

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2000–2001**

The shared decision-making process has now been under implementation in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) for over eight years. This process was adopted to encourage empowerment and decentralization within the nation's 7th largest district by providing greater control at the school/campus level. Specifically, each HISD school is required by state and district policy to elect a Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) to assist the principal with the development, review, and revision of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), which is designed to meet all of the needs of the students served by the school. The SDMC is authorized to work with the principals to:

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

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

The District Advisory Committee (DAC) has been another major initiative of HISD over the last eight years. Similar to the SDMC, committee members are elected annually. The goal of this initiative is to improve the quality of decision-making by providing the opportunity for teachers, school personnel, parents, community members and business partners to give advice regarding the process of decision-making throughout the district. The DAC meets on a monthly basis. As mandated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), each school district in Texas is to gather information regarding the effectiveness of the DAC.

The Shared Decision-Making Committees at HISD schools represent the main vehicles of decentralization in the district. By following state and district guidelines, SDMCs work to meet the individual and special needs of each school in the district by giving invested stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

To determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on SDMCs during the 2000–01 school year, surveys were administered in the Spring 2001. A separate survey was developed to obtain input from committee members of the DAC which included teachers, school-based professional staff (such as assistant principal, librarian, counselor), employees of the Central Office and administrative district office, parents, community members, and business partners.

From these surveys, the questions that addressed general procedures and activities of the SDMCs and the DAC, yielded positive responses for the most part. The frequency and notices for meetings were positively perceived and handled well. The nomination and voting process also received approval by most members. However, a few DAC members felt the process could be made more fair.

The overall quality of the SDMCs' and the DAC's involvement in decision making and school planning was also found to be effective. Higher ratings that indicated an overall approval of the SDMC's involvement in decision making included items such as staff development, student performance, instructional support, and communication procedures. However, it is not indicated if these committees are able to follow through on suggested changes or only voice new ideas.

When questioned about Region IV training, less than a third of SDMC respondents attended the training. Of these respondents, most believed that the training was effective, helpful, and that the SDMC worked better. However, while the percentage of respondents who had received no training decreased from the 1998–99 school year to the 2000–01 school year, the percentage of respondents who did receive training also decreased. Overwhelmingly, the respondents who had received training said it was helpful. SDMC members ought to encourage each other to attend the training that is offered and provide more training in areas such as site-based budgeting and team/consensus building.

The experiences and perceptions of SDMC and DAC members appeared to be positive. Approximately three-fourth of SDMC respondents felt that there was support and involvement among parents, community members and business partners in making recommendations. Further, these percentages increased between the 1998–99 and the 2000–01 school years. However, approximately a fourth of all SDMC respondents in 1998–99 and 2000–01 were not sure if parents, community members, and business partners supported or disapproved the committee's recommendations. By keeping committee members informed of which recommendations are supported and which ones are not, greater implementation of the recommendations may occur.

For members of the DAC, responses were positive in regards to their own experiences. However, it appears improvements could be made in areas such as decision-making by consensus and meeting minutes received in a timely fashion. As an advisory committee, changes are more likely to take place when the most knowledgeable decisions are suggested.

# SHARED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2000–2001

## Introduction

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## Methods

### Data Collection

To determine the perceptions of teachers, non-instructional school personnel, parents, community members, and business representatives who participated on SDMCs during the 2000–01 school year, surveys were administered in the Spring 2001. The survey (see **Appendix A**) was designed to allow committee members to give their opinions about general SDMC procedures, SDMC and school planning, training/technical assistance procedures and activities, and experiential/perceptual effectiveness. Questions in these areas were based on a multiple-response set format. Respondents were also given the opportunity to critique the SDMC on two additional open-ended questions that assessed how the SDMC benefited the school and how the SDMC process could be more

effective.

In order to obtain a representative sample, surveys were provided to all possible SDMC membership groups: principals, teachers, school-based personnel, non-instructional staff, parents, community members, and business partners. In each of the 13 administrative districts, one high school, one middle school, and six elementary schools were randomly selected. Then, the number of members at each school was obtained by the District SDMC coordinator. Surveys were then sent out to each principal to distribute to all SDMC members during the school’s next SDMC meeting. Principals then collected the surveys and returned them directly to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability.

A separate survey was developed to obtain input from members of the DAC (See **Appendix B**). Membership in the committee included teachers, school-based professional staff (such as assistant principal, librarian, counselor), employees of the Central Office and administrative district office, parents, community members, and business partners. Designed for the same purpose as the SDMC survey, respondents were given the opportunity to rate the purpose and process of the DAC using a similar format on a smaller scale. Surveys were distributed to all members during the committee’s meeting in May 2001.

**Participants**

The number of SDMC surveys returned are presented in **Table 1**. Of the 1,475 school personnel and other stakeholders from the 98 schools surveyed, 557 school personnel and 56 other community stakeholder SDMC members returned surveys for a total of 619. Among members who returned the survey, 90.0% were school personnel and 9.0% were other stakeholders. Specifically, the highest return rate was by classroom teachers with

Table 1: SDMC Surveys Returned by Respondent Group

Specific Membership Group	N Returned	Percentage
Classroom Teacher	364	58.8%
Other School Based Personnel	123	19.9%
Principal	36	5.8%
Non-Instructional Staff	34	5.5%
<b>Total: School Personnel</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>90.0%</b>
Parent	42	6.8%
Community Member	8	1.3%
Business Partner	6	1.0%
<b>Total: Other Stakeholders</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>Total: Overall</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>100%</b>

58.8% and the lowest was by business partners with 1.0%.

SDMC survey respondents represented all school levels within HISD. Those affiliated with HISD elementary schools had the highest response rate with 66.2% (see **Figure 1**). In addition, all 13 HISD administrative districts were represented among respondents. The North and Northeast districts had the highest number of respondents with 83 and 72, respectively (see **Table 2**).

Of the 17 DAC surveys distributed at the last meeting, 100.0% of the surveys were returned. **Table 3** presents

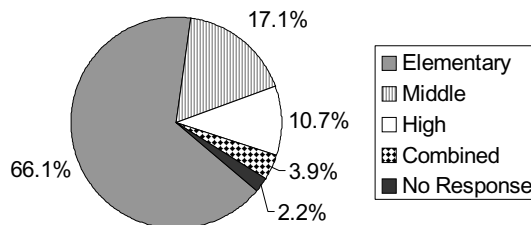


Figure 1: SDMC response rates by academic level.

Table 2: SDMC Respondents by Respondent Group and Administrative District

	Principal	Teacher	School Staff	Other School Professional	Parent	Community Member	Business Partner	Total
Central	6	31	3	14	10	1	0	65
East	2	42	4	12	2	0	1	63
North	4	53	4	16	4	0	2	83
N. Central	5	36	2	19	4	3	0	69
Northeast	4	44	4	15	5	0	0	72
Northwest	6	36	4	13	7	0	1	67
South	5	35	4	17	1	1	1	64
S. Central	0	26	3	7	2	1	1	40
Southeast	1	36	4	8	2	0	0	51
Southwest	3	27	1	5	4	0	1	41
West	6	43	2	7	5	0	2	65
Alternative	2	18	6	9	1	1	0	37
Acres Home	3	23	1	9	7	0	0	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>760</b>

the distribution of surveys returned. The DAC members who returned the survey included: 64.7% teachers, 11.8% school-based staff members, 11.8% staff members from Central Office, 5.9% staff members from an administrative district, and 5.9% community members. Classroom teachers had the highest rate of return; while neither parents

Table 3: DAC Surveys Returned

Specific Membership Group	N (Returned)	Percentage
Classroom Teacher	11	64.7%
Other School Based Personnel	2	11.8%
Central Office Staff	2	11.8%
Administrative District Staff	1	5.9%
<b>Total: School Personnel</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>94.2%</b>
Parent	0	0.0%
Community Member	1	5.9%
Business Partner	0	0.0%
<b>Total: Other Stakeholders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
<b>No Response</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Total: Overall</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.1%</b>

nor business partners completed a survey.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized in order to analyze the data. Frequencies, percentages, and crosstabulations were calculated for the closed-ended questions. Qualitative analysis based on emergent categories was used to summarize the data from open-ended questions.

**Results**

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

**General Procedures and Overall Quality**

Seven questions included on the survey (7 - 13, Appendix A) were items related to general SDMC procedures and activities (see **Table 4**). The SDMC members were asked how long they had been a member of SDMC. The largest percentage of respondents had served 1–2 years (39.1%) and the other respondents were almost equal with less than a year and more than two years (29.2% and 29.9%, respectively). The majority of respondents answered that their SDMC met 1–2 times a month (75.0%). The majority also felt that meeting monthly was “just right” in the amount of times (78.5%). When meetings were scheduled, 88.0% 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” (68.8% and 69.6%, respectively). Finally, respondents were asked in what capacity does their school’s SDMC operate. The majority felt that they were the decision-making entity for the campus, 40.7%, followed by the advisory committee to the principal, 27.9%.

Table 4: SDMC Procedures and Activities

How long have you been a member of the SDMC?	Less than a Year 29.2%	1–2 Years 39.1%	More than 2 Years 29.9%		
How often did your school’s SDMC meet during 2000–01?	1-2 times per Month 75.0%	3+ per Month 3.9%	Quarterly 11.1%	Annually 1.0%	Not Sure 6.0%
The number of times your SDMC met was:	Too few 10.5%	Just Right 78.5%	Too Many 2.4%	Not Sure 5.7%	
Did you receive notice of SDMC meetings in a timely fashion?	Yes 88.0%	No 7.6%	Not Sure 1.8%		
The ten-day nomination period for elections to the SDMC is:	Too Short 4.0%	Just Right 68.8%	Too Long 13.9%	Not Sure 10.8%	
How fair are the voting procedures in SDMC elections for committee members?	Very Fair 69.6%	Somewhat Fair 19.1%	Not Very Fair 2.7%	Not Fair at All 1.1%	Not Sure 5.7%
In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?	Advisory Committee to the Principal 27.9%	Decision-Making entity for Campus 40.7%	Advisory Committee to the Principal, with approval of staff development 17.6%		Not Sure 10.3%

Fourteen questions (14 - 27, Appendix A) included were items related to the quality of the SDMC’s involvement in decision-making and school planning (see **Table 5**). The majority response to all questions was “good” and all questions received a majority of excellent and good responses. Notable fair to poor responses were found for questions relating to modifications for special needs students, student grouping patterns, input on staffing patterns, and student services.

From the DAC survey, three questions (3 - 6, Appendix B) were related to general DAC procedures (See **Table 6**). When asked the number of times DAC held meetings during the 2000–01 school year, 93.8% of the respondents felt that the number was “just right.” With regards to receiving notices of the meetings, 100.0% of the respondents felt that they were informed in a timely fashion. The last question dealt with the school nomination procedures for DAC committee members. Similar to the SDMC responses, the majority of respondents felt that the procedures were “very fair” with fewer respondents perceiving them “somewhat fair” (81.3% and 12.5%, respectively).

Four questions included in the DAC survey (7 - 10, Appendix B) that related to the overall quality of the DAC’s involvement in providing input. With regards to student performance, such as TAAS scores, TEA Accountability

Table 5: SDMC Involvement in Decision Making and School Planning

Shared Decision-Making and School Planning Items	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
Student performance—TAAS scores, TEA Accountability Ratings, etc.	27.9%	47.7%	15.0%	4.2%	3.2%
Curriculum issues	23.9%	45.2%	20.8%	5.5%	2.7%
Modifications for special needs students	18.1%	38.9%	21.8%	9.7%	9.7%
Student grouping patterns	15.3%	40.7%	20.8%	9.4%	11.5%
School waiver requests	27.1%	39.6%	14.5%	4.5%	12.4%
Alternative assessment instruments and/or methods	16.3%	39.7%	19.9%	9.0%	12.8%
Budget development and recommendations	23.3%	38.8%	18.9%	9.9%	7.3%
Use of discretionary campus funds	21.5%	37.6%	17.6%	10.7%	10.7%
Input on staffing patterns	18.6%	37.2%	19.5%	11.5%	10.8%
Campus-based staff development	29.7%	41.7%	16.0%	5.5%	5.0%
Organization of departments or teaching teams	19.7%	40.4%	16.0%	10.5%	11.3%
Communication procedures	26.0%	42.2%	19.9%	7.1%	2.7%
Instructional support – library, media, technology, etc.	25.2%	43.1%	17.6%	7.4%	4.5%
Student services – counseling, nursing, nutrition, etc.	21.6%	38.4%	20.0%	10.0%	7.6%

Table 6: DAC Procedures Questions and Involvement in Decision Making and School Planning

The number of times the DAC met during the 2000–01 school year was:	Too few 0.0%	Just Right 93.8%	Too Many 6.3%	Not Sure 0.0%	
Did you receive notice of DAC meetings in a timely fashion?	Yes 100.0%	No 0.0%	Not Sure 0.0%		
How fair are the school nomination procedures in DAC committee members?	Very Fair 81.3%	Somewhat Fair 12.5%	Not Very Fair 6.25%	Not At All Fair 0.0%	Not Sure 0.0%
Student performance—TAAS scores, TEA Accountability Ratings, etc.	Excellent 26.7%	Good 40.0%	Fair 26.7%	Poor 0.0%	N/A 6.7%
Curriculum issues	Excellent 37.5%	Good 50.0%	Fair 6.25%	Poor 0.0%	N/A 6.3%
District staff development waivers	Excellent 43.8%	Good 37.5%	Fair 6.25%	Poor 12.5%	N/A 0.0%
Budget development and recommendations	Excellent 47.1%	Good 23.5%	Fair 11.8%	Poor 17.6%	N/A 0.0%

Ratings, etc., 40.0% of respondents felt it was “good,” while 26.7% answered with “excellent” and another 26.7% answered with “fair.” The majority of respondents (50.0%) felt the overall quality was “good” with regards to curriculum

issues; while the 43.8% of the respondents also felt the overall quality was “excellent” when responding to district staff development waivers. There were 47.1% of respondents that answered with “excellent” when asked about the budget development and recommendations.

**Technical/Training Assistance**

Four closed-ended questions and one open-ended question (29 - 33, Appendix A) were asked regarding Region IV SDMC training for the 2000–01 school year. **Table 7** presents the results from the closed-ended questions. Only 27.5% of those who returned their survey had gone to Region IV training. Of those who attended, 90.0% said it was helpful and 67.1% replied they had trained others. The overall feeling among those who had participated was that

Table 7: SDMC Response Rate to Participation and Effectiveness of Region IV Training

	Yes	No
Participation in SDMC training presented by Region IV?	27.5%	66.1%
For the those that attended, was the training helpful?	90.0%	2.9%
Did those that attended train others in the techniques presented?	67.1%	30.6%
Does the SDMC work better because of training?	73.5%	22.9%

the SDMC did work better as a result of the training (73.5%).

When asked why the SDMC does not work better as a result of Region IV training, 31 people responded to this question. The largest percentage, 35.5%, found that there was no change in the SDMC and that the information had not been shared yet. Other respondents stated that it was not helpful (16.1%).

Four items (34 - 37, Appendix A) included on the survey were 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**. The majority of the respondents received either full training or some training on the role of SDMC. Similarly, 57.7% and 51.7%, respectively, of the respondents also received at least some training in developing School Improvement Plans and Team/Consensus Building. Site-based budgeting registered the largest percentage of SDMC respondents, 49.4%.

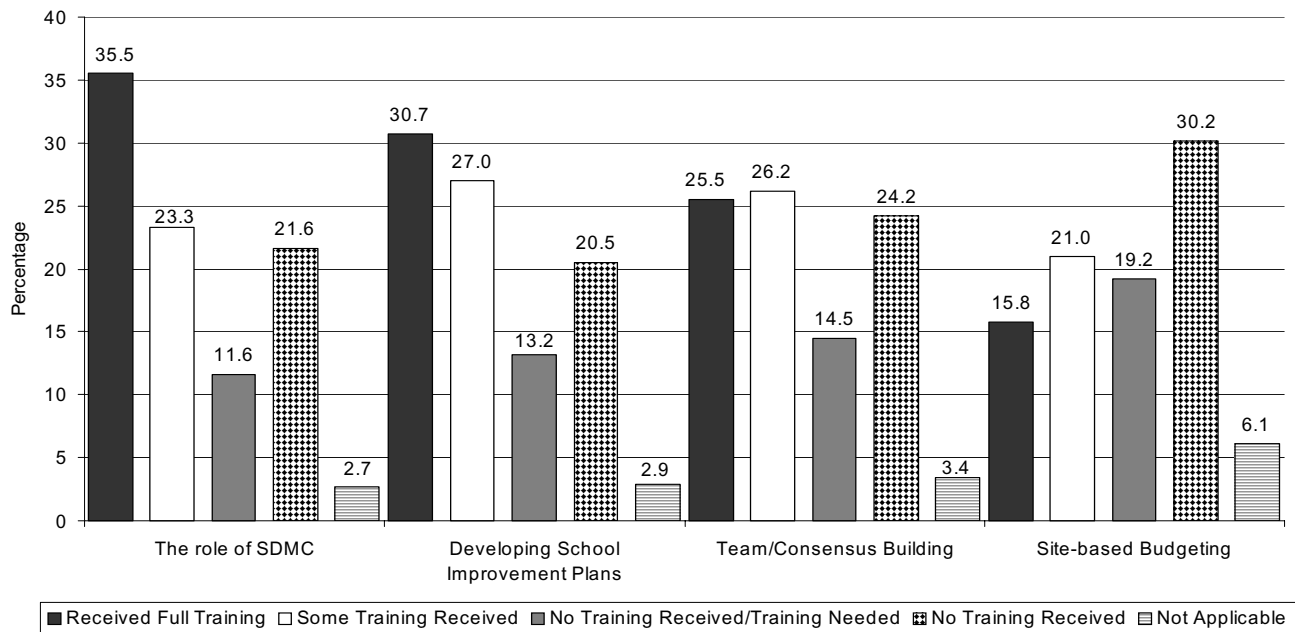


Figure 2: SDMC response rates to training/technical assistance items.



### Experiential/Perceptual Items

Twenty-six items included on the SDMC survey (39 - 64, Appendix A) were statements designed to assess SDMC members' perceptions and experiences. The results from the survey for these items are presented in **Table 8**. The following statements were rated as "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" by more than 75.0% of the SDMC members who participated in the survey process:

- "Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC," 82.5%;
- "Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC," 79.7%;
- "Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner," 82.1%;
- "My role on SDMC was clear," 80.3%;
- "Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members," 82.6%;
- "I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings," 84.7%;
- "Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus," 85.3%;
- "The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year," 79.0%;
- "SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff and parents," 82.0%;
- "SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion," 81.1%;
- "Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan," 77.7%;

The following statements were rated "Strongly Disagree" or "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," 22.1%;
- "The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right," 23.3%;
- "The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC planning and decision-making was about right," 26.0%;
- "During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed," 54.2%;

Respondents to the DAC survey were asked to assess the degree to which members agree or disagree with nine items of an experiential and/or perceptual nature (12 - 22, Appendix B). Respondents were favorable, over 85.0% rated these items either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree".

- "Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year," 94.1%;
- "Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner," 100.0%;
- "My role on the DAC was clear," 100.0%;
- "I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings," 100.0%;
- "Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus," 87.5%;
- "The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year," 94.1%;
- "The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development," 94.1%;
- "DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents," 94.1%;
- "DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion," 88.2%;

### Open-ended Questions and Items

Both the SDMC survey and the DAC survey employed two additional open-ended questions in order to collect information about the perceptions of their members. The questions allowed participating SDMC and DAC members to voice their opinions about the benefits of the committee, ways in which the shared decision-making process could be made more effective, and any other comments about committees. Similar comments were suggested and are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

#### *How schools have benefited from the SDMCs and DACs*

Eight specific categories emerged from the analysis of the SDMC members' responses to the question, "How

Table 8: SDMC Response Rates to Experiential/Perceptual Items

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Our Shared Decision Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.	22.3%	49.9%	12.8%	3.6%	7.1%
In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.	18.7%	50.2%	12.1%	1.8%	12.9%
Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.	33.4%	49.1%	6.3%	0.6%	6.5%
Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	22.8%	56.9%	5.7%	0.8%	9.7%
The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.	20.4%	51.5%	4.4%	0.8%	18.9%
Community members in our area supported our school plan.	20.5%	48.9%	2.6%	1.0%	22.8%
Businesses in our community supported our school plan.	18.7%	47.3%	3.2%	1.0%	25.5%
Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself in an effective manner.	34.9%	47.2%	6.3%	2.4%	4.5%
My role on the SDMC was clear.	33.9%	46.4%	7.8%	2.3%	5.2%
It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.	28.1%	45.9%	11.5%	1.5%	8.6%
The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	16.8%	49.4%	14.7%	7.4%	7.3%
The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	14.9%	45.7%	16.5%	6.8%	11.3%
The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.	14.4%	40.5%	19.2%	6.8%	13.6%
Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.	33.8%	48.8%	5.3%	1.1%	6.3%
Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.	26.7%	43.9%	9.9%	1.8%	12.8%
I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.	40.9%	43.8%	5.0%	2.1%	3.2%
Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.	34.7%	50.6%	3.1%	1.3%	5.2%
The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.	38.8%	40.2%	7.1%	2.9%	5.7%
During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.	7.4%	25.4%	32.6%	21.6%	6.6%
The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.	23.1%	44.6%	13.2%	4.5%	8.9%
SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.	38.1%	43.9%	5.0%	1.9%	5.7%
SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.	37.5%	43.6%	5.8%	2.3%	5.2%
The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.	18.9%	39.3%	14.2%	5.7%	15.8%
Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.	17.1%	41.0%	12.8%	4.0%	18.6%
Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.	31.7%	46.0%	4.5%	1.8%	9.2%
The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.	27.5%	44.1%	9.2%	1.9%	9.2%

has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?" The responses were categorized when a minimum of five similar responses were revealed. The most widely recognized benefit was giving stakeholders a voice, 29.7%. The categorized benefits indicated the SDMC facilitates more effective decision making (14.4%), facilitates better communication among school staff and other stakeholders (11.7%), has no

benefits (10.0%), allows for greater participation (8.1%), fosters cohesion (7.2%), provides a feeling of ownership and leadership (5.4%), general helpfulness (5.4%), and other (8.1%).

The following responses from the DAC survey address the question, “How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?”

- “Administrative District Support Staff was able to hear the voice of the teachers and adjust plans accordingly;”
- “Communication has improved across the board;”
- “Lots of feedback on a multitude of issues;”
- “Getting information from member of the school and other community;”
- “An excellent opportunity for networking and allowing staff and teachers’ issues to surface in a supportive environment;”
- “We were able to disseminate information and learn new things.”

#### *How the Shared Decision-Making Process Could Be Made More Effective*

The following seven responses emerged through the analysis of SDMC members’ responses to the question “How could the Shared-Decision Making process be more effective?”. The most popular response was that SDMCs needed more parent and community participation (18.7%). Participants also said the SDMC could be more effective through more faculty involvement (16.5%), a clearer agenda and process (14.3%), no change as it is effective enough (8.8%), to meet more regularly (8.8%), a teacher stipend (6.6%), and more SDMC training (6.6%). Other responses consisted of 19.8% which could not be categorized.

The following responses from the DAC survey address the question, “How could the DAC process be more effective?”

- “Set norms for the meeting on protocol for meetings;”
- “I think it is evolving into a very important program.”
- “Having a superintendent in the meeting,”
- “Try to schedule shorter meetings, maybe on one theme.”

Highlights of the open-ended questions from the DAC survey are listed as follows:

- “...it took me a while to figure out what we were doing. I think the rotating terms will help with this - I enjoyed this experience - I learned a lot of beneficial information that I could share with our staff...;”
- “Attendance should be looked at more closely... Those not attending could ask a proxy or have to ask an alternate;”
- “This experience has been most rewarding;”
- “Thanks for all you have given me to help me understand HISD in so many areas;”
- “Excellent, organized agendas... I appreciate the opportunity to have served;”

## **Conclusion**

The Shared Decision-Making Committees at HISD schools represent the main vehicles of decentralization in the district. By following state and district guidelines, SDMCs work to meet the individual and special needs of each school in the district by giving invested stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

In regards to the general procedures and activities of the SDMCs and the DAC, most responses were positive. The frequency and notices for meetings were positively perceived and handled well. The nomination and voting process also received approval by most members. However, a few DAC members felt the process could be made more fair. In response to the SDMC survey question, “In what capacity does the SDMC operate on your campus?”, there was less consensus. The most frequent answer was a “decision-making entity for campus.” These split responses indicate that individual schools use their SDMCs at different levels and capacities.

The overall quality of the SDMCs' and the DAC's involvement in decision making and school planning was also found to be effective. Higher ratings that indicated an overall approval of the SDMC's involvement in decision making included items such as staff development, student performance, instructional support, and communication procedures. Campus-based committees are able to make decisions because of their localized position. However, it is not indicated if these committees are able to follow through on suggested changes or only voice new ideas. Similar responses were noted on the DAC surveys but again, whether these committees are able to participate in acting on these decisions is not clear.

When questioned about Region IV training, only 27.5% of SDMC respondents attended the training. Of these respondents, most believed that the training was effective, helpful, and that the SDMC worked better. However, while the percentage of respondents who had received no training decreased from the 1998–99 school year to the 2000–01 school year, the percentage of respondents who did receive training also decreased. Overwhelmingly, the respondents who had received training said it was helpful. SDMC members ought to encourage each other to attend the training that is offered and provide more training in areas such as site-based budgeting and team/consensus building.

The experiences and perceptions of SDMC and DAC members appeared to be positive. Approximately three-fourth of SDMC respondents felt that there was support and involvement among parents, community members and business partners in making recommendations. Further, these percentages increased between the 1998–99 and the 2000–01 school years. However, approximately a fourth of all SDMC respondents in 1998–99 and 2000–01 were not sure if parents, community members, and business partners supported or disapproved the committee's recommendations. By keeping committee members informed of which recommendations are supported and which ones are not, greater implementation of the recommendations may occur.

For members of the DAC, responses were positive in regards to their own experiences. However, it appears improvements could be made in areas such as decision-making by consensus and meeting minutes received in a timely fashion. Through thoughtful and informed discussion can reasonable decisions be made. As an advisory committee, changes are more likely to take place when the most knowledgeable decisions are suggested.

## APPENDIX A

### HISD Survey of the 2000-2001 Shared Decision-Making Committee Process

Shared Decision-Making has been a major initiative of the Houston Independent School District for more than seven years. The goal of this initiative is to improve the quality of decision-making in the district by providing the opportunity for input and involvement of those who are affected by the decisions. The purpose of this survey is to gather information regarding the effectiveness of the Shared Decision-Making process at your school and across the district, as mandated by the Texas Education Code.

Please complete and return this **survey and scantron in an envelope labeled “SDMC Survey”** to the principal at your school so that it can be returned by **April 15<sup>th</sup>** to the Department of Research and Accountability. All of your responses will remain confidential. Your cooperation is much appreciated as this survey is an important part of the district's continuing efforts to improve services.

Instructions: On the accompanying scantron sheet, please darken the corresponding oval with your response. In addition, respond to short answer questions in the space provided. Please do not fill in your name on the scantron.

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. Alternative	c. 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 2000-2001?
  - 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 2000-2001 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  
 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Training/Technical Assistance-

29. Did you participate in the SDMC training presented by Region IV?  
 a. Yes    b. No
30. If yes, did you find the training helpful?  
 a. Yes    b. No
31. Have SDMC members who did attend train other SDMC members in the techniques learned at the Region IV presentation?  
 a. Yes    b. No
32. Does the SDMC work better as a result of the Region IV training?  
 a. Yes    b. No
33. If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| a. Received training                    | d. No training received |
| b. Some training received               | e. Not Applicable       |
| c. No training received/Training needed |                         |
34. The role of the SDMC  
 35. Developing School Improvement Plans  
 36. Team-building skills/Consensus-building  
 37. Site-based budgeting

Considering the last school year (2000-2001), 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
39. Our Shared Decision-Making Committee accomplished a great deal in the past year.
  40. In general, all of the members of the SDMC were satisfied with the committee's work.
  41. Our principal supported most of the recommendations of our SDMC.
  42. Teachers at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.
  43. The parents at our school supported the recommendations of our SDMC.
  44. Community members in our area supported our school plan.
  45. Businesses in our community supported our school plan.
  46. Our SDMC was well organized and conducted itself an effective manner.
  47. My role on the SDMC was clear.
  48. It seemed that everyone on the SDMC was clear about his or her role.
  49. The level of involvement of parents on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
  50. The level of involvement of community members on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
  51. The level of involvement of business partners on the SDMC in planning and decision-making was about right.
  52. Our SDMC was open to new ideas from non-SDMC members.
  53. Other staff members and parents were aware of the process for submitting items to the SDMC for consideration.
  54. I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our SDMC meetings.
  55. Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.
  56. The SDMC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.
  57. During the school year the SDMC schedule was regularly changed.
  58. The SDMC played an important role in campus-based professional development.
  59. SDMC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.
  60. SDMC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.
  61. The SDMC subcommittees met regularly.
  62. Other non-SDMC faculty members and parents participated through subcommittees.
  63. Our SDMC operated in the way described in our School Improvement Plan.
  64. The principal implemented the majority of the SDMC recommendations.

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If possible, please answer the following short answer questions:

65. How has your school benefited from having a Shared Decision-Making Committee?
66. How could the Shared Decision-Making process be more effective?
67. Additional comments you may have regarding the Shared Decision-Making Committee Process:

## APPENDIX B

### HISD Survey of the 2000-2001 District Advisory Committee Process

The District Advisory Committee has been a major initiative of the Houston Independent School District for more than seven years. The goal of this initiative is to improve the quality of decision-making in the district by providing the opportunity for people to give advice regarding decision-making. The purpose of this survey is to gather information regarding the effectiveness of the District Advisory Committee, as mandated by the Texas Education Code.

Please complete and return this **survey and scantron** at the end of this meeting. All of your responses will remain confidential. Your cooperation is much appreciated as this survey is an important part of the district's continuing efforts to improve services.

Instructions: On the accompanying scantron sheet, please darken the corresponding oval with your response. In addition, respond to short answer questions in the space provided. Please do not fill in your name on the scantron.

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 2000-2001 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. Student performance—TAAS scores, TEA Accountability Ratings, etc.
  8. Curriculum issues
  9. District staff development waivers
  10. Budget development and recommendations
  11. Other:
-



Considering the last school year (2000-2001), 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
12. Our DAC accomplished a great deal in the past year.
  13. Our DAC was well organized and conducted in an effective manner.
  14. My role on the DAC was clear.
  15. I felt very comfortable and free to express my thoughts at our DAC meetings.
  16. Our committee reached most recommendations by consensus.
  17. The DAC meeting schedule was set at the beginning of the school year.
  18. The DAC played an important role in district-based staff development.
  19. DAC meeting minutes were readily available to staff members and parents.
  20. DAC meeting minutes were provided in a timely fashion.

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If possible, please answer the following short answer questions:

21. How has HISD benefited from having a District Advisory Committee?
  
22. How could the DAC process be more effective?
  
23. Additional comments you may have regarding the DAC: