district central office. Because central office employees are well aware of this possibility, they tend to be the most active groups opposing the implementation of site-based management (Brown, 1990). Thus, as Clune and White (1988) alluded to, because central office administrators, which also includes the superintendent, are reluctant to share power, the effectiveness of site-based management is affected. Results found by researchers, who have conducted a number of studies, have shown the desire of central office administrators to block site-based decision-making (Brown, 1990; Smith, 1993).

Although many schools benefit from the implementation of site-based management, some challenges exist to its implementation. New demands are placed on teachers and administrators. Thus, all stakeholders must contend with a heavier workload and the frustrations that accompany a slower group process (Liontos, 1994). Liontos noted that increased time demands placed on stakeholders may be the greatest barrier to the implementation and maintenance of site-based decision-making. The implementation of site-based management requires that teachers extend themselves beyond their traditionally isolated environment to engage other teachers, negotiate, resolve differences, and make informed decisions (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Furthermore, confusion may be created about the roles and responsibilities of teachers, administrators, parents, and students (White, 1989). She noted that without clear site-based management guidelines, principals may not know when to consult teachers in regards to decision-making or when it is appropriate to make a decision on their own. David (1994) reported that during the initial stages of school reform in Kentucky to site-based management, schools found it difficult to find parents who were willing to run for election to the site-based committee due to parental apathy that had persisted for so long. She stated that a commitment on the part of the teachers, staff, and administrators to recruit parents was essential to successful restructuring in Kentucky.

Site-based management can also bring about frustration due to slower paced procedures than traditional models of school governance (Myers & Stonehill, 1993). Myers and Stonehill also pointed out that site-based committee members must be able to work together to plan, hence this takes time away from other aspects of their jobs. Furthermore, committee members need training in areas such as budgeting and planning to make effective decisions for the school. Johnson (1987) voiced another challenge to site-based management centered on the

plausibility of decisions due to the availability of funds. Site-based decision-making committees are charged with choosing instructional materials, deciding on equipment needed, both of which are limited depending on available resources. Personnel hiring decisions are not only dependent upon resources available but also on enrollment trends and teacher-student ratio trends according to Johnson (1987).

Another challenge faced by site-based management is the public. Concern exists that the public will make premature judgments regarding the goals set by the committee. Many stakeholders outside the school judge the success of reform by test scores. David (Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996) stated that when more than one desired outcome exists and the processes to meet those outcomes are not clear, it is difficult to assess progress in mid-stream. Therefore, developing new ways of measuring progress during the implementation of site-based management is critically important (Bryk, Deabster, Easton, Lupescu, & Thum, 1994). In accordance with a method for measuring progress, David (Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996) shared concern about participants not judging site-based management in terms of its goals. She pointed out that the process involved in site-based management takes up time and energy but quite often towards no good purpose. Only through observable progress and results will stakeholders freely put forth the effort necessary to make site-based management successful. Finally, most proponents of site-based management realize that this reform alone will not insure schools of success or solve all school problems such as low teacher salaries or societal tensions (White, 1989). For site-based management to be successful, all stakeholders must go further than simply a restricted focus on only the schools and their immediate communities.

Lessons Learned About Site-Based Management

There are a number of lessons that have been learned by schools that have implemented site-based management. A valuable lesson learned was the importance of empowering all stakeholders-teachers, administrators, parents, community and business members- by organizing teams that facilitate widespread involvement in the decision-making process (Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997). The most effective service of school-site councils was to coordinate and integrate activities of decision-making groups operating in the school (David, 1994). Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) added that the most effective school councils were given control over hiring and firing school staff, including principals and teachers. Further still, these authors claimed that districts that gave schools lump-sum budgets to allocate according to local need demonstrated the most highly thriving implementation of site-based management. Training offered to site-councils to enhance decision-making skills enables the representatives of the committee to contribute in more ways to the organization and more knowledgeably to decisions about improvements according to Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993).

Another lesson learned was to invest in ongoing professional development to strengthen individual and organizational capacity to initiate reform, particularly in areas of curriculum, instruction, teamwork, and budgeting (Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997). In addition, Ravitch and Viteritti (1997) communicated that within actively restructuring schools, professional development was aimed at the enhancement of the overall system capability to achieve goals rather than simply personal goals. Many successful site-based managed schools planned out multi-year commitments to professional development, which were to include all teachers and staff with regular follow-up sessions (Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997). Some schools, according to Ravitch and Viteritti (1997), even designed incentive systems to motivate involvement in reform efforts and rewarded those participants who produced desired results by both monetary and non-monetary rewards.

Facilitating shared leadership by encouraging teachers to lead work teams and allowing principals to focus on facilitating change and supporting the emergence of a learning community has been a advantageous lesson learned by schools implementing site-based management (Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997). These researchers suggested that principals at schools with flourishing school-based management models actively dispersed power, promoted a school-wide commitment to learning, empowered teachers to participate in school business, and encouraged the teachers to learn about student learning.

The success of site-based decision-making committees depends upon the leadership of the principal, as Osalov (1994) learned during the Kentucky statewide reform of 1990. Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) and Lindle (Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996) agreed that the principal is key to successful management. Principals must be open to the idea of the site-based committee and must permit the authority of the committee to be carried out. Who the teacher and parent representatives are on a committee and the perspectives they bring with them significantly impacts the ability of the committee to function effectively (David, 1994). The committee should be the body that looks at the big picture, such as philosophies, policies, and procedures, not the daily details of school operation (Osalov, 1994).

Site-based management has become a major educational reform movement in both elementary and secondary education. According to the Rutgers-based Center for Policy Research in Education, SBM has the potential to set major trends in both state and local policy (Clune & White, 1988). The National Governors' Association published *Time For Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education* (1986), which called for the endorsement of site-based management. Kentucky mandated statewide adoption of site-based decision making in its Education Reform Act of 1990, beginning in 1991/1992 and to be fully implemented by the 1996/1997 school year (Van Meter, 1991). School restructuring has become a foremost ingredient in national discussions regarding education, and teacher unions are among the leading supporters of site-based decision-making (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1989).

Clune and White (1988) pointed out that some of the conclusions of effective schools research, reforms involving decentralization, and the advice of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy are pertinent to site-based decision making. The Carnegie Forum (1986) called for increased teacher participation in decision making in order to create a more professional environment for teachers. Carr (1988) indicated that other characteristics associated with successful site-based decision making included high expectations of all students, a healthy school climate, and principal leadership. Site-based managed schools have the capability to initiate action to pursue their missions, resolve their own troubles, and manage community relations (Hill, Foster, & Gendler, 1990).

Yet another lesson learned is that much of the site-based management literature is unsupported by empirical findings. Instead, the characteristics stated as essential for site-based management, though quite plausible, were not derived by data sources that could be empirically verified. Though site-based management is being promoted as essential for school reform, evidence of its effectiveness in enhancing student achievement is quite limited.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Site-Based Management

School performance reports, on-site school review teams, and reports from principals and other stakeholders are accountability instruments that have accompanied site-based management efforts (David, Purkey, & White, 1989). Site-based management efforts in Kentucky were accompanied by accountability measures that included performance-based assessment procedures and monetary rewards to successful schools (Van Meter, 1991). David and her colleagues (1989) noted that some site-based management efforts include developing a variety of objectives, such as performance objectives, and creating procedures for ascertaining whether or not the specified objectives have been obtained. Site-based management initiatives have often been implemented with a monitoring system in place, but many of those systems have not been maintained after the initial implementation of the reform (White, 1988).

Few attempts had been made to measure the effects of site-based management on student outcomes in the late 1980s (Clune & White, 1988). Though district administrators were disinclined to foretell test score increases due to site-based management implementation, they were interested in construct accountability devices that matched the goals of their site-based decision-making efforts (David, Purkey, & White, 1989). The need for feedback to evaluate progress towards goals and accountability measures was recognized by districts and schools. Collins (1990) reported that the global evaluation of Dade County's site-based management effort did incorporate some student outcome

measures, such as achievement on standardized tests, report card results, student attendance, percentage of dropouts, and number of suspensions from school.

Little literature existed in the late 1980s and early 1990s regarding monitoring and evaluation of site-based management, yet some stakeholders were monitoring and evaluating SBM on their campuses. Carr (1988) reported that the schools in the Richardson Independent School District in Dallas County, Texas created annual performance reports that integrated process and product appraisals correlated to their tactical stratagem for improvement. A three-year project evaluation plan was developed in Dade County that called for two years of formative evaluation followed by a summative evaluation measuring the outcomes of site-based decision-making (Collins, 1990). Through formative evaluation, the Dade County school district measured the teachers' awareness and attitude toward site-based management and their opinions regarding the school's climate using the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire. In addition, formative assessment included the surveying and interviewing of principals to gain insight on their perspective of the implementation of site-based management initiatives. Because no guarantees exist that site-based management will fulfill all its promises without guidance, Malen et al. (1990) suggested that districts and schools needed to conduct on-going assessments of site-based management programs to identify the conditions necessary for successful implementation.

Emergent Research Regarding Site-Based Management (SBM)

A growing body of literature that directly and indirectly addresses site-based management is available. To date, however, a large portion of the site-based decision making literature consists of position papers, testimonials, conceptual guides, and reports of advocacy (David, 1989; Malen et al., 1990). Clune and White (1988) noted that little empirical research had been conducted regarding site-based management in the late 1980s, however, the number of research studies is increasing as SBM becomes more widely accepted (Blasé & Blasé, 1997).

Some researchers focused literature on how site-based management works in respect to decentralized decisions and how SBM is carried out (Bailey, 1991; David, 1989; White, 1989). Case studies contain descriptions of site-based management operations (Sickler, 1988). Such research has brought about the hypothesis that decentralization at the school level will stimulate organizational renewal, strengthen school-wide planning, improve morale and school climate, improve instruction, foster characteristics associated with effective schools, and increase student achievement (Hatry et al., 1993). Readers should note that this statement is a hypothesis that merits empirical investigation.

Of the literature that does exist, researchers have focused on the rationales and theories underlying site-based management. One of the most important theories is that decisions affecting the educational outcomes of students should be determined by teachers, those persons closest to the students, because they are more knowledgeable of the problems and requirements of the students (Clune & White, 1988). This viewpoint has been supported by groups such as the American Federation of Teachers, the National Governors' Association, and the 1986 Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession since the conception of site-based decision-making (Conley & Bacharach, 1990).

Another theme, which has become a key feature of site-based management is the idea of participatory decision making and school organizational culture (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Cuban, 1988). Site-based management is consistent with decentralization and participatory management efforts in the business and industrial arenas according to Prasch (1990). Carr (1988) has linked organizational culture and participatory decision making to the organizational excellence theories of Peters and Waterman (1982). Readers should note that these themes have not been empirically verified. Though plausible, further investigations are necessary to ascertain the validity of these themes.

Research Concerns of Site-Based Management

Though positive literature exists regarding the premises of site-based decision-making, some concerns have been raised by researchers concerning its ability to impact education (Hatry et al., 1993). According to Elmore (1991), SBM is short of a precise clarification or system for converting organizational changes into changes in instructional procedure and learning. Additionally, he believed that site-based management has been implemented with constraints of existing knowledge, which could negate the overall performance of schools. Making a similar point about implementation was Fullan (1993) who stated that rapidly implementing new paradigms creates confusion, ambiguity, and conflict, which could lead to regression instead of progression. For reform such as decentralization to succeed, the organizational culture of the school must be conducive to change (Fullan, 1993).

Researchers have raised still other concerns about the potential of site-based management to impact teaching and learning (Fullan, 1993; Taylor & Teddlie, 1992; Weiss, 1992). According to Taylor and Teddlie (1992), research regarding the improvement of teaching practices due to the implementation of site-based management has been neglected. However, Taylor and Teddlie indicated that new teaching practices brought about by SBM were not impacted by greater participation in decision-making through the study of one district well known for its site-based management initiative.

Weiss (1992), who conducted another study, found no evidence that teacher participation increased the schools' focus on curriculum planning or pedagogy. However, schools observing decentralization had adopted more of the current educational reform initiatives such as team teaching and block scheduling. Weiss (1992) also noted that these schools may have promoted greater teacher ownership of such initiatives due to shared decision-making.

In addition to these concerns, these researchers wish to stress the necessity of verifying the importance of site-based management, rather than relying on assertions of its importance. Moreover, longitudinal studies of its implementation are critical. Though we believe that site-based management is a significant school reform effort, belief, in and of itself, is not a sufficient reason for schools to implement site-based management.

Training for Site-Based Decision-Making Committees

There are those persons who claim, however, that many stakeholders lack training. Site-based management is time consuming and frustrating, and the implementation of SBM varies widely from school to school (Blasé & Blasé, 1997). Lonnquist and King (1993) noted that teachers involved in a shared governance educational setting must become leaders, thus, principals must take on the added challenge of developing teachers' talents. According to Ganopole (1991), teacher participation in shared governance has been linked to several factors: the extent to which school administrators deem teacher input to be important; the amount of confidence administrators have in their teachers to make informed decisions; and the degree to which administrators believe teachers have a right to make fundamental decisions. Prawat (1991) reported that the key to empowerment of stakeholders is cultivating various methods of communication. This cultivation includes creating a supportive environment in which people can express themselves without fear of reprisal regardless of whether the stakeholder is a teacher or a community member (Blasé & Blasé, 1997).

School system personnel interviewed by Hatry and colleagues (1993) indicated all school-level personnel needed some training in site-based management theory and practices, even if they were not on a site-based decision-making committee. They added that some educators who were interviewed believed the members of the decision-making committees should have more specific, intensive training regarding site-based management to facilitate better communication skills within the committees. According to Hatry and his colleagues (1993), the single most frequently mentioned training needed was decision sharing for principals. Many teachers and other stakeholders believed that site-based management has been implemented on their campuses in name only; principals were unwilling to empower other interested parties to make focal decisions. Principals need to receive training that will encourage them to decentralize decision-making in their schools.

Site-based management is not intended to be an inflexible set of regulations for school administrators and teachers to follow. According to David (1989), site-based management is expected to be set up differently from one district to the next and from one school year to another depending on the students' needs. She also affirmed that the goal of site-based management is to empower staff and other stakeholders by affording authority, flexibility, and resources to aid in solving educational problems specific to their schools. Through a variety of research, researchers have suggested that without increased autonomy, schools are unlikely to change from traditional models of governance. In addition to autonomy, schools must also have support from the district (David, 1989). According to Murphy and Beck (1995), support on an expansive range of fronts is necessary: time, money, technical assistance, and professional development. Site-based management in its most extreme form imparts the opportunity for a more democratic and community-based school governance (Fraser, 1997).

From existing research, evidence exists that site-based management takes a long time to implement. Districts that have successfully decentralized decision-making have taken between 5 to 10 years to fully implement site-based management (Sickler, 1988). Furthermore, these districts have learned through trial and error and experimentation. Site-based management enhances ongoing school development and overall school effectiveness, yet the change from external control to local autonomous governance is not easy (Cheng, 1996). Cheng also stated that all stakeholders must understand the nature of school change and need to be given training regarding the management of that change. To secure the benefits of site-based management, the entire community must understand that public education is a public responsibility; all stakeholders must share the responsibility (Kearns & Harvey, 2000). Site-based management must also cultivate the deep involvement of teachers and parents in the school community to bring about academic excellence (Murphy & Beck, 1995).

Another important factor in the success of site-based management is the effect it will have on student learning and achievement. "If student performance is not enhanced, then site-based management may just be another bureaucratic effort at restructuring that has failed to affect student learning in a meaningful way" (Ellis & Fouts, 1994, p. 79). Researchers have shown some improvement in student achievement, whereas other researchers do not indicate any change (Cotton, 1992; Peterson, 1991). Murphy and Beck (1995) suggested, "At its core, site-based decision-making must become a strategy for enhancing the education of students. In order to be successful, shared decision-making processes will have to wrap around powerful conceptions of learning and teaching" (p. 179).

Critique of Site-Based Management Research

In this exhaustive review of the extant literature on site-based management, two statements are in order. First, readers should note that this field of study is only about 15 years old. Thus, the available literature, regardless of quality, is quite limited. Second, exploratory research, used in the investigation of new areas such as site-based management, is primarily valuable for its generation of hypotheses. These hypotheses are then examined through the use of more verifiable techniques than possible in exploratory research.

Yet another consideration for readers is that many assertions have been made regarding the characteristics of effective site-based management, despite a database for their validity. Thus, the factors that are essential for site-based management to be effective are not fully known at this time. In fact, the extent to which site-based management influences student performance is still largely unknown.

Discussion

In Part I of this two-part series, readers were provided with an extensive review of the literature to provide a

context for the use of site-based management as an educational reform initiative. Systems theory and the nature of school reform, particularly reform efforts through collaboration, were examined as well components involved in implementing and maintaining changes such as would be required in site-based management. In Part II, we focused our discussion on site-based management itself as an educational reform initiative. After discussion the present status of site-based management, we addressed legislation in which site-based management was developed and implemented in many states. Then the assumptions and factors involved in site-based management were delineated. Numerous authors in the area of site-based management were discussed, as were their suggestions for successful implementation of site-based management. Empirical research and the limitations of the few available empirical studies were presented.

Site-based management focuses on changing systemic thinking and emphasizes the need for the decentralization of decision-making from the upper echelon of the school district to the local campus level. As is evidenced by research, site-based decision-making can only facilitate desired change on a campus if both district and desired change on a campus if both district and community and community support are available. In addition, all stakeholders must be involved in school governance in some fashion, even if not as an acting member of a planning and decision-making committee. Input from as many teachers, parents, community members, and business members as possible is necessary to create a collaborative environment where the voices of the usually unheard become the heard. Finally, to be a truly effective site-based managed school, researchers suggested that teachers and administrators must be in agreement regarding the extent and degree of site-based decision-making on their campus. Without this necessary shared mindset, little likelihood exists that the school can access its full capacity for autonomy.

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