

MEMORANDUM

September 18, 2007

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Abelardo Saavedra
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, Research and Accountability, 713-556-6700

Attached is a copy of the 2006-2007 report of the Shared Decision-Making Committee and District Advisory Committee Survey Results. The purpose of the report is to determine the perceptions of general committee procedures by committee members who participated on SDMCs and the DAC during the 2006–2007 school year.

Some of this year's key findings are as follows:

- Forty-six percent (1,238 members) of the estimated 2,655 SDMC committee members and 62 percent (18 members) of the 29 members of the DAC responded to the surveys.
- Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that their SDMC operated as a decision-making entity for the campus, while 33.5 percent of respondents indicated that the committee operated as an advisory committee to the principal.
- In general, the overall quality of the SDMCs was rated by respondents as *good* or *excellent*.
- DAC members reported that the committee was well organized and that they were very comfortable and free to express their thoughts in meetings. However, some members also maintained that the committee is under-utilized in its capacity as an advisory committee.
- The current DAC committee is made up of solely of district staff and employees. As a result the committee lacks the input of parents, community, and business partners.

Should you have any further questions, please contact my office or Carla Stevens in Research and Accountability at (713) 556-6700.



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Attachment

c: Superintendent's Direct Reports
Regional Superintendents
Executive Principals
Mark Smith

RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

HOUSTON
Independent School District



Creating a College-Bound Culture

Shared Decision-Making Committee and District Advisory Committee Survey Results: 2006–2007



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2006–2007

Program Description

In 1992, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board of Education established and approved the campus-level planning and decision-making process. This process included the creation and maintenance of a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) at each school to review the district's educational goals, objectives, and major district wide classroom instructional programs. Each committee was designed to involve professional and non-professional staff, parents, community members, and business representatives in establishing academic and other performance objectives of the school for each academic excellence indicator adopted in the Texas Education Code (TEC §11.253, TEC §39.051).

The SDMC is required to meet at least once a year to discuss the performance of the school and the school's objectives. The committee must maintain a record of all decisions and significant discussion items. This information should be disseminated to appropriate school and district personnel as well as be available upon request for public review. Finally, the SDMC is required to fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Implement all pertinent campus-level planning processes;
2. Develop recommendations for the school budget;
3. Submit recommendations for the school curriculum;
4. Recommend changes in the school's staffing patterns;
5. Develop and approve the campus staff development plans;
6. Develop, review, and revise the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for the purpose of improving student performance for all student populations (after principal approval of the SIP, the SDMC presents the plan to staff for approval);
7. Review and make recommendations regarding the school's organizational structure, and
8. Establish procedures to obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input periodically.

In addition, HISD has also implemented the District Advisory Committee (DAC) under state statute, as an integrated process for planning and decision-making at the school level (TEC §11.251). The committee is designed to provide input to district staff in matters of planning, budgeting, curriculum, school organization, staffing patterns, and staff development. The DAC is to be composed of parents, community and business representatives, and HISD faculty elected by their peers. Since its inception, DAC has been responsible for providing input on the school calendar, district staff development, district budget updates, review of the student code of conduct, and summer school review.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on SDMCs and the DAC during the 2006–2007 school year. Surveys were administered in spring 2007 to all school SDMC members. 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. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What were the perceptions of SDMC members with regard to general SDMC procedures and activities, overall quality of the committees, adequacy of training received by members, their experiences having served on the committees, and some of the benefits to the school?
2. What were the perceptions of DAC members with regard to the general DAC procedures and activities, overall quality, their experiences in having served on the committee, and benefits to the district?

Key Findings

- Forty-six percent (or 1,238 members) of the estimated 2,655 SDMC committee members in the district responded to the SDMC survey, including 1,176 HISD employees and 62 non-HISD personnel. Among the HISD employees who returned the survey, 62.5 percent were classroom teachers and 11.2 percent were principals.
- DAC surveys were distributed to 29 members of the 2006–2007 committee, which included classroom teachers, other school-based professional staff such as librarians, assistant principals, counselors, and district administrators. Subsequently, 18 DAC members responded to the survey for a 62 percent response rate. Respondents included eight teachers, seven other school-based professional staff members, three regional office staff, and one central office staff member.
- Forty-three percent (43.3 percent) of respondents indicated that the committee operated as a decision-making entity for the campus and 33.5 percent of respondents indicated that the SDMC operated as an advisory committee to the principal. The largest percentage of respondents had served 1–2 years (40.6 percent), and a slightly lower percentage of members had served more than two years (33.8 percent). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (72.6 percent) and 83.2 percent of the respondents felt that the amount of meeting times were *just right*. In addition, 92.0 percent of the SDMC respondents indicated that they had received notice of meetings in a timely fashion.
- The majority of the responses to all but two questions relating to the overall quality of SDMCs was rated *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, use of discretionary funds, input on staffing patterns, student services, and student grouping patterns.
- There were several apparent trends on multiple response items that measured the perceptions and experiences of SDMC members. 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 consensus/majority. Third, respondents felt comfortable when expressing their thoughts in meetings. Finally, nearly eighty-six (85.5) percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC,” while 78.3 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.”

- Of the 1,238 survey participants, 680 (54.9 percent) responses were received for the item: “How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?” The highest response was that the SDMC has helped the school (31.5 percent), followed by 23.7 percent of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice. The third most prevalent thematic category was the only negative category and found that the SDMC, in general, has not benefited the school (10.4 percent).
- Of the 18 DAC survey participants, all (100 percent) agreed that the number of times the DAC met during the 2006–2007 school year was *just right*. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents felt that they received notice of DAC meetings in a timely fashion. In addition, 66.7 percent indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members was *very fair*.
- Forty-four percent of DAC respondents judged the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for curriculum issues as *excellent* and only 11.1 percent indicated it was *poor*. The majority of the respondents (72.2 percent) rated the overall quality of DAC’s involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers as excellent or good. The majority of the respondents (61.1 percent) indicated that the overall quality of DAC’s involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either *good* or *excellent*, while 16.7 percent indicated that the DAC’s involvement was *poor*.
- The vast majority (94.4 percent) of the respondents concurred that the DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner and that they felt very comfortable and free to express their thoughts in meetings (88.9 percent). However, 61.1 percent of respondents agreed that the DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents, and even fewer (50 percent) agreed that the minutes were provided in a timely fashion.
- Of the 18 DAC surveys completed, 11 (61.1 percent) responses were received for the question: “How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?” Thirty-six percent of the respondents indicated that HISD has not benefited from having a District Advisory Committee. On the other hand, 27 percent of the respondents indicated that a benefit of the DAC to the district has been to give teachers and other stakeholders a voice, while 18 percent indicated that DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.
- Only eight respondents (44 percent) addressed the question “How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?” The majority of the respondents commented that the DAC could be more effective by involving the committee early in the decision-making process, as well as by providing information prior to meeting to improve discussion.

Recommendations

1. To improve the effectiveness of SDMCs, schedule frequent and consistent meetings during the school year. Having regular meetings would allow the committee to be more proactive, (rather than reactive) to issues and developments concerning the school. Furthermore, meeting dates should be scheduled prior to the beginning of the school year to allow members of the committees enough time to plan to attend.

2. To enhance the functions of the role of the SDMC and its members, all SDMC members must be provided with up-to-date and continuous training in the areas of site-based budgeting, team/consensus building, community support/involvement, and school improvement plans. Additionally, all new members should receive training in the role and functions of SDMCs.
3. To fully utilize the capacity of the DAC as an advisory committee, the district should include and involve the committee earlier (in the brainstorming and planning phases) in the decision-making process.
4. To improve the dissemination of information from the DAC to other stakeholders, the committee should consider posting its minutes from the meetings on the district website or intranet portal for easy access by members, staff, and the general public.
5. To meet state legislation requirements, the DAC should seek to add non-HISD employees (i.e. non-employee parents, community residents, and business partners) to the committee.
6. Both SDMCs and the DAC should consider ways to allow for additional input and representation of the various departments, academies, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, as the Texas Education Code specifies the responsibility to establish “procedures...to periodically obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input” (TEC §11.253 (g)).

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2006–2007

Introduction

Program Description

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6. Develop, review, and revise the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for the purpose of improving student performance for all student populations (after principal approval of the SIP, the SDMC presents the plan to staff for approval);
7. Review and make recommendations regarding the school's organizational structure, and
8. Establish procedures to obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input periodically.

In addition, HISD has also implemented the District Advisory Committee (DAC) under state statute, as an integrated process for planning and decision-making at the school level (TEC §11.251). The committee is designed to provide input to district staff in matters of planning, budgeting, curriculum, school organization, staffing patterns, and staff development. The DAC is to be composed of parents, community and business representatives, and HISD faculty elected by their peers. Since its inception, DAC has been responsible for providing input on the school calendar, district staff development, district budget updates, review of the student code of conduct, and summer school review.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on SDMCs and the DAC during the 2006–2007 school year. Surveys were administered in spring 2007 to all school SDMC members. 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. The following research

questions were addressed:

1. What were the perceptions of SDMC members with regard to general SDMC procedures and activities, overall quality of the committees, adequacy of training received by members, their experiences having served on the committees, and some of the benefits to the school?
2. What were the perceptions of DAC members with regard to the general DAC procedures and activities, overall quality, their experiences in having served on the committee, and benefits to the district?

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 2006–2007 school year, surveys were administered in the spring 2007. The online surveys (see **Appendices A and B**), 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 (Houston Independent School District, 2004). Questions primarily employed a Likert-scale or a multiple-response format, with respondents given the opportunity to provide additional comments in a few open-ended questions. The responses were completely anonymous.

All SDMC committee members, including principals, teachers, school-based personnel, non-instructional staff, parents, community members and business partners, were invited to participate in the survey process online. Principals were asked (via e-mail) to distribute the notice to all committee members at their school, including those without an HISD email address. Committee members without Internet access received paper copies of the survey with scantron sheets for their responses; five of whom responded. The Assistant Superintendent for Research and Accountability notified DAC members of the survey directly, using a list of e-mail addresses provided by the district's DAC coordinator. The data obtained from the completed surveys were collected and aggregated in Microsoft Excel.

Survey Participants

Of the estimated 2,655 SDMC committee members in the district, there were 1,238 SDMC members (46.6 percent) who responded to the survey, including: 36 parents, 21 community members and five business partners not employed by HISD. Among HISD employees, 62.5 percent were classroom teachers, 11.2 percent were principals, 21.2 percent were other school-based staff (e.g. librarians, assistant principals, and counselors), and 5.1 percent were non-instructional (e.g. clerical, cafeteria) staff. The number of surveys completed by both SDMC and DAC members are presented in **Table 1**.

In addition, Table 1 shows that respondents represented all five HISD geographic administrative regions. The North and West regions had the highest number of respondents with 281 (22.7 percent) and 316 (25.5 percent), respectively. The smallest administrative region of alternative schools had the lowest amount with 22 respondents (1.8 percent). SDMC survey respondents represented all school levels within HISD, with 68.3 percent of respondents representing HISD elementary schools, 17.8 percent representing middle schools, 13.3 percent representing high schools, and 0.7 percent combined-level schools (see **Figure 1**).

Table 1. Number of Surveys Returned by the SDMC and DAC Committee Members, 2006–2007*

	SDMC		DAC	
	N	%	N	%
HISD Employee Members				
Classroom Teacher	727	62.5	8	53.3
Other School Based Professional Staff	247	21.2	7	46.7
Principal	130	11.2	-	-
Non-Instructional Staff	59	5.1	-	-
Central Office Staff	-	-	1	25.0
District Office Staff	-	-	3	75.0
Total HISD Employees	1,163	100.0	19***	100.0
Non-HISD Employee Members				
Parent	36	58.1	0	0.0
Community Member	21	33.9	0	0.0
Business Partner	5	8.1	0	0.0
Total Non-HISD Employee Members	62	100.0	0	0.0
Total All Members, excluding N/A responses**	1,225	100.0	18	100.0
Administrative Region				
Alternative	22	1.8	-	-
Central	253	20.4	-	-
East	207	16.7	-	-
North	281	22.7	-	-
South	159	12.8	-	-
West	316	25.5	-	-
Total Members by Administrative District	1,238	100.0	-	-

*Total N for the SDMC survey was 1,238 respondents; 13 members did not identify themselves

**58 responded Not Applicable to “HISD employees”; 751 responded Not Applicable to Non-HISD employees

*** One DAC respondent was identified as working both in a school and in a regional office

Of the 29 DAC members invited to take the survey 18 responded, yielding a 62 percent response rate. Classroom teachers comprised the largest group (53.3 percent) of the respondents. It is important to note that respondents consisted only of members employed by the district.

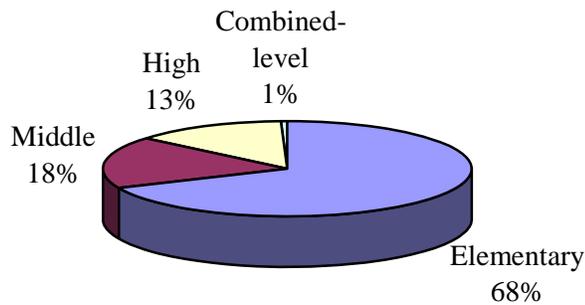


Figure 1: SDMC respondents by school level, 2006–2007

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed to analyze the results of the surveys. First, descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages were used to examine the multiple-response and Likert-type questions. Four response options were scored: “Strongly Agree” = 4; “Agree” = 3; “Disagree” = 2; and “Strongly Disagree” = 1. Items marked “N/A” indicated that the item did not apply. Next, qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data from the open-ended questions. Finally, for the short-answer questions, emergent categories were developed using existing categories from the previous administration of the surveys. The data are presented using descriptive statistics.

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

Results

What were the perceptions of SDMC members with regard to general SDMC procedures and activities, overall quality of the committees, adequacy of training received by members, their experiences having served on the committees, and some of the benefits to the school?

General SDMC Procedures and Activities

Seven of the sixty 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 (40.6 percent) and a slightly smaller proportion of respondents reported more than two years of membership on the SDMC (33.8 percent). The majority of respondents indicated that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (72.6 percent). The majority (83.2 percent) also felt that the amount of times their committee met was *just right*. When meetings were scheduled, 92.0 percent 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 fair* (80.3 percent and 73.2 percent, respectively). Finally, respondents were asked in what capacity their school’s SDMC operates. The largest percentage of respondents (43.3 percent) felt that they were the decision-making entity for the campus, while 33.5 percent indicated that they were the advisory committee to the principal. These results were fairly consistent with findings from 2005 (Houston Independent School District, 2005).

Overall Quality of SDMCs

There were fourteen of the Likert-type and one open-ended question included in the survey 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 but two of the questions was *excellent*. All questions received a majority of *excellent* and *good* responses. As with previous administrations of the survey, the most notable *fair* to *poor* responses were for questions relating to modifications

Table 2. Response Rates to General SDMC Procedures and Activities Questions, 2006–2007

How long have you been a member of the SDMC?	N	Less than a Year	1–2 Years	More than 2 Years		
	1,210	25.6	40.6	33.8		
How often did your school’s SDMC meet during 2004–05?	N	1-2 times per Month	3+ per Month	Quarterly	Annually	Not Sure
	1,213	72.6	3.5	16.6	1.6	5.7
The number of times your SDMC met was:	N	Too few	Just Right	Too Many	Not Sure	
	1,217	11.4	83.2	1.0	4.4	
Did you receive notice of SDMC meetings in a timely fashion?	N	Yes	No	Not Sure		
	1,208	92.0	6.9	1.1		
The ten-day nomination period for elections to the SDMC is:	N	Too Short	Just Right	Too Long	Not Sure	
	1,220	2.7	80.3	9.8	7.2	
How fair are the voting procedures in SDMC elections for committee members?	N	Very Fair	Somewhat Fair	Not Very Fair	Not Fair At All	Not Sure
	1,222	73.2	19.3	2.1	1.3	4.0
In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?	N	Advisory Committee to the Principal	Decision-Making entity for Campus	Advisory Committee to the Principal, with approval of staff development	Not Sure	
	1,216	33.5	43.3	15.2	8.0	

Items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

for special needs students, use of discretionary funds, input on staffing patterns, student services, and student-grouping patterns. For the open-ended question, participants were asked to provide any other information regarding the overall quality of the SDMC’s involvement in decisions made at their school. Of the 509 responses received, the largest percentage (54.0 percent) of respondents cited the active involvement and effectiveness of the SDMCs in the decision-making process within schools. On the other hand, twenty-three percent (22.6) of respondents

commented on the poor quality of the SDMCs' involvement in decisions made at their schools. It was stated that this was due to poor leadership and organization and having met very few times throughout the year. Finally, twenty-three percent (23.4) of respondents cited individual or unique factors of the committees. In many cases, respondents noted that while SDMC members were kept abreast of issues and concerns of the school community, the committee often had very little say in the decisions made. Others noted that the role of the committee was to rubber stamp or approve decisions that were already made by the principal and school administrators.

Table 3. Response Rates to Overall Quality of SDMC's Involvement in Decision Making and School Planning Items, 2006–2007

Shared-Decision-Making and School Planning Items	N	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
Student performance–TAKS scores, Texas Education Agency accountability ratings, etc.	1,238	43.8	33.0	13.1	5.5	4.6
Curriculum issues	1,238	42.2	33.1	13.0	7.4	4.3
Student grouping patterns	1,238	35.9	28.0	14.6	9.3	12.1
School waiver requests	1,238	54.5	24.1	7.5	4.4	9.5
Input on staffing patterns	1,234	36.8	26.7	14.3	11.7	10.6
Campus-based staff development	1,238	48.1	28.9	11.7	7.2	4.0
Communication procedures	1,238	45.3	28.8	14.3	7.2	4.4
Modifications for special needs students	1,238	35.4	27.9	15.9	9.3	11.5
Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods	1,238	38.6	27.1	14.5	8.2	11.6
Budget development and recommendations	1,238	41.7	28.3	14.0	9.8	6.2
Use of discretionary campus funds	1,238	38.0	26.5	13.2	12.0	10.3
Organization of departments or teaching teams	1,238	41.1	26.8	12.9	11.0	8.2
Instructional support – library, media, technology, etc.	1,221	35.3	36.4	16.2	7.5	4.6
Student services – counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.	1,218	26.8	35.5	19.6	9.9	8.2

Items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

Training/Technical Assistance for SDMC Members

Four of the multiple-response questions 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 and technical assistance questions are presented in **Figure 2**.

The majority of the respondents (62.2 percent) received either *training* or *some training* on the role of SDMC. Two-thirds (66.7 percent) of the respondents also received *training* or *some training* in developing School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and 72 percent had some level of training in Team/Consensus Building. While nearly half (49.9 percent) of respondents received *training* or *some training* in site-based budgeting, 43.5 percent had not received any training at all.

In addition to the four multiple-choice questions included on the surveys, participants were also asked, in an open-ended format, to list any further training that they would like to see offered. In all, 421 respondents answered this question. More than half (54.6 percent) of the respondents indicated that they did not need further training. Among those who indicated that they would need further SDMC training, the most prevalent responses included training on site-based budgeting, enhancing students’ learning environment, staff development, and building community support/involvement. Other responses centered on training that could potentially enhance the functions of SDMCs including training on the change process, the role and responsibilities of SDMCs and committee members, leadership development, and team-building. In addition, there were several respondents who indicated that they had not been made aware of any training offered to SDMC members.

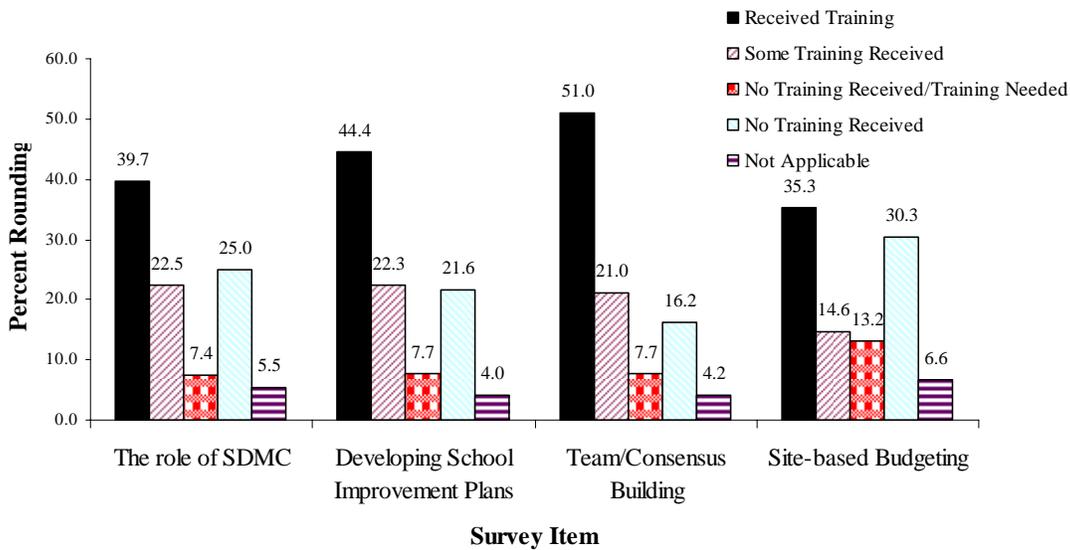


Figure 2. Response rates to training and technical assistance items, 2006–2007

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 for these items are presented in **Table 4**. Among the items presented, the following were rated as *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* by more than 80 percent of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- “Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus/majority,” 90.8 percent;
- “I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings,” 88.0 percent;
- “My role on the SDMC was clear,” 86.3 percent;

- “Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself an effective manner,” 85.8 percent;
- “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC,” 85.5 percent;
- “Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members,” 84.8 percent;
- “Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC,” 84.5 percent;
- “SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion,” 81.1 percent;
- “It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role,” 80.2 percent.

Table 4. Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the SDMC Committee Members, 2006–2007

Experiential/Perceptual Items	N	Percent				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Community members in our area supported our school plan.	1,208	19.3	51.2	1.7	1.7	26.2
Businesses in our community supported our school plan.	1,212	16.3	45.4	2.6	1.7	34.1
Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself an effective manner.	1,210	33.8	52.0	7.2	3.2	3.8
My role on the SDMC was clear.	1,219	32.3	54.0	7.1	2.3	4.3
It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.	1,226	25.0	55.2	9.9	2.7	7.3
The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	1,223	14.3	45.5	20.8	9.0	10.5
The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	1,213	12.4	44.9	20.0	7.7	14.9
The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	1,213	11.0	38.4	21.7	8.7	20.3
Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.	1,203	30.9	53.9	3.1	2.3	9.8
Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.	1,212	18.6	50.2	9.2	4.5	17.4
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.	1,213	41.4	46.6	6.7	2.7	2.6
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus/majority.	1,209	37.5	53.3	3.0	2.0	4.2

Items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 4. Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the SDMC Committee Members, 2006–2007 (Continued)

Experiential/Perceptual Items	N	Percent				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	1,217	34.7	44.5	9.4	3.0	8.3
During the school year, the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.	1,214	3.7	23.2	47.0	18.8	7.2
The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.	1,218	20.9	47.7	17.1	4.7	9.7
SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members, parents, and community members.	1,208	33.9	45.6	7.1	2.6	10.7
SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	1,218	33.0	48.1	8.9	2.1	8.0
The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.	1,215	13.7	41.3	17.9	6.6	20.5
Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.	1,209	9.3	40.4	17.9	6.3	26.1
Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.	1,210	24.5	51.7	3.9	2.9	17.0
The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.	1,212	27.1	51.2	10.2	2.8	8.6
Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC	1,218	37.0	48.5	4.8	1.9	7.7
Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC	1,219	24.2	60.3	4.0	1.0	10.5

Items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

A closer look at these multiple response items revealed several trends in the agreement between some of these items. 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 or majority. Third, respondents felt comfortable when expressing their thoughts in meetings. Finally, nearly eighty-six (85.5) percent of respondents agreed with the statement “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC,” while 78.3 percent 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 20.0 percent of the participating SDMC members:

- “The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-

- making was about right,” 30.4 percent;
- “The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right,” 29.8 percent;
- “The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right,” 27.7 percent;
- “The SDMC subcommittees met regularly,” 24.5 percent;
- “Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees,” 24.2 percent.
- “The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development,” 21.8 percent;

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, nearly a quarter (24.5 percent) of respondents agreed that their SDMC subcommittees did not meet regularly. Third, more than one fifth (21.8 percent) of respondents indicated that the SDMC did not play an important role in campus-based professional development.

On a positive note, nearly two-thirds (65.8 percent) of respondents disagreed with the statement regarding the regular changing of the SDMC schedule; thus supporting another statement where 79.2 percent of the respondents indicated that the schedule was set at the beginning of the year.

Benefits, Suggested Improvements, and Comments on SDMCs

There were three additional open-ended questions included 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.

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?” **Table 5** presents the number and percent of respondents for the eight emerging categories. Of the 1,238 surveys completed, 680 responses (54.9 percent) were received for “How has your school benefited from having a Shared-Decision-Making Committee?” The highest category of response was that the SDMC has helped the school (31.5 percent), followed by 23.7 percent of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice. The third highest thematic category was that the SDMC, in general, has not benefited the school (10.4 percent). In addition, respondents also indicated that SDMCs have facilitated better communication (9.3 percent) and allowed for greater participation (7.8 percent) by school staff and other stakeholders.

How could the Shared-Decision-Making process be more effective? The most frequent response to this item was the encouragement of other parents, community, and business partners to become more involved in the lives of the schools, by means of their local SDMC. Other relevant comments included: structuring the committee to serve more as the decision-making entity for the campus; allowing representatives from all disciplines, academies, and departments in the school to be represented in the SDMC; providing training to new committee members on the roles and responsibilities of SDMCs, scheduling meetings on a consistent and regular basis; and developing a method by which the opinions of school staff who are not members of the SDMC can be incorporated in the decision-making process.

Table 5. Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of SDMCs, 2006–2007

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
SDMC has helped the school.	214	31.5
SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	161	23.7
SDMC has not benefited the school.	71	10.4
SDMC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	63	9.3
SDMC has allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders.	53	7.8
SDMC has facilitated more effective decision-making.	34	5.0
SDMC has brought cohesion among school staff and other stakeholders.	35	5.1
SDMC has given the feeling of ownership and leadership to the SDMC members.	15	2.2
Other	34	5.0
Total	680	100.0

Additional comments you may have regarding the SDMC process. Most of the respondents did not provide additional comments on the SDMC process. Several respondents considered the role of SDMCs to be an “important instrument” and “the heart of every visionary school.” Others considered the SDMC process to be a “great concept in theory” and “on paper,” but insisted that in order for SDMCs to work effectively, “there needs to be clear guidelines for SDMC members, especially regarding voting on items and agenda submissions.”

What were the perceptions of DAC members with regard to the general DAC procedures and activities, overall quality, their experiences in having served on the committee, and benefits to the district?

General DAC Procedures and Activities

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 18 respondents, all (100.0 percent) agreed that the number of times the DAC met during the 2006–2007 school year was just right. Eighty-nine percent of the DAC members indicated that notification of meetings was received in a timely fashion. In addition, 66.7 percent of respondents indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members were very fair, while only 11.1 percent indicated that the procedures were not very fair.

Overall Quality of DAC

Table 6 contains the results from the multiple response items addressing the quality of the DAC using a five-point Likert scale (*Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, N/A*). Of the 18 respondents, 44.4 percent of the respondents judged the *overall quality* of DAC’s involvement in providing input for curriculum issues as excellent, while 11.1 percent indicated it was *poor*. The majority of the respondents (72.2 percent) rated the overall quality of DAC’s involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers as *excellent* or *good*. The majority of the respondents (61.1 percent) indicated that the overall quality of DAC’s involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either *good* or *excellent*, while 16.7 percent indicated that the DAC’s involvement was *poor*.

Table 6. Response Rates to the Overall Quality of the DAC’s Involvement, 2006–2007

Survey Items (N=18)	Percent				Don't Know
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for curriculum issues.	44.4	16.7	22.2	11.1	5.6
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers.	38.9	33.3	16.7	11.1	0.0
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations.	38.9	22.2	11.1	16.7	11.1

DAC Experiential/Perceptual Items

Table 7 presents the results from the 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*. The majority of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that the DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner (94.4 percent), and accomplished a great deal in the past year (77.8 percent). Eighty-nine percent of respondents agreed to some extent to the items “My role on the DAC is clear,” and “I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.” Fifty percent of respondents agreed that meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion. In addition, 27.8 percent disagreed to some extent that the DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.

Benefits, Suggested Improvements, and Comments on DAC

Similar to the SMDC survey, 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 additional comments about the DAC. Because of the limited number of responses to the open-ended items, thematic categorical analysis was used to develop emergent categories and classify DAC members’ responses where appropriate. Otherwise, responses were briefly summarized and are discussed below.

Four categories emerged from the analysis of DAC members’ responses to the question: “How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?” Only 11 members provided responses to this question. The results are presented in **Table 8**. The largest proportion of the respondents (36 percent) indicated that HISD has not benefited from having a District Advisory Committee. They maintained that the committee is under-utilized in its capacity as an advisory committee. On the other hand, 27 percent of the respondents indicated that a benefit of the DAC to the district has been to give teachers and other stakeholders a voice, while 18 percent indicated that DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.

Table 7. Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for DAC Committee Members, 2006–2007

Experiential/Perceptual Items	N	Percent				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.	18	16.7	61.1	5.6	5.6	11.1
Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.	18	61.1	33.3	5.6	0.0	0.0
My role on the DAC was clear.	18	27.8	61.1	5.6	0.0	5.6
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.	18	50.0	38.9	5.6	0.0	5.6
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	18	38.9	38.9	5.6	0.0	16.7
The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	18	33.3	38.9	5.6	0.0	22.2
The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.	18	27.8	33.3	22.2	5.6	11.1
DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	18	38.9	22.2	11.1	0.0	27.8
DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	18	38.9	11.1	16.7	0.0	33.3

Table 8: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of the DAC, 2006–2007

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
<i>How has HISD Benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?</i>		
DAC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	3	27.0
DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	2	18.0
DAC has not benefited the district	4	36.0
Other	2	18.0
Total	11	100.0

How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective? There were only eight responses to this item. The majority of the respondents commented that the DAC could be more effective by involving the committee early in the decision-making process, as well as by providing information prior to the meeting to improve discussion. Respondents also suggested that the Superintendent of Schools become more involved with the committee

Additional comments you may have regarding the DAC? As with the previous question, most of the respondents did not provide additional comments on the DAC process. However, respondents made mention of the fact that there was an absence of non-district members (i.e. non-employee parent, community resident, business partner, etc.) on the committee. In addition, members also suggested that minutes from the meetings be posted on the district website or intranet portal for easy access by members, staff, and the public at large.

Discussion

The Shared-Decision-Making and the District Advisory Committees at HISD were created to work to meet the individual and special needs of each school in the district by giving stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the decisionmaking process. Consequently, this biannual review of the SDMC committee process was designed to determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on SDMCs and the DAC during the 2006–2007 school year. 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.

In general, most responses by SDMC members were positive relative to the procedures and activities of the committee and the overall quality of the SDMC decision-making process. The committees' survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they had excellent involvement in providing input on school waivers. In contrast, lower ratings were received for providing input on issues such as modifications for special needs students, use of discretionary funds, input on staffing patterns, student services, and student grouping patterns.

The overall experiences and perceptions of SDMC members were also positive. Most members felt that the committees were well organized and the school staff supported the recommendations of the committee. Moreover, the majority of respondents indicated that the principal supported most of the recommendations of the SDMC committee. Respondents also suggested that SDMCs develop a method by which the opinions of school staff and other stakeholders who are not members of the SDMC can be incorporated into the decision-making process.

With regards to the training and technical assistance received by members of the committees, most members received some form of training and indicated that they did not need further training. However, among those who indicated a need for further training, the majority requested training in site-based budgeting, staff development, and building community support/involvement.

This report also presents the fourth biannual review of the DAC process. 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. The DAC members reported that the process was well organized and that they were very comfortable and free to express their thoughts in meetings. However, they indicated uncertainty about whether the minutes had been provided in a timely manner and were available to staff members and parents.

The DAC is perceived to run smoothly; however, the committee is still perceived to be under-utilized in its capacity as an advisory committee. Furthermore, the committee is currently (this was not the case in 2005) made up solely of district staff and employees. As a result, the committee lacks the input and participation of parental, community, and business partners.

Recommendations

1. To improve the effectiveness of SDMCs, schedule frequent and consistent meetings during the school year. Having regular meetings would allow the committee to be more proactive, (rather than reactive) to issues and developments concerning the school. Furthermore, meeting dates should be scheduled prior to the beginning of the school year to allow members of the committees enough time to plan to attend.

2. To enhance the functions of the role of the SDMC and its members, all SDMC members must be provided with up-to-date and continuous training in the areas of site-based budgeting, team/consensus building, community support/involvement, and school improvement plans. Additionally, all new members should receive training in the role and functions of SDMCs.
3. To fully utilize the capacity of the DAC as an advisory committee, the district should include and involve the committee earlier (in the brainstorming and planning phases) in the decision-making process.
4. To improve the dissemination of information from the DAC to other stakeholders, the committee should consider posting its minutes from the meetings on the district website or intranet portal for easy access by members, staff, and the general public.
5. To meet state legislation requirements, the DAC should seek to add non-HISD employees (i.e. non-employee parents, community residents, and business partners) to the committee.
6. Both SDMCs and the DAC should consider ways to allow for additional input and representation of the various departments, academies, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, as the Texas Education Code specifies the responsibility to establish “procedures...to periodically obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input” (TEC §11.253 (g)).

References

- Houston Independent School District. (2003). Shared Decision-Making Committee and District Advisory Committee Survey Results: 2002-03. *Journal of Educational Reports* 15 (5). Houston, TX: Author, Department of Research and Accountability.
- Houston Independent School District. (2005). Shared Decision-Making Committee and District Advisory Committee Survey Results: 2004-05. Houston, TX: Author, Department of Research and Accountability.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF THE SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

Instructions: Please select your responses for each of the multiple choice questions below and record them on the SCANTRON FORM provided for you. In addition, please respond to short answer questions in the spaces provided in this survey.

1. If you are employed in the district, what is your position?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Classroom Teacher
 - c. Non-Instructional Staff (e.g. clerical, cafeteria)
 - d. Other School Based Professional Staff (e.g. 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 letter.)
3. a. Alternative b. Central c. East d. North e. South f. West

4. 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

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

6. How often has your school's SDMC met during 2006–2007?
 - a. 1-2 times per month
 - b. 3 or more times per month
 - c. Quarterly
 - d. Annually
 - e. Not sure

7. The number of times your SDMC met during the 2006–2007 school year was:
 - a. Too few
 - b. Just right
 - c. Too many
 - d. Not sure

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

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

10. 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

11. 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

APPENDIX A (continued)
SURVEY OF THE SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

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:					
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don’t Know
12. Student performance—TAKS scores, TEA Accountability Ratings, etc.					
13. Curriculum issues					
14. Modifications for special needs students					
15. Student grouping patterns					
16. School waiver requests					
17. Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods					
18. Budget development and recommendations					
19. Use of discretionary campus funds					
20. Input on staffing patterns					
21. Campus-based staff development					
22. Organization of departments or teaching teams					
23. Communication procedures					
24. Instructional support—library, media, technology, etc.					
25. Student services—counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.					
26. 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:					
	Received training	Some training received	No training received/ Training needed	No training received	Not Applicable
27. The role of the SDMC					
28. Developing School Improvement Plans					
29. Team-building skills/Consensus-building					
30. Site-based budgeting					
31. What further SDMC training would you like? _____					

APPENDIX A (continued)
SURVEY OF THE SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

Considering the current school year (2006–2007), please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
32. Our Shared Decision-Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.					
33. In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.					
34. Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.					
35. Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.					
36. The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.					
37. Community members in our area supported our school plan.					
38. Businesses in our community supported our school plan.					
39. Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself an effective manner.					
40. My role on the SDMC was clear.					
41. It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.					
42. The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.					
43. The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.					
44. The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.					
45. Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.					
46. Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.					
47. I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.					
48. Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus/majority.					
49. The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.					
50. During the school year, the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.					
51. The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.					
52. SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members, parents, and community members.					
53. SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.					
54. The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.					

APPENDIX A (continued)
SURVEY OF THE SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
55. Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.					
56. Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.					
57. The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.					

Please answer the following short answer questions:

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

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

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

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF THE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

Instructions: Please select your responses for each of the multiple choice questions below and record them on the SCANTRON FORM provided for you. In addition, please respond to short answer questions in the spaces provided in this survey.

1. If you are employed in the district, what is your position?
 - a. Classroom Teacher
 - b. Other School Based Professional Staff (e.g. 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 your SDMC met during the 2006–2007 school year was:
 - a. Too few b. Just right c. Too many d. Not sure

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

6. 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

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

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don’t Know
7. Curriculum issues					
8. District staff development waivers					
9. Budget development and recommendations					
10. Other: _____					

Considering the current school year (2006–2007), please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
11. Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.					
12. Our DAC was well organized and conducted itself 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/majority.					

APPENDIX B (continued)
SURVEY OF THE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 2006–2007

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
16. The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.					
17. The DAC played an important role in campus-based professional development.					
18. DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members, parents, and community members.					
19. DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.					

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: