

RESEARCH

Report on an Educational Program

Department of Research and Accountability

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2004–05

Houston Independent School District



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2004–05

Program Description

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board of Education established and approved the campus-level planning and decision-making process in 1992. This process includes the creation and maintenance of a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) at each school to review the district's educational goals, objectives, and major districtwide classroom instructional programs. Each committee is 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 was authorized 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 periodically obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input.

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

Further, the District Advisory Committee (DAC) has been implemented in HISD, under state statute, as an integrated process for planning and decision-making at the school level (TEC 11.251). DAC is composed of parents, community and business representatives, and HISD faculty elected by their peers. The committee provides input to district staff in matters of planning, budgeting, school organization, staffing patterns, and staff development. 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 DACs during the 2004–05 school year. Surveys were administered in the spring 2005 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.

Findings

Survey Participants

- There were a total of 751 participants in the SDMC survey, which included 745 school-based and six non-HISD personnel. Among the school-based personnel who returned the survey, 56.5% were classroom teachers and 13.2% were principals. The six non-HISD personnel were parents.
- DAC surveys were distributed to classroom teachers, other school-based professional staff such as librarians, assistant principals, and counselors. Subsequently, there were 17 DAC respondents to the survey. Seven respondents were identified as teachers, three as other school-based professional staff, one as non-instructional staff, three as parents, two as community members, and one DAC member was unidentified.

General SDMC Procedures and Activities

- In response to questions concerning general procedures and activities, 38.7% of respondents indicated that the SDMC operated as an advisory committee to the principal and 36.7% indicated that it operated as a decision-making entity for the campus. 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 (38.9%). However, a fairly comparable percentage of members had served more than two years (35.5%). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (76.0%), and 82.7% of the respondents felt that the amount of monthly meeting times were “just right.” In addition, 93.1% of the SDMC respondents indicated that they had received notice of meetings in a timely fashion.

Overall Quality of SDMCs

- Regarding overall quality of SDMC committees, the largest percentage of responses to all questions was “good” and all questions received a majority of “excellent” and “good” responses. Specifically, the highest percentage of respondents indicated “excellent” on the quality of involvement of the committee on school waiver requests. Notable “fair” to “poor” responses were found on questions relating to modifications for special needs students, use of discretionary funds, input on staffing patterns, organization of departments or teaching teams, and student services.

SDMC Experiential/Perceptual Items

- There were several apparent trends on multiple response items that measured the perceptions and experiences of SDMC members. Specifically, 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 84.4% of respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC,” only 77.3% of them agreed with the statement, “The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.”

SDMC Open-ended Questions and Items

- Of the 751 survey participants, 312 (41.5%) 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 (25.0%) followed by 16.3% of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has facilitated more effective decision-making. The third highest thematic category was that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice (15.4%).

DAC General Responses

- Of the 17 DAC survey participants, 15 (88.2%) agreed that the number of times their DAC met during the 2004–05 school year was just right. Ninety-four percent of the respondents felt that they received notice of DAC meetings in a timely fashion. However, only 35.3% indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members was very fair.

DAC Overall Quality

- Of the 17 DAC survey participants, 11.8% of them judged the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for curriculum issues as excellent and only 5.9% indicated it was poor. The respondents indicated that the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers was excellent (5.9%) or good (41.2%), while 23.6% indicated it was fair or poor. Although a majority of the respondents (53.0%) indicated that the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either good or excellent, 17.6% indicated that the DAC’s involvement was poor.

DAC Experiential/Perceptual Items

- One hundred percent of the respondents indicated 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. However, 52.9% felt that the DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents and that the minutes were provided in a timely fashion.

DAC Open-ended Questions

- Of the 17 surveys completed, 12 (70.6%) of the responses were received for the question “How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?”. Twenty-five percent of the respondents indicated that 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). Comparable percentages indicated that DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.
- Thirteen respondents addressed the question “How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?”. The highest emergent category was “meet with the superintendent,” which received 30.8% of the responses. The second highest category indicated by the respondents was that the DAC could be more effective by providing information prior to meeting to improve discussion (23.1%).

SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS: 2004–05

Introduction

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board of Education established and approved the campus-level planning and decision-making process in 1992. This process includes the creation and maintenance of a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) at each school to review the district's educational goals, objectives, and major districtwide classroom instructional programs. Each committee is 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 was authorized to fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Implement all pertinent campus-level planning processes;
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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 the principal approves the SIP, the SDMC will present the plan to the school-based professional staff for a vote of approval.
7. Review and make recommendations regarding the school's organizational structure; and
8. Establish procedures to periodically obtain broad-based community, parent, and staff input.

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

Further, the District Advisory Committee (DAC) has been implemented in HISD, under state statute, as an integrated process for planning and decision-making at the school level (TEC 11.251). DAC is composed of parents, community and business representatives, and HISD faculty elected by their peers. The committee provides input to district staff in matters of planning, budgeting, school organization, staffing patterns, and staff development. 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.

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 2004–05 school year, surveys were administered in the spring 2005. The surveys (see **Appendix 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 were designed using a Likert-scale or a multiple-response format. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide additional comments on the committees' effectiveness and how the committee benefited the school using open-ended questions. The respondents were anonymous to the researcher.

HISD's web-based technology system was utilized to electronically administer the SDMC surveys to all possible committee membership groups. Principals were notified via email to distribute the notice to other committee members who did not have an HISD email address. DAC members were notified directly by the district's DAC coordinator who distributed surveys during a monthly meeting. The data obtained from survey distribution were collected and aggregated.

Survey Participants

The number of surveys completed by SDMC and DAC members are presented in **Table 1**. There were 751 SDMC members and 17 DAC members who participated in the survey process. Among the SDMC members, 745 school-based personnel and 6 parents provided responses to survey items. In addition, 13.2% of the respondents were principals and 56.5% were classroom teachers. Other school-based staff comprised 23.7% and non-instructional staff such as librarians, assistant principals, and counselors comprised 5.9% of the SDMC respondents.

In addition, Table 1 shows that all 13 HISD administrative districts were represented among respondents. The North Central and West districts had the highest number of respondents with 103 (13.7%) and 94 (12.5%),

	SDMC		DAC	
	N	%	N	%
HISD School-based Members				
Classroom Teacher	424	56.5	7	63.6
Other School Based Personnel	178	23.7	3	27.3
Principal	99	13.2	-	-
Non-Instructional Staff	44	5.9	1	9.1
N/A	6	0.8	-	-
Total	751	100.0	11	100.0
Non-HISD Members				
Parent	6	100.0	3	50.0
Community Member	-	-	2	33.3
Business Partner	-	-	-	-
N/A	-	-	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0	6	100.0
Total All Members	751*	100.0	17	100.0
Administrative District				
Alternative	47	6.3	-	-
Central	37	4.9	-	-
East	78	10.4	-	-
North/Acres Homes Coalition	15	2.0	-	-
North Central	103	13.7	-	-
Northeast	66	8.8	-	-
Northwest	59	7.9	-	-
South	46	6.1	-	-
South Central	50	6.7	-	-
Southeast	48	6.4	-	-
Southwest	57	7.6	-	-
West	94	12.5	-	-
West Central	50	6.7	-	-
N/A	-	-	2	100.0
Total	750	100.0	2	100.0

*Includes respondents who classified themselves as both HISD and Non-HISD employees

respectively. North/Acres Homes Coaliton, which is the smallest was the least represented (2.0%).

SDMC survey respondents represented all school levels within HISD. Those affiliated with HISD elementary schools had the highest response rate with 64% (see **Figure 1**).

DAC survey respondents consisted of members employed by the district and members not employed by the district (see Table 1). Of the 17 DAC school-based respondents, classroom teachers had the highest response rate (63.6%), while parents had the highest response rate among non-HISD survey participants (50.0%).

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis in terms of frequencies and percentages was employed when examining the Likert-type questions. Four response options were scored: “Strongly Agree” = 4; “Agree” = 3; “Disagree” = 2; and “Strongly Disagree” = 1. Items marked “NA” indicated that the item did not apply. 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 (SPSS) 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 (38.9%) and a slightly less proportion of respondents reported more than two years as a member of the SDMC (35.5%). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (76.0%). The majority also felt that meeting monthly was “just right” in the amount of times (82.7%). When meetings were scheduled, 93.1% 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” (74.1% and 73.3%, respectively). Finally, respondents were asked in what capacity does their school’s SDMC

Figure 1: SDMC Response Rates by School Level, 2004–2005

operate. The largest percentage (38.7%) felt that they were the advisory committee to the principal, while 36.7% indicated that they were the decision-making entity for campus.

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 “good” rather than “excellent”, “good”, or “fair”. Notable fair to poor responses were found for questions relating to modifications for special needs students, 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 in **Figure 2**. A total of 751 SDMC members responded to these items. According to Figure 2, the majority of the respondents (81.6%) received either training or some training on the role of SDMC. A total of 69.6% of the

Table 2: Response Rates to General SDMC Procedures and Activities Questions, 2004–05

	N	Less than a Year	1–2 Years	More than 2 Years		
How long have you been a member of the SDMC?	750	25.6	38.9	35.5		
	N	1-2 times per Month	3+ per Month	Quarterly	Annually	Not Sure
How often did your school’s SDMC meet during 2004–05?	750	76.0	3.1	16.3	1.1	3.6
	N	Too few	Just Right	Too Many	Not Sure	
The number of times your SDMC met was:	750	10.8	82.7	2.5	4.0	
	N	Yes	No	Not Sure		
Did you receive notice of SDMC meetings in a timely fashion?	750	93.1	5.9	1.1		
	N	Too Short	Just Right	Too Long	Not Sure	
The ten-day nomination period for elections to the SDMC is:	750	2.8	74.1	16.8	6.3	
	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?	750	73.3	20.1	2.0	1.1	3.5
	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?	750	38.7	36.7	7.1	17.6	

Table 3: Response Rates to Overall Quality of SDMC’s Involvement in Decision Making and School Planning Items, 2004–05

Shared Decision-Making and School Planning Items	N	Percent Responding				Don't Know
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Student performance—TAAS scores, Texas Education Agency accountability ratings, etc.	751	25.0	44.9	18.1	9.1	2.9
Curriculum issues	751	23.3	42.6	19.0	12.1	2.9
Modifications for special needs students	751	16.1	36.4	22.1	17.6	7.9
Student grouping patterns	741	16.7	37.2	20.0	14.7	11.3
School waiver requests	751	35.2	37.0	12.4	6.5	8.9
Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods	751	14.8	38.3	20.6	15.4	10.8
Budget development and recommendations	751	25.3	38.3	19.8	12.8	3.7
Use of discretionary campus funds	751	20.5	36.1	18.0	18.4	7.1
Input on staffing patterns	751	15.6	36.1	20.8	17.2	10.4
Campus-based staff development	751	28.8	41.9	16.5	10.1	2.7
Organization of departments or teaching teams	751	17.6	36.2	18.8	16.9	10.5
Communication procedures	751	23.3	40.1	20.6	10.9	5.1
Instructional support – library, media, technology, etc.	751	21.4	41.4	20.6	11.9	4.7
Student services – counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.	751	16.0	35.7	22.4	17.0	8.9

respondents also received training or some training in developing School Improvement Plans and 66.4% in Team/Consensus Building. Relative to site-based budgeting, the largest percentage of SDMC respondents had received some training (31.1%).

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 80% of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC,” 84.4%;
- “Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC,” 84.3%;
- “Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner,” 83.4%;
- “My role on SDMC was clear,” 84.0%;
- “Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members,” 85.4%;
- “I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings,” 85.1%;
- “Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus,” 88.7%;
- “SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff and parents,” 83.1%;
- “SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion,” 81.4%;

There were several apparent trends on multiple response items that measured the perceptions and experiences of SDMC members. Specifically, 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 respondents (84.4%) overwhelmingly agreed with the statement “Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC”, only 77.3% of the them 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% of the participating SDMC members:

- “The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right,” 33.4%;
- “The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right,” 34.3%
- “The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC planning and decision-making was about right,” 38.1%;
- “During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed,” 67.1%;
- “The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development,” 22.0%;
- “The SDMC subcommittees met regularly,” 26.8%;and
- “Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees,” 24.6%.

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, 67.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement regarding the regular changing of the SDMC schedule; thus indicating that 26.2% of the respondents suggesting that the schedule was changed regularly and 6.1% not sure. Third, the respondents indicated that the SDMC did not play an important role in campus-based professional development.

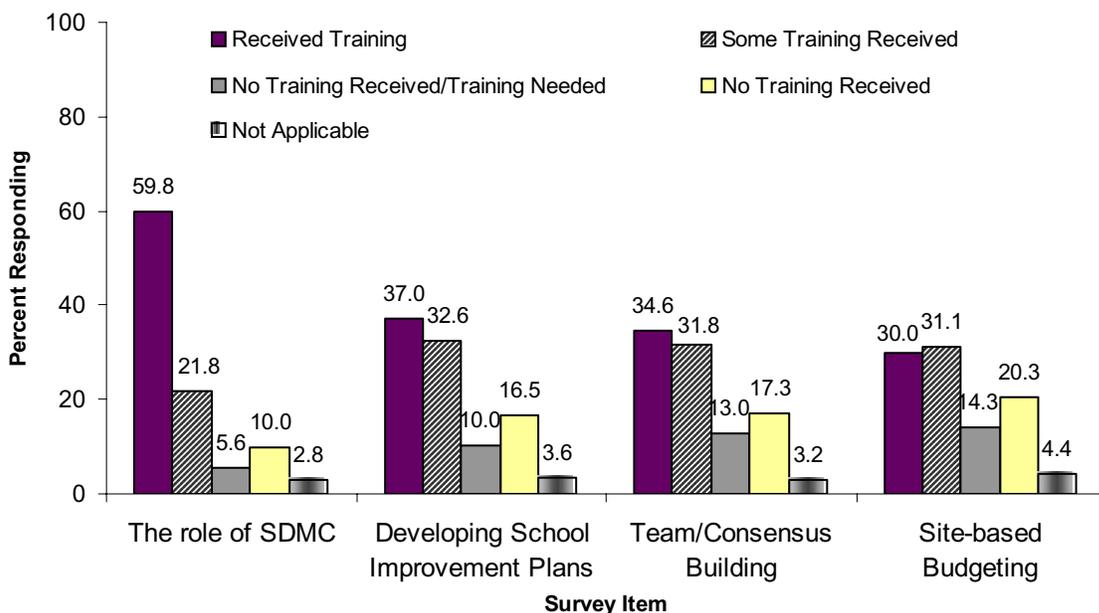


Figure 2: Response rates to training/technical assistance items, 2004–05.

Table 4: Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the SDMC Committee Members, 2004–05

Experiential/Perceptual Items	Percent Responding (%)					Not Sure
	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Our Shared Decision Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.	751	20.1	52.9	13.6	6.4	7.1
In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.	751	17.3	52.2	14.2	5.2	11.1
Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.	751	32.5	51.9	5.2	4.1	6.3
Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	751	20.9	63.4	4.4	1.3	10.0
The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	751	16.5	53.7	3.2	1.7	24.9
Community members in our area supported our school plan.	751	16.9	47.9	2.8	1.7	30.6
Businesses in our community supported our school plan.	751	15.2	43.8	3.6	2.4	35.0
Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner.	751	29.3	54.1	8.1	3.5	5.1
My role on the SDMC was clear.	750	31.1	52.9	7.9	4.5	3.6
It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.	750	22.8	52.4	11.7	3.6	9.5
The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	750	14.4	44.1	22.3	11.1	8.1
The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	750	10.7	43.1	21.9	12.4	12.0
The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	750	9.1	37.6	26.0	12.1	15.2
Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.	750	28.3	57.1	4.0	2.8	7.9
Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for	750	16.5	51.7	10.3	4.7	16.8
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.	750	39.1	46.0	8.0	5.1	1.9
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	750	34.8	53.9	3.6	3.2	4.5
The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	750	35.5	42.8	9.2	4.7	7.9
During the school year, the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.	750	3.7	22.5	45.1	22.0	6.7
The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.	750	19.2	51.5	15.7	6.3	7.3
SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	750	36.7	46.4	8.7	2.7	5.6
SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	750	30.9	50.5	9.5	2.9	6.1
The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.	750	11.2	42.8	18.7	8.1	19.2
Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.	750	9.1	42.4	16.7	7.9	24.0
Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.	749	24.7	52.6	7.1	3.1	12.6
The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.	749	25.5	51.8	9.3	3.2	10.1

SDMC Open-ended Questions and Items

The SDMC survey employed 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 results are as follows.

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?” **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 751 surveys returned, 312 responses (41.5%) 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 (25.0%) followed by 16.3% of the respondents indicating that the SDMC has facilitated more effective decision-making. The third highest thematic category was that the SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice (15.4%). However, one negative category found was that the SDMC, in general, has not benefited the schools (11.9%). This response was equally as likely as the SDMC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders”. The “other” category was comprised of only 2 responses; therefore, it was not included in the identified eight categories. Most Non-HISD SDMC members did not provide comments relative to benefits of the committee. Those that did, had varying comments from noted improvements in safety and budgets to “no visible signs of affecting the school.”

Table 5: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of SDMCs, 2004–05

Emergent Response Category	N	Percent
SDMC has helped the school.	78	25.0
SDMC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	48	15.4
SDMC has allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders.	32	10.3
SDMC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	37	11.9
SDMC has not benefited the school.	37	11.9
SDMC has facilitated more effective decision-making.	51	16.3
SDMC has brought cohesion among school staff and other stakeholders.	24	7.7
SDMC has given the feeling of ownership and leadership to the SDMC members.	3	1.0
Other	2	0.6
Total	312	100.0

What further SDMC training would you like?

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not need further training. However, the most prevalent responses included enhancing students’ learning environment, staff development, building community support/ involvement, and site-based budgeting. In addition, some respondents considered training on the change process, team building, and roles of members, would enhance the function of the SDMC.

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

Non-HISD SDMC members addressed this item by noting that staff and members be allowed to offer more suggestions. Other relevant comments included developing a method in which the opinions of school staff who are not members of the SDMC can be incorporated in the decision-making process.

Additional comments you may have regarding the SDMC process

Most of the respondents did not provide additional comments on the SDMC process. Respondents who commented on the process questioned the method of employing the SDMC on making decisions on campus, particularly since principals may be more likely to have final decisions. On the other hand, some respondents considered the SDMC to be a “good tool” and the “wave of the future” for “implementing the guidelines towards a better education service”. Non-HISD SDMC members provided no additional comments.

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 17 respondents, 88.2% agreed that the number of times their DAC met during the 2004–05 school year was just right while one respondent suggested too many. Ninety-four percent of the DAC members indicated that notification of meetings were received in a timely fashion. In addition, 35.3% of respondents indicated that the school nomination procedures for DAC members was very fair, followed by 17.6% indicating that the procedures were not very fair.

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, NA). Of the 17 respondents, 11.8% of the respondents judged the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for curriculum issues as excellent and only 5.9% indicated it was poor. The “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers was rated excellent (5.9%) or good (41.2%), while 23.6% indicated it was fair or poor. Although a majority of the respondents (53.0%) indicated that the “overall quality” of DAC’s involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations was either good or excellent, 17.6% indicated that the DAC’s involvement was poor.

Table 6: Response Rates to the Overall Quality of the DAC’s Involvement, 2004–05

Survey Item (N=17)	Percent Responding				
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NA/No Response
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for curriculum issues.	11.8	47.1	23.5	5.9	11.8
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for district staff development waivers.	5.9	41.2	11.8	11.8	29.4
Please judge the overall "quality" of the DAC's involvement in providing input for budget development and recommendations.	11.8	41.2	11.8	17.6	17.6

Table 7: Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items for the DAC Committee Members, 2004–05

Survey Items (N = 17)	Percent Responding (%)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.	6.7	80.0	13.3	0.0	0.0
Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.	35.3	64.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
My role on the DAC was clear.	17.6	64.7	17.6	0.0	0.0
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.	35.3	64.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	14.3	78.6	0.0	7.1	0.0
The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	52.9	47.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.	15.4	46.2	23.1	15.4	0.0
DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0

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." Among the items presented, the following were rated as "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" by 100% of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- "Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner,"
- "I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings," and
- "The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year."

In addition, respondents were likely to disagree that DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents (40.0%) and that DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely manner (40.0%).

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 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 additional 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?

DAC respondents were asked "How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?" Five emergent categories were evident among the 12 respondents. **Table 8** provides the number and percent of respondents for the five emergent categories. Of the 12 surveys completed, 25.0% of the respondents indicated

Table 8: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing the Benefits of the DAC, 2004–05

<u>Emergent Response Category</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DAC has allowed for greater participation by school staff and other stakeholders.	3	25.0
DAC has given teachers and other stakeholders a voice.	2	16.7
DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.	3	25.0
DAC has given the feeling of ownership and leadership to the DAC members.	1	8.3
Other	3	25.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 9: Numbers and Percentages of Responses Describing How the DAC Could be More Effective for HISD, 2004–05

<u>Emergent Response Category</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Percent</u>
The DAC is effective enough.	2	15.4
Allow more teacher input.	2	15.4
Provide information prior to meeting to improve discussion	3	23.1
Meet with Superintendent	4	30.8
Other	2	15.4
Total	13	100.0

that 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). Comparable percentages indicated that DAC has facilitated better communication among school staff and other stakeholders.

How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?

Four categories emerged from the analysis of DAC members’ responses to the question “How could the District Advisory Committee process be more effective?” Only 13 members provided responses to this question. The results are presented in **Table 9**.

The highest emergent category was “meet with the superintendent,” which received 30.8% of the responses. The second highest category indicated by the respondents was that the DAC could be more effective by providing information prior to meeting to improve discussion (23.1%).

Conclusion

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 stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the decision-making 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 DACs during the 2004–05 school year. Surveys were administered in the spring 2005 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. Notification requesting participation was disseminated to all committee members serving during the 2004–05 school year in each of HISD’s administrative districts.

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 overwhelmingly indicated that they had excellent involvement in providing input on school waivers. In contrast, lower ratings were received on providing input on issues such as modifications for special needs students, use of discretionary funds, input on staffing patterns, organization of departments or teaching teams, and student services.

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.

This report also presents the second 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. Notification requesting participation was disseminated to all committee members serving during the 2004–05 administration in each of HISD’s administrative districts.

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 in whether the minutes were available to staff members and parents. The open-ended questions confirm the overall results of the data provided by the DAC members. The DACs are effective; however, more teacher input should be allowed.

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.

Appendix A

Survey of the Shared Decision-Making Committee, 2004–05

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 2004–2005?
 - 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 2004–2005 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 A (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
- b. Some training received
- c. No training received/Training needed
- d. No training received
- e. Not Applicable

- 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 (2004–2005), 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 A (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 B Survey of the District Advisory Committee, 2004–05

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 2004–2005 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 (2004–2005), 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.

Appendix B (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: