RESEARCH

Report on an Educational Program
Department of Research and Accountability

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2002–03

Houston Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SURVEY RESULTS: 2002–03

Program Description

The shared decision-making process has now been under implementation in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) for over ten years. This process was adopted to encourage empowerment and decentralization within the nation's seventh largest district by providing greater control at the school/campus level. Specifically, each HISD school was required by state and district policy to select a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) to assist the principal with the development, review, and revision of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), which is designed to meet all of the needs of the students served by the school. The SDMC was authorized to work with the principals to:

1. Select methods to assess the academic achievement performance of all students;
2. Set campus performance objectives;
3. Identify how campus goals will be met by all students;
4. Determine the resources necessary to implement the SIP;
5. Identify staff needs and their role in the implementation of the SIP;
6. Set time lines for reaching the goals and objectives established in the SIP; and
7. Measure progress toward the performance objectives to ensure that the SIP is resulting in academic achievement.

SDMCs are also designated to be instrumental in the decision-making process in the areas of planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization. SDMCs are comprised of teachers, other school personnel (librarians, teacher aides, secretaries, etc.), parents, community members, and business representatives.

The District Advisory Committee (DAC) has now been under implementation in HISD for over ten years. Under state statute, the planning and decision-making process is presented as an integrated process (TEC 11.251). Specifically, each district is required by state and district policy to select a District Advisory Committee to assist the district in six areas in accordance with HISD procedures. The six areas include planning, budget, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organizations. The DAC is authorized to work with the district to:

1. Approve all district-wide staff development activities;
2. Provide input on issues and concerns that affect HISD's schools and district; and
3. Address six areas (planning, budget, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization) as interrelated factors that contribute towards accomplishing school improvement efforts.

Sample agenda items have included drafts of the 2002–2003 school calendar, district staff development, district budget updates, review of the student code of conduct, and summer school review. The DACs were comprised of classroom teachers, professional staff, parents, community members, and business representatives.

The purpose of the surveys was to determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on their schools' SDMCs or the district's DAC during the 2002–03 school year. Surveys were administered in the spring of 2003 to the DAC and all school SDMCs in HISD. The surveys were designed to allow committee members to give their opinions about general committee procedures such as school planning, training/technical assistance, and experiential/perceptual effectiveness.

Findings

Participants
- There were 813 school personnel, 35 other community stakeholder and 10 not identified SDMC members who returned surveys for a total of 858. Among members who returned the survey, 94.7% were school personnel and 4.1% were other stakeholders (parents, community members, and business partners). Specifically, the highest return rate was by classroom teachers with 58.3% and the lowest was by business partners with 0.7%.

- DAC survey respondents consisted of members employed by the district and members not employed by the district. Of the 35 DAC respondents, classroom teachers had the highest response rate (51.4%), followed by parents (14.3%), community members (11.4%), business partners (11.4%), and other school based professional staff (11.4%). Of the 22 DAC respondents employed by the district but not located in a school, 11.4% worked in central office, while 2.9% worked in administrative district offices.

General SDMC Procedures and Activities
- The SDMC members were asked how long they had been a member of the SDMC. The largest percentage of respondents had served 1–2 years (43.3%) and the other respondents were almost equal with less than a year and more than two years (26.9% and 29.8%, respectively). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (79.4%). The majority also felt that meeting monthly was "just right" in the amount of times (86.0%). When meetings were scheduled, 92.9% of the respondents felt that they had received notice in a timely fashion.

Overall Quality of SDMCs
- The largest percentage of responses to all questions was "excellent" and all questions received a majority of excellent and good responses. Notable fair to poor responses were found for questions relating to modifications for special needs students, student grouping patterns, input on staffing patterns, and student services.

SDMC Experiential/Perceptual Items
- Upon examining the multiple response items, several trends became evident. First, the respondents indicated that their SDMC committee was well organized and the school staff supported the recommendations of the committee. Second, committee recommendations were reached by a consensus. Third, respondents felt comfortable when expressing their thoughts in meetings. Finally, although the respondents (87.0%) overwhelmingly agreed with the statement "Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC", only 78.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement "The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations".

SDMC Open-ended Questions and Items
- Of the 858 surveys returned, 537 (62.6%) responses were received for "How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?" The highest response was that the SDMC has helped the school (34.8%) followed by a recurring theme echoed by 15.3% of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice to share their opinions and ideas. The third highest thematic category was that the SDMC allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders (10.6%).

- There were 447 respondents (52.1%) who answered the question "How could the Shared-Decision Making process be improved?". The most popular answer was that SDMC committees should have real power (23.3%). This category, comprised of 104 responses, was followed by an indication that the SDMCs were effective (16.1%) and a need to meet more regularly (16.1%). This was followed by a need for more parent and community involvement (13.9%).

DAC Experiential/Perceptual Items
- Of the 35 respondents, 85.3% agreed that the number of times their DAC met during the 2002–03 school year was just right while 8.8% suggested there were not enough meetings. Ninety-one percent of the DAC members indicated that notification of meetings were received in a timely fashion. However, only 52.9% indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members was very fair, followed by 20.6% indicating that the procedures were somewhat fair and 26.5% indicating not sure.

- Approximately, 71% of the respondents indicated that the "overall" quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers was either good or excellent, while only 5.7% indicated it was poor. Although a majority of the respondents (68.6%) indicated that the "overall" quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either good or excellent, 22.8% indicated that the DAC's involvement was poor.

- Although the respondents indicated that the DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner (94.2), only 77.1% of the respondents indicated their role as members of the DAC was clear. Inspite of this finding, 85.7% of the DAC members indicated they felt very comfortable and free to express their thoughts in meetings. In regards to the DAC meetings, the respondents indicated that minutes from the meetings were readily available (88.6%) in a timely fashion (80.0%).

DAC Open-ended Questions
- Of the 35 surveys completed, 28 (80.0%) of the responses were received for the question "How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?". Of the 28 surveys returned, 8 (28.6%) of the respondents indicated the primary benefit of the DAC to the district has been the increase in participation by school staff and other stakeholders (parents and the community).

- Of the 35 surveys, 21 (60.0%) of the responses were received for the question "How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?". The highest emergent category was the "other" category, which received 33.3% of the responses. The second highest thematic category indicated by the respondents was that the DAC was effective (23.8%) and more teacher input should be allowed (23.8%), which was followed by a need to provide more training to committee members on the role they play in the DAC (19.1%).

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND
DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SURVEY RESULTS: 2002–03

Introduction

The shared decision-making process has now been under implementation in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) for over ten years. This process was adopted to encourage empowerment and decentralization within the nation's seventh largest district by providing greater control at the school/campus level. Specifically, each HISD school was required by state and district policy to select a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) to assist the principal with the development, review, and revision of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), which is designed to meet all of the needs of the students served by the school. The SDMC was authorized to work with the principals to:

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7. Measure progress toward the performance objectives to ensure that the SIP is resulting in academic achievement.

SDMCs are also designated to be instrumental in the decision-making process in the areas of planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization. SDMCs are comprised of teachers, other school personnel (librarians, teacher aides, secretaries, etc.), parents, community members, and business representatives.

The District Advisory Committee (DAC) has now been under implementation in HISD for over ten years. Under state statute, the planning and decision-making process is presented as an integrated process (TEC 11.251). Specifically, each district is required by state and district policy to select a District Advisory Committee to assist the district in six areas in accordance with HISD procedures. The six areas include planning, budget, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organizations. The DAC is authorized to work with the district to:

1. Approve all district-wide staff development activities;
2. Provide input on issues and concerns that affect HISD's schools and district; and
3. Address six areas (planning, budget, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization) as interrelated factors that contribute towards accomplishing school improvement efforts.

Sample agenda items have included drafts of the 2002–2003 school calendar, district staff development, district budget updates, review of the student code of conduct, and summer school review. The DACs were comprised of classroom teachers, professional staff, parents, community members, and business representatives.

Methods

Data Collection

To determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on their schools' SDMCs or the district's DAC during the 2002–03 school year, surveys were administered in the spring 2003 to all schools in the Houston Independent School District. The surveys (see **Appendix B and C**) were designed to allow committee members to give their opinions about general committee procedures such as school planning, training/technical assistance, and experiential/perceptual effectiveness. Questions in these areas were based on a Likert-scale format or a multiple-response set format. The responses were completely anonymous. Respondents were also given the opportunity to critique the committees on open-ended questions that assessed how the committees benefited the school and how the committee process could be more effective.

The surveys were administered electronically via the internet. Surveys were provided to all possible committee membership groups: principals, teachers, school-based personnel, non-instructional staff, parents, community members, and business partners. The SDMC survey administration was initiated by notifying principals via email and they distributed the notice to other committee members. DAC members were notified directly by the district DAC coordinator. Then, the number of members at each school was obtained by the district coordinator. Notification of the surveys were then sent out to all SDMC and DAC members via the internet. The data obtained from the administration of the surveys were collected and aggregated.

Participants

The number of surveys returned are presented in **Table 1**. There were 813 school personnel, 35 other community stakeholder and 10 not identified SDMC members who returned surveys for a total of 858. Among members who returned the survey, 94.8% were school personnel and 4.1% were other stakeholders (parents, community members, and business partners). Specifically, the highest return rate was by classroom teachers with 58.3% and the lowest was by business partners with 0.7%.

DAC survey respondents consisted of members employed by the district and members not employed by the district (see Table 1). Of the 35 DAC respondents, classroom teachers had the highest response rate (51.4%), followed by parents (14.3), community members (11.4%), business partners (11.4%), and other school based professional staff (11.4%). Of the 5 DAC respondents employed by the district but not located in a school, 11.4%

Table 1:   Number of Surveys Returned by the SDMC and DAC Committe Members, 2002–03

	SDMC		DAC	
	N	%	N	%
HISD School Based				
Classroom Teacher	500	61.5	18	81.8
Other School Based Personnel	183	22.5	4	18.2
Principal	73	9.0	-	-
Non-Instructional Staff	57	7.0	-	-
Total	**813**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**
HISD Non-School				
Administration Office	-	-	1	20.0
Central Office	-	-	4	80.0
Total	**-**	**-**	**5**	**100.0**
NON-HISD				
Parent	20	57.1	5	38.5
Community Member	9	25.7	4	30.8
Business Partner	6	17.1	4	30.8
Total	**35**	**100.0**	**13**	**100.0**
Not Identified	**10**	**1.2**	**0**	**0.0**

worked in central office, while 2.9% worked in administrative district offices.

SDMC survey respondents represented all school levels within HISD. Those affiliated with HISD elementary schools had the highest response rate with 61% (see **Figure 1)**. In addition, all 14 HISD administrative districts were represented among respondents. The Southeast and Northwest districts had the highest number of respondents with 101 and 85, respectively (see **Appendix A**).

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis in terms of frequencies and percentages was employed when examining the Likert-type questions. Four response options were scored: e.g., "Strongly Agree" = 4; "Agree" = 3; "Disagree" = 2; and "Strongly Disagree" = 1. Items marked "NA", indicated the item did not apply. Using this method, a mean of 2.5 would indicate that as many respondents agreed as disagreed. Qualitative analysis based on emergent categories was used to summarize the data from the open-ended questions. Once the data were aggregated, emergent categories for the short answer questions were developed using existing categories from the previous administration of the surveys. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and presented using descriptive statistics.

Results

The descriptive data from the surveys were analyzed for the following areas: general SDMC procedures, SDMC and school planning, training/technical assistance procedures and activities, and experiential/perceptual effectiveness. Content analysis was used to evaluate the results from the open-ended questions that assessed how the SDMC benefited the school and how the SDMC process could be more effective, as well as soliciting any other comments about the SDMC process.

General SDMC Procedures and Activities

Seven of the multiple-response questions included on the survey were items related to general SDMC procedures and activities (see **Table 2**). The SDMC members were asked how long they had been a member of the SDMC. The largest percentage of respondents had served 1–2 years (43.3%) and the other respondents were almost equal with less than a year and more than two years (26.9% and 29.8%, respectively). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (79.4%). The majority also felt that meeting monthly was "just right" in the amount of times (86.0%). When meetings were scheduled, 92.9% of the respondents felt that they had received notice in a timely fashion. The next two questions dealt with the voting procedure. The majority of respondents answered that the ten-day nomination period was "just right" and that the voting procedure was "very
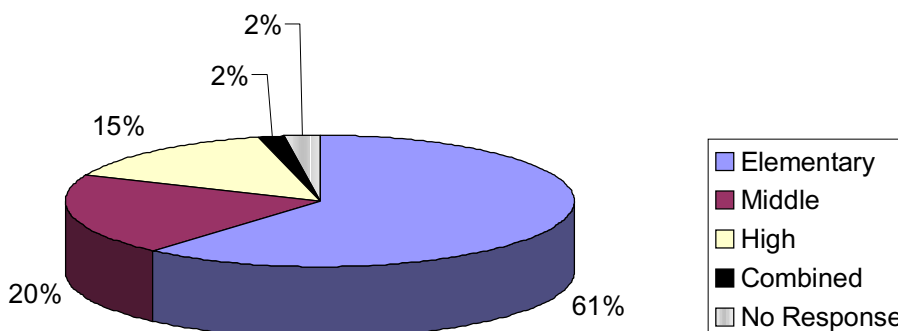

Figure 1: SDMC Response Rates by School Level, 2002–2003

fair" (78.6% and 73.7%, respectively). Finally, respondents were asked in what capacity does their school's SDMC operate. The largest percentage (43.1%) felt that they were the decision-making entity for the campus, 43.1%, followed by the advisory committee to the principal, 35.3%.

Overall Quality of SDMCs

Fourteen of the Likert-type questions included were items related to the quality of the SDMC's involvement in decision-making and school planning (see **Table 3**). The largest percentage of responses to all questions was "excellent" and all questions received a majority of excellent and good responses. Notable fair to poor responses were found for questions relating to modifications for special needs students, student grouping patterns, input on staffing patterns, and student services.

Four of the multiple-response questions included on the survey were items related to the degree of training and technical assistance SDMC members have received. Participating members were asked to rate these items in terms of the level of training and technical assistance they have received and whether further training and technical assistance is needed. The results from the survey for the training/technical assistance questions are presented

Table 2:   Response Rates to General SDMC Procedures and Activities Questions, 2002–03

	N	Less than a Year	1–2 Years	More than 2 Years		
How long have you been a member of the SDMC?	839	26.9%	43.3%	29.8%		
	N	1-2 times per Month	3+ per Month	Quarterly	Annually	Not Sure
How often did your school's SDMC meet during 2002–03?	844	79.4%	2.0%	14.9%	.4%	3.3%
	N	Too few	Just Right	Too Many	Not Sure	
The number of times your SDMC met was:	849	9.0%	86.0%	2.0%	3.0%	
	N	Yes	No	Not Sure		
Did you receive notice of SDMC meetings in a timely fashion?	836	92.9%	5.9%	1.2%		
	N	Too Short	Just Right	Too Long	Not Sure	
The ten-day nomination period for elections to the SDMC is:	846	2.7%	78.6%	13.7%	5.0%	
	N	Very Fair	Somewhat Fair	Not Very Fair	Not Fair at All	Not Sure
How fair are the voting procedures in SDMC elections for committee members?	848	73.7%	18.0%	2.0%	1.3%	4.8%
	N	Advisory Committee to the Principal	Decision-Making entity for Campus	Advisory Committee to the Principal, with approval of staff development	Not Sure	
In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?	844	35.3%	43.1%	7.8%	13.7%	

in **Figure 2**. The majority of the respondents (65.5%) received either training or some training on the role of SDMC. Seventy percent (70.2) of the respondents also received training or some training in developing School Improvement Plans and Team/Consensus Building. For site-based budgeting, the largest percentage of SDMC respondents had not received any training in site-based budgeting (37.8%).

SDMC Experiential/Perceptual Items

Twenty-six of the multiple-response items included on the survey were statements designed to assess SDMC members' perceptions and experiences. A five-point Likert scale was used as a format for these items: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "Not Sure. " The results from the survey for these items are presented in **Table 4.** The following statements were rated as "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" by more than 75% of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- "Our Shared Decision-Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year," 77.2%;
- "Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC," 87.0%;
- "Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC," 84.2%;
- "Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner," 87.2%;
- "My role on SDMC was clear," 84.5%;
- "It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role," 77.2%;
- "Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members," 85.7%;
- "I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings," 88.9%;
- "Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus," 89.4%;
- "The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year," 82.9%;
- "SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff and parents," 84.6%;

Table 3: Response Rates to Overall Quality of SDMC's Involvement in Decision Making and School Planning Items, 2002–03

|		Percent Responding				
Shared Decision-Making and School Planning Items	**N**	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**Don't Know**
Student performance–TAAS scores, Texas Education Agency accountability ratings, etc.	855	43.0	37.2	11.2	5.4	3.2
Curriculum issues.	855	44.6	33.6	12.3	6.9	2.7
Modifications for special needs students.	855	39.9	28.5	13.9	8.9	8.8
Student grouping patterns.	855	37.2	31.0	12.0	8.5	11.2
School waiver requests.	855	53.8	22.3	7.4	4.4	12.0
Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods.	855	38.4	29.9	11.0	8.2	12.5
Budget development and recommendations.	855	52.0	25.7	11.2	7.3	3.7
Use of discretionary campus funds.	855	45.4	25.3	11.2	9.7	8.4
Input on staffing patterns.	855	41.8	26.3	13.7	9.4	8.9
Campus-based staff development.	855	50.9	28.8	11.2	5.4	3.7
Organization of departments or teaching teams.	855	42.2	26.8	13.2	9.6	8.2
Communication procedures.	855	49.2	27.1	14.0	6.4	3.2
Instructional support – library, media, technology, etc.	853	36.3	39.3	12.8	7.0	4.6
Student services – counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.	851	29.3	35.3	16.0	10.1	9.4
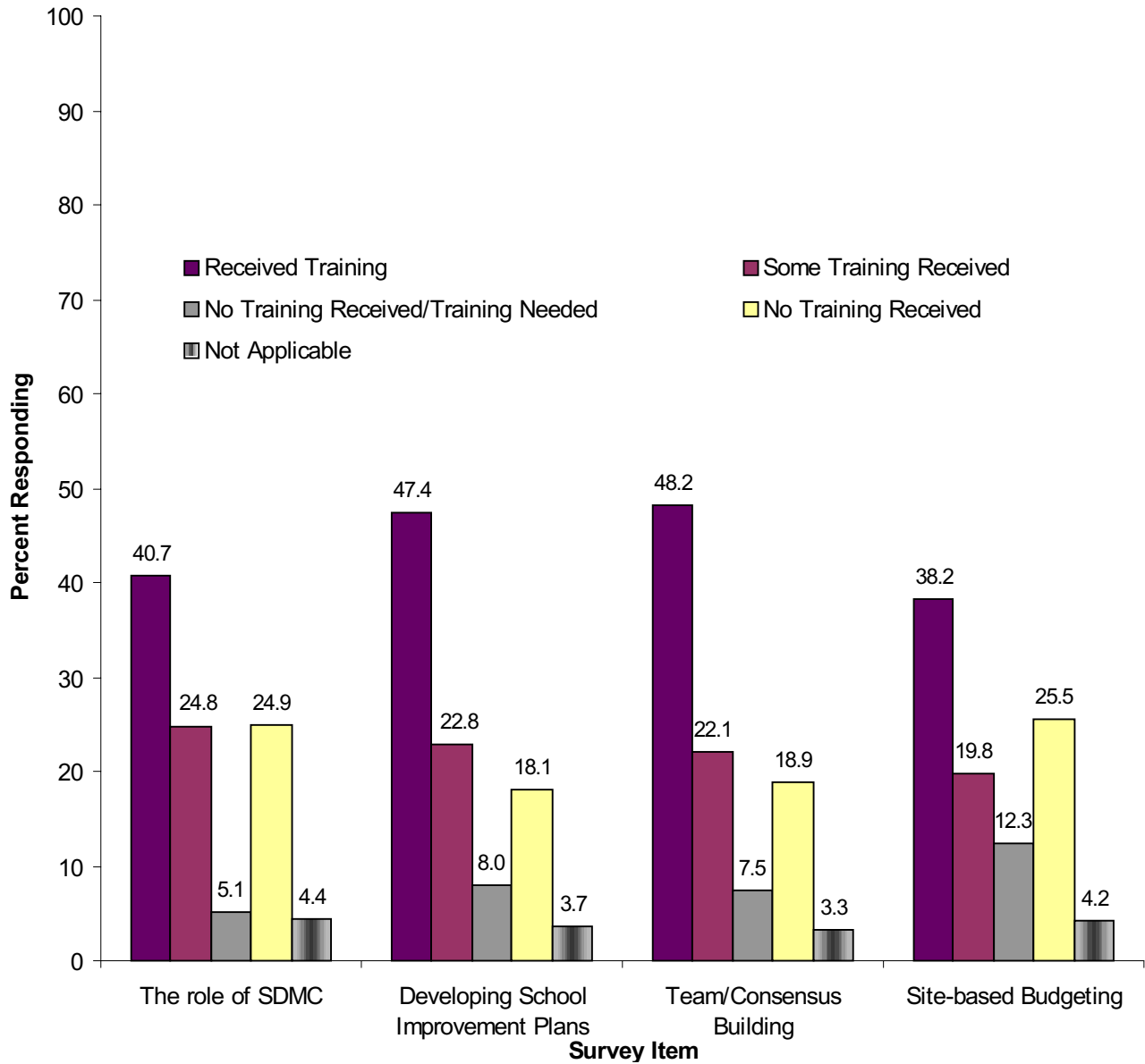
Figure 2: Response rates to training/technical assistance items, 2002–03.

- "SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion," 85.1%;
- "Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan," 79.4%;
- "The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations," 78.9%;

Upon examining the multiple response items, several trends became evident. First, the respondents indicated that their SDMC committee was well organized and the school staff supported the recommendations of the committee. Second, committee recommendations were reached by a consensus. Third, respondents felt comfortable when expressing their thoughts in meetings. Finally, although the respondents (87.0%) overwhelmingly agreed with the statement "Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC", only 78.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement "The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations".

The following statements were rated "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" by more than 25% of the participating SDMC members:

- "The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right," 30.3%;

Table 4: Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the SDMC Committee Members, 2002–03

		Percent Responding				
Experiential/Perceptual Items	**N**	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Not Sure**
Our Shared Decision Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.	849	27.7	49.5	11.5	4.9	6.4
In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.	851	23.4	51.4	10.0	3.4	11.9
Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.	847	42.3	44.7	4.5	1.9	6.6
Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	844	26.4	57.8	3.9	1.1	10.8
The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	846	20.0	53.1	2.5	1.1	23.4
Community members in our area supported our school plan.	842	22.0	47.3	1.3	1.0	28.5
Businesses in our community supported our school plan.	847	20.4	42.0	2.6	1.4	33.5
Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner.	847	41.0	46.2	6.6	3.0	3.3
My role on the SDMC was clear.	850	37.6	46.9	8.5	2.8	8.6
It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.	844	27.1	50.1	11.3	2.8	8.6
The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	841	16.2	44.7	22.7	7.6	8.8
The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	842	15.1	43.1	21.7	7.7	12.4
The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	840	13.8	37.4	23.7	9.3	15.8
Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.	843	35.0	50.7	3.4	1.7	9.3
Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.	844	24.6	47.2	9.5	2.7	16.0
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.	843	47.6	41.3	5.7	2.7	2.7
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	838	42.7	46.7	4.7	2.0	3.9
The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	842	43.0	39.9	7.6	3.4	6.1
During the school year, the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.	835	5.0	20.1	49.0	20.4	5.5
The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.	838	24.1	45.7	16.1	5.1	8.9
SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	836	42.6	42.0	6.5	2.2	6.8
SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	836	37.4	47.7	8.7	1.8	4.3
The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.	840	17.9	43.3	12.7	5.7	20.4
Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.	835	14.4	42.0	13.5	6.0	24.1
Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.	842	31.5	47.9	6.1	1.7	12.9
The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.	842	29.7	49.2	9.3	2.0	9.9

- "The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right," 29.4%
- "The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC planning and decision-making was about right," 33.0%;
- "During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed," 69.4%; and

An examination of the aforementioned statements reveals trends in the disagreement with the multiple response items. First, the respondents indicated that the level of involvement by non-HISD members (parents, community members, and business partners) was inadequate. Second, 69.4% of respondents disagreed with the statement regarding the regular changing of the SDMC schedule; thus indicating that 25.1% of the respondents suggesting that the schedule was changed regularly and 5.5% not sure. Third, the respondents indicated that the SDMC did not play an important role in campus-based professional development.

SDMC Open-ended Questions and Items

The SDMC survey employed three additional open-ended questions in order to collect information about the perceptions of the SDMC members. The questions allowed participating SDMC members to voice their opinions about the benefits of the SDMC, ways in which the shared decision-making process could be made more effective, and any other comments about SDMCs. Thematic categorical analysis was used to develop emergent categories and classify SDMC members' responses for each of the open-ended questions. The question requesting addtional comments was omitted from the analysis due to the lack of an adequate number of responses.

How schools have benefited from the SDMCs

Eight specific categories emerged from the analysis of the SDMC members' responses to the question "How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?" The emerged categories required at least five responses to be included in the analysis. **Table 5** presents the number and percent of respondents for the eight categories emerging from the question soliciting responses regarding the benefits of the SDMCs.

Of the 858 surveys returned, 537 (62.6%) responses were received for "How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?" The highest response was that the SDMC has helped the school (34.8%) followed by a recurring theme echoed by 15.3% of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice to share their opinions and ideas. The third highest thematic category was that the SDMC allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders (10.6%). However, one negative category found was that the SDMC, in general, has not benefited the schools (8.0%). For example, a respondent indicated that "Many staff members believe it is a total waste of time on our campus" while another respondent stated "It hasn't except give the principal an outlet to say he reviewed his decisions." The "other" category was comprised of 47 responses that varied greatly and could not be included in the identified eight categories.

How the Shared Decision-Making Process Could Be Improved

The eight defined categories emerged through the analysis of SDMC members' responses to the question "How could the Shared-Decision Making process be improved?" (See **Table 6**). There were 447 respondents (52.1%) who answered this question. The most popular answer was that SDMC committees should have real power (23.3%). This category comprised of 104 responses was followed by an indication that the SDMCs were effective (16.1%) and a need to meet more regularly (16.1%). This was followed by a need for more parent and community involvement (13.9%). The "other" responses category (14.5%) was comprised of 65 responses that varied greatly and could not be included in the other eight categories.

DAC Experiential/Perceptual Items

Fifteen of the multiple response items included on the DAC survey were statements designed to assess the members perceptions and experiences. A four-point Likert scale (Too Few, Just Right, Too Many, Not Sure) was used to assess perceptions regarding DAC meetings. Of the 35 respondents, 85.3% agreed that the number of

Table 5:   Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of SDMCs, 2002–03

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
SDMC has helped the school.	187	34.8
SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	82	15.3
SDMC has allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders.	57	10.6
SDMC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	43	8.0
SDMC has not benefited the school.	43	8.0
SDMC has facilitated more effective decision-making.	35	6.5
SDMC has brought cohesion among school staff and other stakeholders.	30	5.6
SDMC has given the feeling of ownership and leadership to the SDMC members.	13	2.4
Other	47	8.8
Total	**537**	**100.0**

Table 6:   Numbers and Percentages of Responses for Suggestions on How to Improve SDMCs, 2002–03

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
Committee with real power.	104	23.3
SDMC is already effective enough.	72	16.1
Meet more regularly.	72	16.1
More parent and community participation.	62	13.9
More SDMC training.	34	7.6
A clearer agenda and process.	21	4.7
More faculty involvement.	14	3.1
A teacher stipend.	3	.7
Other	65	14.5
Total	**447**	**100.0**

times their DAC met during the 2002–03 school year was just right while 8.8% suggested there were not enough meetings. Ninety-one percent of the DAC members indicated that notification of meetings were received in a timely fashion. However, only 52.9% indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members was very fair, followed by 20.6% indicating that the procedures were somewhat fair and 26.5% indicating not sure.

Table 7 contains the results from the multiple response items addressing the "quality" of the DAC using a five point Likert scale (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, NA). The results indicate that 68.6% of the respondents judged the "overall" quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for curriculum issues as good or excellent and only 11.4% indicated it was poor. Approximately, 71% of the respondents indicated that the "overall" quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers was either good or excellent, while only 5.7% indicated it was poor. Although a majority of the respondents (68.6%) indicated that the "overall" quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either good or excellent, 22.8% indicated that the DAC's involvement was poor.

Table 8 presents the results from nine of the multiple-response items designed to assess DAC members' perceptions and experiences. A five-point Likert scale was used as a format for these items: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "Not Sure." Among the experiential/perceptual items, the following were rated as "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" by more than 75% of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- "Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner," 94.2%;
- "My role on the DAC was clear," 77.1%;
- "I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings," 85.7%;
- "The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year," 94.3%;
- "DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents," 88.6%; and
- "DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion," 80.0%.

Upon examining the multiple response items, a key finding became evident. Although the respondents indicated that the DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner (94.2), only 77.1% of the respondents indicated their role as members of the DAC was clear. Inspite of this finding, 85.7% of the DAC members indicated they felt very comfortable and free to express their thoughts in meetings. In regards to the DAC meetings, the respondents indicated that minutes from the meetings were readily available (88.6%) in a timely fashion (80.0%).

DAC Open-ended Questions

The DAC survey employed three additional open-ended questions in order to collect information about the perceptions of the DAC members. The questions allowed participating DAC members to voice their opinions about the benefits of the DAC, ways in which the district advisory committee could be made more effective, and any

Table 7: Response Rates to the Overall Quality of the DAC's Involvement, 2002–03

Survey Item	N	Percent Responding				
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NA
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for curriculum issues.	35	34.3	34.3	14.3	11.4	5.7
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers.	35	40.0	31.4	20.0	5.7	2.9
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations.	35	28.6	40.0	8.6	22.8	0.0

Table 8:   Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the DAC Committee Members, 2002–03

Survey Items	N	Percent Responding				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.	35	28.6	45.7	5.7	2.9	17.1
Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.	35	77.1	17.1	5.7	0.0	0.0
My role on the DAC was clear.	35	40.0	37.1	5.7	8.6	8.6
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.	35	54.3	31.4	14.3	0.0	0.0
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	35	48.6	22.9	2.9	8.6	17.1
The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	35	91.4	2.9	5.7	0.0	0.0
The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.	35	45.7	28.6	14.3	8.6	2.9
DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	35	68.6	20.0	2.9	0.0	8.6
DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	35	68.6	11.4	8.6	0.0	11.4

additional comments about the DAC. Thematic categorical analysis was used to develop emergent categories and classify DAC members' responses for each of the open-ended questions. The question requesting addtional comments was omitted from the analysis due to the lack of an adequate number of responses.

How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?

When conducting emergent category analysis on the data submitted by the respondents for the question "How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?" five emergent categories were evident among the 28 respondents. Due to the small sample size, there was no minimum requirement for inclusion in the analysis. **Table 9** presents the number and percent of respondents for the five emergent categories. Of the 35 surveys completed, 28 (80.0%) of the responses were received. Of the 28 surveys returned, 8 (28.6%) of the respondents indicated the primary benefit of the DAC to the district has been the increase in participation by school staff and other stakeholders (parents and the community). As one participant noted, "All facets of the district and the community are represented." Second, the respondents indicated that the DAC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice: "It has been a voice that assits HISD's administrators in reviewing district educational goals and objectives." Third, the respondents indicated that the DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders: "Information is shared with individuals who otherwise would not have access to the staff who are responsile for budget, professional development, etc." The "other" responses category (17.9%) was comprised of five responses that varied greatly and could not be included in the remaining six categories.

How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?

Three specific categories emerged from the analysis of DAC members' responses to the question "How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?" The emergent categories required at least four responses to be included in the analysis. **Table 10** presents the number and percent of respondents for the three emergent categories.

Of the 35 surveys, 21 (60.0%) of the responses were received. The highest emergent category was the "other" category, which received 33.3% of the responses. Looking in greater detail at these responses, no consistent thematic reason was found. The second highest thematic category indicated by the respondents was that the DAC was effective (23.8%) and more teacher input should be allowed (23.8%), which was followed by a need to provide more training to committee members on the role they play in the DAC (19.0%). The "other" responses category was comprised of 7 responses that varied greatly and could not be included in the remaining four categories.

Conclusion

By following state and district guidelines, the Shared Decision-Making and the District Advisory Committees at HISD schools work to meet the individual and special needs of each school in the district by giving invested stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. This report is the third biannual review of the SDMC committees. The survey was designed to allow committee members to give their opinions about general SDMC procedures, SDMC and school planning, training/technical assistance procedures and activities, as well as experiential/perceptual effectiveness. Notification requesting participation was disseminated to all committee members serving during the 2002–03 administration in each of HISD's administrative districts.

Table 9: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of the DAC, 2002–03

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
DAC has allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders.	8	28.6
DAC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	6	21.4
DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	5	17.9
DAC has not benefited the school.	3	10.7
DAC has given the feeling of ownership and leadership to the DAC members.	1	3.6
Other	5	17.9
Total	**28**	**100.0**

Table 10: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing How the DAC Could be More Effective for HISD, 2002–03

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
The DAC is effective enough.	5	23.8
Allow more teacher input.	5	23.8
Committee members need more training on their role in the DAC.	4	19.0
Other	7	33.3
Total	**21**	**100.0**

In regards to the general procedures and activities of the SDMC committees, most responses were positive. The frequency and notices for meetings were positively perceived and handled well. The nomination and voting process also received approval. In response to the question "In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?" the answers varied. The most frequent answer was a "decision-making entity for the campus." The variation in responses indicated that individual schools use their SDMCs in different frequencies and capacities.

The overall quality of the SDMCs involvement in decision making and school planning was also found to be effective. Lower ratings were usually indicated when an SDMC committee did not address certain topics such as student services, staffing patterns, budget development, student grouping patterns, and special needs students. Since individual schools have more pressing concerns than others, it is not surprising to see a fluctuation in the percentages.

The overall experiences and perceptions of SDMC members were also positive. Questions regarding community members, business partners, and parents indicated that a large minority felt that there was not enough participation by these groups. In addition, subcommittees were found not to meet regularly at some schools. Therefore, more active recruiting of members outside the school is necessary for this lack of participation to be alleviated. In addition, the importance of subcommittees should be promoted.

The open-ended questions confirm the overall results of the data. SDMCs are effectively involving school members and some other stakeholders. Those who are involved feel empowered and believe that their SDMC is making a difference at their school. However, greater participation is needed outside of the school to reach the full potential of SDMCs.

This report is the second biannual review of the DAC committees. The survey was designed to allow committee members to give their opinions about general DAC procedures, planning, budget, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization. Notification requesting participation was disseminated to all committee members serving during the 2002–03 administration in each of HISD's administrative districts.

In regards to the general procedures and activities of the DACs, most responses were positive. The frequency and notices for meetings were positively perceived and handled well. However, only 52.9% indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC committee members was very fair.

The results indicate that the respondents judged the following as effective: 1) overall quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for curriculum issues, 2) the overall quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers, and 3) the overall quality of DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations. Finally, there was a general consensus among DAC members that the committee was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.

The open-ended questions confirm the overall results of the data provided by the DAC members. The DACs are effective; however, committee members need more training on their role in the DAC and more teacher input should be allowed.

Appendix A
Number of SDMC Respondents by HISD Affiliation and Administrative District, 2002–03

District	Principal	Teacher	School Staff	Other School Professional	Parent	Community Member	Business Partner	Not Identified	Total
Central	6	44	3	11	5	1	2	-	72
East	7	28	5	16	1	-	-	-	57
North	7	40	5	13	-	1	-	-	66
North Central	4	40	3	16	-	-	-	-	63
Northeast	4	47	7	17	1	2	1	-	79
Northwest	6	50	7	15	3	4	-	-	85
South	10	17	1	4	-	-	-	-	32
South Central	2	57	5	15	-	-	-	-	79
Southeast	5	63	7	21	4	-	1	-	101
Southwest	3	30	3	19	1	-	1	-	57
West	4	23	8	12	4	-	-	-	51
West Central	5	34	2	13	1	1	1	-	57
Alternative	1	2	0	3	-	-	-	-	6
Acres Home	9	25	1	8	-	-	-	-	43
Not Identified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10
Total	**73**	**500**	**57**	**183**	**20**	**9**	**6**	**10**	**858**

Appendix B
Survey of the Shared Decision-Making Committee, 2002–03

> Instructions: Please select your responses for each of the questions below. In addition, respond to short answer questions in the space provided.

1. If you are employed in the district, what is your position?
    a. Principal   b. Classroom Teacher   c. Non-Instructional Staff (eg. clerical, cafeteria)
    d. Other School Based Professional Staff (eg. Librarian, Assistant Principal, Counselor)
    e. Not applicable

2. If you are not employed by the district, what is your position?
    a. Parent   b. Community Member   c. Business Partner   d. Not Applicable

In what Administrative District is your school located? (Choose **one** district and fill in **only** the corresponding number)
3. a. Central   b. East   c. North   d. North Central   e. Northeast
4. a. Northwest   b. South   c. South Central d. Southeast   e. Southwest
5. a. West   b. West Central c. Alternative   d. Acres Homes

6. For what school level are you serving on the Shared Decision Making Committee?
    a. Elementary School   b. Middle School   c. High School   d. Combined-level School

7. How long have you been a member of the SDMC?
    a. Less than a year   b. 1–2 years   c. More than 2 years

8. How often has your school's SDMC met during 2002–2003?
    a. 1-2 times per month   b. 3 or more times per month   c. Quarterly
    d. Annually   e. Not sure

9. The number of times your SDMC met during the 2002–2003 school year was:
    a. Too few   b. Just right   c. Too many   d. Not sure

10. Did you receive notice of SDMC meetings in a timely fashion?
    a. Yes   b. No   c. Not sure

11. The ten-day nomination period for elections to the SDMC is:
    a. Too short   b. Just right   c. Too long   d. Not sure

12. In your opinion, how fair are the voting procedures in SDMC elections for committee members?
    a. Very fair   b. Somewhat fair   c. Not very fair   d. Not at all fair   e. Not sure

13. In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?
    a. Advisory committee to the Principal   b. Decision-making entity for the campus   c. Not sure
    d. Advisory committee to the Principal, with approval of staff development

> Shared Decision-Making and School Planning- Using the scale below, please judge the overall "quality" of the SDMC's involvement in decisions made to your school regarding the following topics:

            a. Excellent   b. Good   c. Fair   d. Poor   e. Don't Know

14. Student performance—TAAS scores, TEA Accountability Ratings, etc.
15. Curriculum issues
16. Modifications for special needs students
17. Student grouping patterns
18. School waiver requests
19. Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods
20. Budget development and recommendations

Appendix B (continued)

20. Budget development and recommendations
21. Use of discretionary campus funds
22. Input on staffing patterns
23. Campus-based staff development
24. Organization of departments or teaching teams
25. Communication procedures
26. Instructional support—library, media, technology, etc.
27. Student services—counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.
28. Other:

> Using the scale below, please indicate whether or not you have received training and/or technical assistance at any point in time in each of the following areas AND whether or not further training and/or technical assistance is needed:

a. Received training	d. No training received
b. Some training received	e. Not Applicable
c. No training received/Training needed	

29. The role of the SDMC
30. Developing School Improvement Plans
31. Team-building skills/Consensus-building
32. Site-based budgeting
33. What further SDMC training would you like?

> Considering the current school year (2002–2003), please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree   e. Not Sure

34. Our Shared Decision-Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.
35. In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.
36. Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.
37. Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.
38. The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.
39. Community members in our area supported our school plan.
40. Businesses in our community supported our school plan.
41. Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself an effective manner.
42. My role on the SDMC was clear.
43. It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.
44. The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
45. The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
46. The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
47. Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.
48. Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.
49. I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.
50. Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus/majority.
51. The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.
52. During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.

Appendix B (continued)

49. I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.

50. Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus/majority.

51. The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.

52. During the school year, the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.

53. The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.

54. SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members, parents, and community members.

55. SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.

56. The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.

57. Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.

58. Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.

59. The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.

Please answer the following short answer questions:

60. How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?

61. How could the Shared Decision-Making process be more effective?

62. Additional comments you may have regarding the Shared Decision-Making Committee Process:

Appendix C
Survey of the District Advisory Committee,
2002–03

Instructions: Please select your responses for each of the questions below. In addition, respond to short answer questions in the space provided.

1. If you are employed in a school, what is your position?
   a. Classroom Teacher
   b. Other School Based Professional Staff (eg. Librarian, Assistant Principal, Counselor)

2. If you are employed by the district, but not in a school, where are you located?
   a. Central Office   b. An administrative district office

3. If you are not employed by the district, what is your position?
   a. Parent   b. Community Member   c. Business Partner

4. The number of times the DAC met during the 2002–2003 school year was:
   a. Too few   b. Just right   c. Too many   d. Not sure

5. Did you receive notice of DAC meetings in a timely fashion?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Not sure

6. In your opinion, how fair are the school nomination procedures for DAC committee members?
   a. Very fair   b. Somewhat fair   c. Not very fair   d. Not at all fair   e. Not sure

Using the scale below, please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for the following topics:

a. Excellent   b. Good   c. Fair   d. Poor   e. N/A

7.   Curriculum issues
8.   District staff development waivers
9.   Budget development and recommendations
10.   Other:

Considering the current school year (2002–2003), please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree   e. Not Sure

11.   Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.
12.   Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.
13.   My role on the DAC was clear.
14.   I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.
15.   Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.
16.   The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.
17.   The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.
18.   DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.
19.   DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.

Appendix C (continued)

If possible, please answer the following short answer questions:

20. How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?

21. How could the DAC process be more effective?

22. Additional comments you may have regarding the DAC: