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School Based Management in Colorado Public Schools: The Impact of Administrative Decision Making on the Achievement of Low-Socio Economic and Minority Students

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SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION MAKING ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND MINORITY STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

To my son, Garrett, remember you can be anything and do anything you want in life, all you need is the courage to try. Dream big, have faith, and let it be. Success is about perserverance. 1-4-3.

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by

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ABSTRACT

One of the most popular reform initiatives of the 20th century was the decentralization of administrative services and decision making in public schools. The implementation of site-based decision making (SBDM) or school-based management (SBM) was an effort to delegate decision making authority to the schools sites. The hope was that those working closest to the students would be able to make the best decision to improve student achievement. As popular as this reform effort became, over the years there has not been much research to measure its direct impact on student learning and achievement especially for minority and low-socio economic students. This study was designed to explore the impact of SBDM on an administrator's decision making ability and achievement for minority and low socio-economic students. The results of the study were inconclusive and further research is necessary to determine the direct impact of SBDM. The data for this study was collected by administrator surveys, one on one interviews and standardized state achievement tests. Focus of the data was twofold. First, the purpose of the interviews was to gather direct information from administrators to identify patterns and themes regarding their ability to make decisions regarding the achievement of minority and low socio-economic students. Second, overall achievement data was examined to determine if the implementation of SBDM in the Pikes Peak school district has an impact on student achievement for these particular students.

The major result from this study came from the face-to-face interviews with administrators. SBDM in the Pikes Peak school district is alive and well accepted. Administrators are committed to SBDM and are still enthusiastic about the autonomy that SBDM promotes. All the administrators agreed that SBDM can improve student achievement. What is evident from the one on one interviews, is that there is not a clear delineation of what is

and what is not SBDM in this district. There is a clear need for administrators to have a clear definition of policies and procedures for specific issues within the district. As this district continues to grow in student population and grow in the number of minority and low socio-economic students, it will be important to have specific procedures and policies in place that continue to promote SBDM, and provides administrators enough support to make good decisions to foster student achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the best known school reforms of the 20th century has been the decentralization of public schools. The decentralization approach to educational reform is recognized as school self management, school-based governance, site-based management or site-based decision making (B. Caldwell, 2005). The purpose of this reform was to give schools more local control of their decisions specifically those involving curriculum, finance, personnel, and student support programs (Hill & Bonan, 1991). As this reform effort gained momentum and popularity, underlying questions surfaced regarding the level of impact on student achievement, specifically for students that are minorities and/or economically disadvantaged. School-based management has become a popular political reform model that gives local school participants--educators, parents, students and the community-at-large--the power to improve their school (Wohlstelter, 1995). By moving governance and management to the school level, those with most at stake are empowered to do something about how their school is performing (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). As control is transferred, the school level actors have to conform to, or operate within a set of centrally determined policies (B. Caldwell, 1998).

Although certain aspects of the literature have revealed that school-based management increases student achievement, a question must be posed: Is the intended idea of transferring power to the local school sites enough to increase achievement for all students? A second question: Do educators in elementary schools have the skills and the incentives to make the fundamental changes in how they enact their roles as decision makers (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996)? These actors are usually organized in a team or council and represent their colleagues and school community (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory; SEDL, 1991). Do these

teams have adequate training in site-based decision making? Do they have the expertise and background knowledge to make decisions regarding educational programs and outcomes?

To determine how organizations obtain the involvement of stakeholders, an examination of the work of Edward E. Lawler is critical. Lawler's high-involvement framework is used to study the implementation of school-based management and the level of involvement of stakeholders in improving student achievement. The high-involvement model focuses on creating the capability for meaningful involvement in the organization and its overall performance (Lawler, 1986; Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992). The high involvement framework identifies four resources which must be spread throughout the organization: (a) power to make or influence decision; (b) information upon which good decisions can be made; (c) knowledge and skills; and (d) rewards for performance. This model is also designed to get people focusing on the ongoing improvement of performance.

Statement of the Problem

School (Site)-based management or SBM has been adopted by many school systems to increase school autonomy and to share decision-making with teachers, parents, students, and community members. With a large body of research from the private sector on the benefits of participatory decision-making, school leaders believed that SBM would be the promising strategy for improving the quality of educational decision-making because it engages those closest to the action (Poverty Reduction and Education Management [PREM], 2007). SBM encompasses a variety of strategies, ranging from full autonomy schools with authority over every educational, financial, professional development, and personnel matters to more restrictive versions that allow autonomy over certain school operations such as curriculum, schedules, and interventions (PREM, 2007). The scope of local empowerment varies from district to district and

to whom greater decision power and accountability are transferred (Cohen, 1988). Typical goals for SBM include (a) increasing the participation of parents and communities in schools, (b) empowering principals and teachers, (c) building local level capacity, (d) creating accountability mechanisms for site-based actors and improving the transparencies of processes by devolution of authority; and (e) improving quality and efficiency of schooling thus raising student achievement levels (PREM, 2007).

Although the implementation of school-based management was to decentralize the decision making process, the effects of SBM on achievement for minority and low socio-economic students merits study (Greenblatt, Cooper, & Muth, 1983; PREM, 2007). By merely transferring power to the local site, does not necessarily equate to school improvement and increased achievement for all students. Because there is a plethora of research for implementing SBM, many could interpret this as an effective school reform initiative however, there is limited documented research on its direct impact on student achievement, specifically for minority and economically disadvantaged students and administrators' ability to make decisions regarding student achievement (SEDL, 1991).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of school-based management (SBM) on an administrator's ability to make decisions regarding the achievement of economically disadvantaged and minority students. The goal of SBM is to increase students' achievement. By giving those closest to the building a voice in decisions, "We are, in effect creating ownership for those responsible for carrying out decisions by involving them directly in the decision making process--and by trusting their abilities and judgment" (Harrison, Killion, & Mitchell, 1989, p. 55). After reviewing the fundamental aspects of SBM, it is important to

understand how the principal role and authority is impacted by this educational reform (Tanner & Stone, 1998). This study will not only identify the varying and definitions and parameters of SBM, but also identify how the varying degrees of implementation and processes for decision making at the site level impact the scope of an elementary principal's decision-making ability. Coupled with a lack of structure and consistency from within central office to the site level, these issues can indirectly promote underachievement for all students and more specifically for the low socio-economic and minority students (S. D. Caldwell & Wood, 1988; Glickman, 1990).

The results of this study may impact school governance policies and provide insight into the effectiveness of this type of school reform. Superintendents, central office personnel, and principals will find the results of this study beneficial when determining at what level instructional programs, professional development, policies and regulations need to be established to promote school improvement equally for all students.

Research Questions

The questions of this study will address the impact of implementation of school-based management on elementary principals' ability to make decisions regarding the academic achievement of low socio-economic and minority students.

1. How does the implementation of site-based management affect the decisions of elementary school principals?

2. How does the implementation of site-based decision making relate to the academic achievement of low socio-economic and minority students as measured by the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)?

3. What are the principals' perceptions regarding central office administration support of site-based decision making?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of site-based management was to democratize schools and bring the responsibility of decisions as close to the school as possible (Funkhouser,1996). Because site-based management is implemented in widely different forms within a single district, it is difficult to identify consistent processes that are used in decision making at the site level. However, Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990) found that, in the cases they reviewed, there was "little evidence that school-based management alters, influences relationships, renews organizations or engenders the characteristics of academically effective schools" (p. 324), and concluded that the reforms simply failed to produce any substantive change.

There have been many attempts to explain how and why low socio-economic and minority students fail to attain high academic achievement levels. The Equal Educational Opportunity Survey by J. S. Coleman concluded that family background was the contributing factor of student achievement (Edmonds, 1979). However, through effective school research, existing schools were identified for their success with these students despite their background. Schools were identified as having strong instructional leadership, a sense of mission and high expectations for all students. The creation of the Effective School Correlates was the beginning of inclusive practices for schools. As our nation continues to experience increased numbers of minorities in our population, it is important to understand the history of compensatory education, the foundation of the effective school correlates, and the purposes of SBDM. If all students are going to attain high levels of academic achievement, it would be important to study why over time, low socio-economic students still underachieve despite many efforts of school reform.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

In July 1966, "The Equal Educational Opportunity Survey" was published by J. S. Coleman and others. The Coleman report concluded that family background, not the school, was the major determinant of student achievement. Coleman was foremost among a group of social scientists who, during the 1960s and 1970s, believed that family factors such as poverty or a parent's lack of education prevented children from learning regardless of the method of instruction. His report, along with the related literature, was the catalyst to the creation of "compensatory education" programs that dominated school improvement throughout those decades. According to Ron Edmonds (1979), these programs, provided chiefly through Title I of the Elementary Secondary Education Act, "taught low-income children to learn in ways that conformed to most schools' preferred ways of teaching" (p. 15). These programs focused on changing students' behavior in order to compensate for their disadvantaged backgrounds and made no effort to change school behavior.

The first task of the effective schools researchers was to identify existing effective schools--schools that were successful in educating all students regardless of their socio-economic status or family background. Examples of these especially effective schools were found repeatedly, in varying locations and in both large and small communities. After identifying these schools, the task remained to identify the common characteristics among these effective schools. In other words, what philosophies, policies, and practices did these schools have in common (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1987).

Upon closer inspection, the researchers found that all of these especially effective schools had strong instructional leadership, a strong sense of mission, demonstrated effective instructional behaviors, held high expectations for all students, practiced frequent monitoring of

student achievement, and operated in a safe and orderly manner. These attributes eventually became known as the Correlates of Effective Schools (Edmonds, 1979; Edmonds & Frederiksen, 1981; Lezotte, 1987).

Other aspects of the Effective Schools Movement have evolved over the years as well. The early definition of effective schools rested on the concept of equity between children from differing socio-economic classes. As educators became concerned about equity among other subsets of the population, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and family structure were added to the mix. Furthermore, the early definition was cast in terms of mastery of essential curriculum, i.e., reading and arithmetic. Over time, other curricular outcomes were added: problem-solving ability, higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and communicative ability (Lezotte, 1987).

The early Effective Schools Movement emphasized the individual school as the unit of change. Eventually, it became clear that school improvement resulting in increased student achievement could only be sustained with strong district support.

By viewing the school as a unit of change and transferring power to the local school site, it is believed that incentive is created to promote better instruction and learning (World Bank, 2008). Leadership at this level, in informal positions of authority is believed to be an unrecognized phenomenon. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) referred to leadership as flat structures that have distributed leadership over multiple people and roles and are being advocated as solutions.

The research on distributed leadership is that of optimism and enthusiasm (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Distributed leadership is thought to (a) more accurately reflect the division of labor that is experienced in organizations on a day to day basis, and (b) reduce the chances of error arising from decisions made based on the limited information available to a single leader.

The basis of distributed leadership is that it allows opportunities for the organization to benefit from the capacities of its members, it allows members to gain from their strengths and create interdependence of how one's behavior effects the organization as a whole (Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). However, can this interdependence create inequity for student outcomes? Do the members have the capacity to make decisions for all students? Increased participation can lead to greater commitment to organizational goals and student outcomes, however there is little research to support a linear connection between "collective leadership" and student outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Delimitations of the Study

The study included all 18 elementary school principals in one Colorado school district. The study also focused on this particular school district due to the increasing enrollment of low-socio-economic and minority students. Although other aspects, definitions, and concepts of SBM could be researched, principals and achievement data was the focus of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The study included 18 elementary school principals in one Colorado school district. Because the primary investigator also worked in this school district, a limitation to this study would be that the principals were not as truthful on their surveys or in their interviews for fear of retribution for expressing their opinions.

Another limitation to this study would be the background experiences of each principal. Although each principal has worked in this school district for a minimum of 1 year, each one still brings a variety of experiences working at different levels of SBDM implementation.

Definition of Terms

Administrator. Term used to describe an elementary school principal. The principal is responsible for all school operations such as curriculum, assessment, finance, personnel, etc. The term principal and administrator are used interchangeably throughout this document.

Central Office Support. For the purpose of this study, the term central office support refers to giving active help, assistance, encouragement, and/or money to enable staff to function.

Colorado Student Assessment Program. The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is designed to provide a snapshot of how students in the state of Colorado are progressing toward meeting academic standards, and how schools are doing to ensure learning success of students.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program Alternate (CSAPA). CSAPA is a standards-based assessment designed specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities and is meant to provide a picture of student performance to schools, districts, educators, parents and the community. The primary purpose of the assessment program is to determine the level at which Colorado students meet the Expanded Benchmarks which are linked to the Colorado Model Content Standards in the content areas assessed. The data should be used to keep abreast of individual student progress toward attaining achievement in the content areas. The CSAPA is collaboratively developed by the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado educators and CTB/McGraw-Hill.

Shared Decision Making. A process designed to move education decisions to the school level, where those stakeholders closest to children may apply their expertise in making decisions that promote school effectiveness and ensure that appropriate services and programs are provided to students and the school community (David, 1989; Hill & Bonan, 1991).

Site-based Management. Site-based management is a process of decentralization in which the school becomes the primary unit of management and educational improvement. Site-based management creates an avenue for the input of teachers, support staff, parents and the community--individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the issues (Funkhouser, 1996).

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature beginning with the definition of site-based management. The second section focuses on the research related to site-based management and its purpose of improving student achievement. The third section examines the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. The final section reviews the different levels of SBM implementation.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study. The methodology includes the subjects chosen for this study, the methods used to gather data, procedures used during the study, and a description of the research design and data analysis.

Chapter 4 represents the data and an analysis of those data. Findings of the research are also addressed in Chapter 4 and an analysis is provided to the posed research questions.

Summary, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the findings are provided in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The primary purpose of this chapter is to present the literature concerning the impact of school-based management on an elementary principal's ability to make decisions regarding student achievement and specifically regarding decisions involving low socio-economic and minority students and their academic performance. This chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) Historical Perspective of School Reform, (b) Site-Based Management, (c) Related research regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students, and (d) Social Justice and educational leaders.

Historical Perspective

In the 1980s, United States policy makers, professional organizations and academics encouraged public school systems to "restructure" existing organizational arrangements to improve the academic performance of schools (Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). School districts were asked to delegate decision-making authority to local school sites where principals, teachers and in some cases parents could make decisions in domains ranging from budget to instructional programs (Hill & Bonan, 1991; National Education Association, 1991).

There is documented research that reveals methods by which site-based management was enacted and examined as well as how the impact of the new decision-making arrangements in schools reshaped the principals' role. Most studies highlighted the internal dynamics of school and ignored the impact of the devolution of decision-making authority on the relations of school and their external environments (Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). The restructuring of educational governance has shifted the locus of responsibility in decision making from professionally dominated centralized hierarchies to various forms of local site councils emphasizing community

input, and control in a variety of policy making areas such as programs and personnel (Glassman & Heck, 1992; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). This change in ideology regarding the scope of decision-making raises the need to examine the role of the principal and determine principal effectiveness relative to the site-based decision making paradigm. The leadership role of the principal has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. The definition of the principal's role itself has evolved from principal teacher, to street-level bureaucrat, instructional manager, instructional leader, and transformation leader. These changes as related to the role of the principal may be the result of increasing external demands for educational accountability and further the reform of a system from centralized control to decentralized participation (Glassman & Heck, 1992). Given the structures and differentiating models of site-based management, the role of the principalship and the principals' ability to make decisions regarding student achievement depends on the level of site-based implementation and the degree of centralized control and decentralized participation (Glassman, 1992).

Early effective school research established that aspects of principal school leadership, influences student outcomes at least indirectly. However this connection is more intricate that previously defined. What is less clear is how principals contribute to school contexts, variables, and student outcomes specifically when it is difficult to isolate the effects of school culture, climate, and achievement. Previous research from Bridges (1982) and Murphy (1988) supported the lack of clarity of these concepts in connection to the role of the principal and offered no additional strategies for studying this topic. Although early research began to draw conclusions between the principal's role and school effectiveness, Wimpelberg, Teddie, and Stringfield (1989) noted that future research should address not only behavior and attitudes of principals, but also the role and responsibilities and the effects of varying contextual situations. Therefore, how

a principal behaves may depend on his or her own values and beliefs as well as organizational and political variables associated with the school and the community context, district size, level schooling, and students' socio-economic status. Because these contextual factors may sometimes constrain and shape a principals' exercise of leadership and resulting effects on teachers and students, the validation of this relationship has been hard to pin point and further research is warranted (Firestone & Herriott, 1982; Glassman & Heck, 1992; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

School context is viewed as more than just simple demographics. Now it is seen as "culture," "access to knowledge," and "staff attitudes toward education" and "achievement of the school" which can influence day to day behavior of principals (Glassman & Heck, 1992). Research suggests that the relationship between principal attitude and leadership behavior is not coincidental (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Glassman & Heck, 1992; Hallinger & Murphy 1987). However, it does appear that the principal's leadership does not affect the academic achievement of students directly. Instead the impact of the principals is indirect focusing on decision-making, developing a vision, school purpose, setting goals, communicating expectations for performance, "gatekeeping" with parents and other community interests, and monitoring the activities at the school site (Heck, 1992). All of these activities have a way of trickling down into classrooms and impacting students' performance (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Glassman & Heck, 1992; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990).

Effects of Restructuring on the Principal's Role

The purpose of restructuring schools was to increase student achievement. Research on the effectiveness of restructured schools in producing higher student outcomes began to surface two decades ago. David (1989) noted that particular types of organizational governance may be related to outcomes. Good and Brophy (1986) found that where individual schools had the

discretion to hire personnel and control budget, the potential for school effects on achievement were greater. Louis and Miles (1991) identified a team approach as critical in urban higher schools that had undergone extensive reform and academic improvement.

While the first surge of school reform occurred in the early 1980s, its focus was on increasing centralized controls over curriculum and instruction to improve school outcomes, the second surge was concerned with the ways to redistribute power as a means of increasing educational accountability (Murphy, 1991). School-based management is one reform effort that has been implemented to change school organization, accountability, and promote school-based leadership. The main reason for this change was the hope for greater educational efficiency, the empowerment of stakeholders, and to shift responsibility for poor outcomes away from the central office to the local school site (Murphy, 1991).

There is wide variation in the types of site-based management programs being implemented today. This includes the amount of power redistributed to the central office personnel and to the local school sites. The relationship between site-based decision making and student outcomes is problematic as there is very little research on this topic (Malen et al., 1990). One of the biggest obstacles is isolating the effects of site-based management programs as there are many other variables that impact gains in student achievement. The other problem is the lack of a standard definition of site-based management (Peterson, 1991). The impact of site-based management needs to be further studied in a variety of school settings to understand how this particular type of reform may be affecting principals' authority and power. Malen et al. (1990) postulated that site-based management has significant political-institutional properties, in that they operate as a response to turmoil in the educational system. How it improves or brings order to this turmoil is difficult to measure as schools exist in a variety of contexts and cultures.

Site-Based Management Defined

Site-based management goes by many different names including school-based management, school-site autonomy, school-site management, school centered management, decentralized management, school-based budgeting, site-based decision making, shared governance, the autonomous school concept, school-based curriculum development, and administrative decentralization (Clune & White, 1988; Rodriguez & Slate, 2005). There is an abundance of literature regarding site-based management. The literature addresses issues including definitions, varieties, effectiveness, (or ineffectiveness) environments for its operation and the role of the principals (Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). Despite decades of promoting educational reform there is still little agreement on how site-based management is defined and implemented (Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). Decentralization of authority varies from district to district and even between local school sites. The differences exist within multiple dimensions: degree of authority delegated, domains over which schools school exercise discretion, and who is involved on decision-making bodies (David, 1989; Malen et al., 1990). Wohlstetter and Oden (1992) defined site-based management in three basic models: The first treats principals as chief executive officers with broad discretion; school councils if they operate, serve an advisory function. The second model marks teachers as the dominant actors on school councils. The third model places control of site councils, largely in elected or appointed representatives of schools' surrounding communities. Leithwood and Menzies (1998) added a fourth model where principals and teachers exercise equal influence on site councils.

One key issue with the implementation of site-based management, as evidenced in the literature, is the impact on academic performance. Malen et al. (1990) suggested that site-based management may have changed the governance of districts and schools, but fails to change the

relations among participants and only improves morale temporarily. Site-based management does not improve the quality of decision making and planning and fails to increase instructional adaptation and innovation (Malen et al., 1990).

Leadership for School Improvement

The field of education has been nothing short of great leaders with the "right" kind of leadership, vision, and action that resulted in great achievement for students despite their environmental and internal challenges. They were seen as heroic and charismatic. Leaders such as Horace Mann and Deborah Meir are examples of strong leadership; single acts of greatness. Today, with the accountability of the No Child Left Behind Act and the educational demands of the early 21st century, it is evident that those leaders were the exception and not the rule. For many years, America believed in filling the roles at the top with the right principals, district administrators, superintendents who would be the answer to the plight of education (Copland, 2003). In many cases, however, the "top" position made independent decisions and then sought all others in the school building to adhere to those changes and decisions. Many times this worked for as long the person of authority remained in the position of authority. If that particular leader left, most often the changes and implementation of programs often ended. This style of leadership provides us with two lessons: one, for leaders to do their jobs, they need the adherence, commitment and "buy-in" from those doing the work; two, independent decisions on behalf of the leader, do not produce enduring change for school improvement. Recently, Vroom and Jago (2007) defined leadership as a "process of motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things" (p. 4). Vroom and Jago believed that leadership is a process not a property of a person. Leadership is a form of influence called motivating. The result of motivating can be the collaboration in the quest for a common goal similar to the

purpose of SBDM. Leithwood et. al (2007) also stated that Vroom and Jago's definition of leadership as participative, a similar description of SBDM.

The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) a 5-year reform effort involving schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area region to "reculture" (Copeland, 2003, p. 376) school in ways that would support whole school change. Each school in the study received grants of up to $150 per student for 3 to 5 years after completing an evidenced-based, peer reviewed portfolio. Leadership from these schools used the grants to fund support services, professional development and other efforts of reform. The BASRC's theory for leadership in schools was based on three premises. First, improving schools is accomplished by those at the school level which means a change in school culture, a need for distributed leadership. Second, improving learning is improving teaching. This is done by focusing on student learning, building capacity among teachers with regard to instructional practices and problem solving. Lastly, BASRC's theory of actions suggests that decisions made at the school regarding identified problems, and solutions, should be done collectively focusing on improving learning for all students. BASRC's is an example of the how reforms in education has evolved from the traditional norms of hierarchy to SBDM, to distributive leadership, all dedicated to improving student achievement and educational practices.

The preliminary findings on distributed leadership from BASCR are an interesting example of the adaptation of distributed leadership. Eighty six schools participated in a data driven whole school reform with a strong commitment to participatory leadership. Pertinent to this study, was the creation of a learning community in which leadership was shared including establishing a vision, planning, and being accountable. Principals still played a vital role in hiring, firing, and protecting from conflicting external demands and continually asking questions.

Distributed leadership appears to be a more current hybrid of the reform effort of SBDM. Distributed leadership is focused on people, enabling collaborative action towards goals, and allowing leadership to arise naturally (Kayrooz & Fleming, 2008). It also promotes the exchange of leadership as the need arises. It has having the right people in the right place at the right time. Distributed leadership recognized diversity in education by bringing in multiple perspectives to make informed decisions (Kayrooz & Fleming, 2008). Distributed leadership is similar to SBDM, as a form of participatory democracy. It assembles the collective effort of a group of people, encouraging commitment to decisions and works to promote a balance between central control and local discretion by giving voice to those who acknowledge or go against power holders (Kayrooz and Fleming, 2008). It is a multi-layered blending of expertise, ideas and effort. Distributive leadership promotes shares responsibility, encourages open endedness and emergent leadership.

As an extension of SBDM, distributed leadership is a no-nonsense approach to answering the call for accountability. With so many demands from stakeholders both internal and external, it makes sense to spread leadership, problems-solving and student outcomes to those who have a vested interest. Kayrooz and Fleming (2008) believed that school will meet the educational challenges of the 21st century by adapting a culture of interpersonal synergy; the systems for concerted action and distribution of power to different contexts.

For many schools still implementing SBDM, it would behoove school districts to begin discussions and developing understanding of distributed leadership. It would be important to find the best models of implementation. Such a cultural adaption will continue to foster shared leadership at a high performing level. Principals would need to develop an environment that is

safe, open to risk-taking, and promote the blending of expertise to solve problems for school improvement.

Student Achievement

The seeds of school reform planted man years ago by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Wikipedia, 2010) have taken root in the restructuring of schools and districts. Only a few studies have considered the impact of teacher participation on student achievement. In one study researchers found the relationship between teacher-perceived participation and student-perceived teaching quality to be curvilinear rather than direct (Greenblatt et al., 1983). The high point of teaching quality occurred in schools where teachers perceived their level involvement to be consultative. Quality was lower in both authoritative schools and highly participative schools (Conway, 1984).

Weiss' (1993) study of 12 high schools found that teachers in shared decision-making environments feel more professional and enjoy the increased authority and collegiality, but the results do not translate into increased emphasis in teaching. Weiss' perception was that site-based decision making was acceptable for teachers but not for students. Greenblatt et al. (1983) speculated that teachers want to be informed and have a voice in their work, as well as control over their classrooms, but they do not want to necessarily be involved with all the aspects of the organization. Weiss confirmed a hypothesis found in earlier studies that shared decision making detracts from, rather than enhances teacher work (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980). This would contribute to the types and quality of decisions teachers are making regarding instruction and student achievement.

The main goal of SBDM is to increase student performance. From the little research that has been done to measure the direct impact of SBDM on student achievement, reports conclude

that there is no direct link positive or negative. Overall, research does not indicate that SBDM brings consistent or stable improvements in student achievement.

In 1977, Brookover and Lezotte published a study, *Changes in School Characteristics Coincident with Changes in Student Achievement*. The focus of this study was on educational variables that are liable to school control and important to the quality of student performance (Edmonds, 1979). The study included interviews and questionnaires to schools with increasing and declining levels of achievement. What was evident, was that schools that were improving revealed a more focused approach on teaching, high expectations for all students, a belief that all students could succeed, and an identified strong instructional leader. Schools declining in achievement we just the opposite, teachers did not believe that their students could achieve nor was there anything they could do to influence their students (Edmonds, 1979). The schools lacked basic instructional objectives, specific goals were not part of their fundamental work, and the role of the principal was passive, informal, and more focused on collegial relationships.

From the Coleman Report to the Effective School Correlates and SBDM, school reform efforts have focused on increasing the achievement levels of all students and more specifically for low socio-economic and minority students. Yet with all these efforts, there is still not a specific, identifiable reform effort that has worked to produce increasing and sustainable results. What has been consistent in research and in history is schools need to have high expectations and focused instruction. Instead of all these reform efforts, one should consider, after years of research, is that achievement for all could be as simple as having expectations and a focus on instruction.

Social Justice and Equity

This study was born out of my passion and experience in working with at-risk students. As an administrator, I found that minority and low socio-economic students came to public school with many strikes against them for just being who they are. For many years, I observed an unfair playing field and many disadvantages for these students. Schools that have high enrollments of these particular students have to work twice as hard to "catch" these students up emotionally and academically. The Pikes Peak school district that is the focus of this study is beginning to see increasing numbers of minority and low socio-economic students in their classrooms. Leaders must quickly make sense of their changing demographics to make sure all students receive a quality education. One of the greatest challenges for a leader is to make sense of the changes within their school. How are they prepared to make sense of it all? How does this impact their decision making? Sensemaking is generally understood to be the cognitive act of taking in information, framing it and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals (Evans, 2007). Leaders make decisions everyday and those decision that are made will facilitate an increase or a decrease in academic achievement for all students but more specifically for low socio-economic and minority students (McKenzie et al., 2008). It is imperative that leaders, along with their stakeholders make decisions that encompass all students. Having leaders who do this, have a passion for social justice and are needed to ensure equitable achievement for all.

The concept or definition of social justice in educational leadership is a view that leaders are activists with a focus on equity and that a universal understanding of social justice exists among all scholars. In the real world however, this utopian theory become convoluted and a contradiction. It is important for leaders to strive for evenness in the application of social justice

and work to close the gap between the ideal and of the application (Evans, 2007). For educational purposes social justice can be defined as academic achievement, critical consciousness, and inclusive practices (Evans, 2007). Academic achievement requires school leaders raise the academic achievement for all students. High test scores are important and although tests scores are not a full picture of academic achievement it is the one true popular measure of school success. And test scores, clearly unmask the inequities within education.

Historical decisions, such as *Lau v. Nichols*, the Civil Rights Act, and *Brown v. the Board of Education*, have become part of the American history for social justice (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). As inequities in education are unmasked, it is important for leaders to understand the need for equity in education for all students. Leaders must become advocates for all children. By being consciously aware of the marginalization of others due to class, race, and gender, leaders can take a proactive approach to promoting socially just outcomes for all children (Dantley & Tillman, 2006).

For SBDM to significantly improve achievement for low socio-economic and minority students, the process must work to consider the needs of all students. Administrators need to lead their schools out of the entrenched inequities and push for equitable achievement (McKenzie et al., 2008). This can be attained by promoting inclusive teaching practices within content, cultural understanding, untracked services and quality instruction. Leaders need to become activists or the expert across student differences. By persistently working toward higher achievement for all students, social justice might be attained (McKenzie et al., 2008).

Under SBDM, leaders have the moral imperative to question policies and procedures that not only shape school but also perpetuate inequities for children. This would include tasks that

directly address diversity such as promoting inclusive practices, promoting inclusive school cultures, inclusive teaching and learning, and connecting schools and communities (Riehl, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology to be used for this study. It will identify the types of data to be collected to address the research questions. The discussion will include: research design, participants, instruments and procedures used for collecting the data, and the analysis of the collected data.

Research Design

A non-experimental design was used for this study. This type of research design is used when the independent variable cannot be manipulated and the researcher is not trying to identify cause-effect relationship.

Data for the study was collected by administering surveys to the principals in elementary schools implementing site-based management. After analyzing data gathered from the survey data, repeating themes and recurring issues were used to prepare for the face-to-face interviews with principals. Principal interviews and student achievement data was also be part of the data collection. The use of student achievement data was used for comparison, and focused specifically on student subgroups as defined by the Colorado Department of Education.

Participants

The population for this study included elementary school principals that are implementing site-based management. Eighteen elementary schools principals from one school district in Colorado Springs, Colorado were selected for the study. Principals that were surveyed have worked for a minimum of 1 year in the school district. The principals were asked to voluntarily participate in this study (see Appendix A).

Instruments

Two instruments were used for this study: Shared Decision Making and a short demographic questionnaire (Rothe, 1999; see Appendices B and C).

Shared Decision Making (Pikos, 1993; Rothe, 1999). Developed by Pikos (1993) the survey showed categories of decisions made within a school that could jointly involve teachers and administrators. For the purposes of this research project these instruments were tweaked in wording, sentence structure, and organization of questions to address not only the perceptions of SBDM, but also the impact of SBDM on an elementary principal's decision making ability in this particular school district.

The survey was categorized into three areas: (a) perceptions of site-base decision making, (b) implementation of site-based decision making, and (c) area of decision making. For the first two sections of the survey, respondents answered a total of 35 questions regarding their perceptions of SBDM and practices of SBDM respectively. For each question, the respondents used a six point rating scale ranging from "1" for "strongly disagree" to "5" for "strongly agree" and "N/A" for not applicable. Respondents rated a "3" for "neutral" in the instance they did not have enough information to respond to a particular item. A response of "N/A" was an option for any items that were not pertinent at the building level.

In the "Area of Decision Making," the respondents were asked to rate each of the 23 listed items twice, once relating to SBDM "as it is now" and a second time asking about the implementation of SBDM "as it should be" on a rating scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree." For each rating, respondents used a 6-point scale ranging from "1" for "never shared" to "5" for "always shared" and "N/A" for not applicable. Respondents rated a "3" for "don't know" in the instance they are unable to determine if

decisions of that type were made at the building level. A response of "N/A" was an option for any items that were not pertinent at the building level. The perceptions of involvement in site-based decision making (SBDM) practices as it is now and as it should be were summarized using descriptive statistics and paired samples *t*-tests for significance.

Content validity was addressed by having five former building administrators from the elementary school level review the survey. The items from the survey were drawn from related literature and issues regarding the implementation of site-based decision making. The items are also typical of a school setting. After reviewing the survey, the past administrators agreed on the items, made revisions, and modifications. Based on the feedback from the former administrators the survey has good content validity.

Demographic Survey

The principals in this study were asked to complete a short demographic survey to obtain information regarding their personal and professional characteristics. Some forced choice categorical responses and fill-in items were used. Items included on the survey: age, gender, level of education, and professional experiences. Information regarding their experiences with site-based management at the building level was also collected in the survey.

Operational Definition of Variables

CSAP Achievement Levels. Student performance is reported in four Proficiency Levels: Advanced-Performance Level 4; Proficient-Performance Level 3; Partially Proficient-Performance Level 2; Unsatisfactory-Performance Level 1.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Colorado's determination of incremental progress towards meeting the goals of all students.

Economically Disadvantaged. One of the subgroups reported for AYP. Indicated by students who receive free or reduced lunch.

FEP. Fluent English proficiency.

LEP. Limited English Proficient.

Sample size. The number of students counted to determine AYP.

NEP. Non English Proficient.

Subgroup**.** Groups for which assessment data must be disaggregated include: Native American/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White, Limited English Proficiency, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities.

Data Collection

The researcher obtained permission from the Colorado school district to survey all elementary school principals within the district. Both the purpose and importance of the study was explained as well the specific protocol that was followed to protect the confidentiality of the principals, student achievement data, and the school district.

Permission from the Institutional Review Board from the University of Texas at El Paso was obtained prior to beginning data collection. The researcher sent out letters asking for principals to participate in the study.

For the initial survey, principals were contacted via email requesting their participation. All correspondence, responses and list of participants were monitored using *Survey Monkey* software. *Survey Monkey* is a web-based survey tool that is used to gather information in a timely manner. Survey Monkey facilitates the gathering and analyzing data in real time.

Using an online survey solves many of the problems associated with the traditional survey methods; and it is practical only for limited populations and research objectives (Ritter &

Sue, 2007). Prior to using online surveys there are factors that should be considered before undertaking an evaluation project using this method. These factors can be divided into three categories: (a) respondent factors, (b) questionnaire factors, and (c) evaluator factors. Respondent factors refer to the ability of the respondent to access the internet to complete the online survey. If there are any restrictions or limitations the respondents face in access the computer technology, then another method should be considered. For this study, all the respondents had access to email and to the internet on a daily basis. Email addresses were secured and invitations to complete the survey were sent via email.

Questionnaire factors refers to the data that is to be collected through the online questionnaire. It is important to consider the types of questions being asked and the length of time it takes to complete the questionnaire (Ritter & Sue, 2007). Questionnaires that are open ended are more favorable when using online surveys. Respondents tend to write more, and feel comfortable with the anonymity of the survey. The online questionnaire allows respondents to be more forthcoming that when faced with a human interviewer (Ritter & Sue, 2007). In this study, the researcher, using a rating scale for each of the questions and provided open-ended questions to allow the respondents to extend responses. The researcher also kept the number of questions to a minimum to ensure that all surveys were completed.

Lastly, when using online surveys, the evaluator should consider all the elements involved in this type of data gathering such as time for the collection of information and technological expertise (Ritter & Sue, 2007). By using online surveys, the researcher was able to ensure that the information would be collected quickly. The use of the internet also allowed the researcher to send follow up information to help facilitate the collection of the data.

As a follow up to completing the surveys, a sample group of five principals were selected for face-to-face interviews (see Appendix D). A convenient sample of principals was selected based on the following criteria: number of low socio-economic students and number of minority students per school. Principals at schools with the highest (2) and lowest number (3) of the above criteria were interviewed for comparison of SBDM implementation. The purpose of the face-to-face interviews was to collect information regarding principals' perceptions of SBDM with their given student populations. The information gathered from the interviews provided clarifying information regarding each principal's perception of how the implementation of site-based decision making has impacted their ability to make decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. Each principal was asked a series of questions regarding site-based management (see Appendix D). Using the data gathered from the survey, additional questions were asked to clarify and extend group responses.

Face-to-face interviewing allows researchers to collect the most intricate data. Unforeseen questions can be successfully posed, long interviews are generally tolerated, and the interviewer can note information such as the respondent's nonverbal behaviors. Collecting this type of data does have its drawbacks. Face-to-face interviewing is the most expensive of the survey methods, requiring significant time and extended fielding of the survey (Ritter & Sue, 2007).

All data from the survey as well as student achievement data was transferred into SPSS (Statistical Procedures for Social Sciences) in order to provide descriptive and inferential results. Descriptive statistics was obtained from the survey responses in order to produce demographic information for survey respondents, to analyze student achievement data across years 2004 to 2009, and to produce descriptive results for the general perceptions of SBDM. Inferential

statistics was obtained using and paired *t*-test and one-way ANOVA procedures. The paired samples *t*-test will be used to evaluate each item as to whether significant mean differences occur among survey respondents when analyzing the means for how they feel SBDM Practices and Areas of Decision Making are "now" compared to how they "should be." Furthermore, a One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to examine whether overall group means differ significantly from each other on the dependent variable (determined by area survey and item) with follow-up post hoc Tukey HSD tests which evaluates pairwise differences among the means. An inductive analysis was also conducted utilizing survey results and student achievement data. Information generated through interviews was analyzed by generating common themes and then contrasting this with the themes identified from the survey responses. This method will also provide the basis for validation of the data.

Limitations

The study will be limited by examining site-based management in only elementary schools in a single school district. Though other subjects could have been surveyed for this study, the researcher focused on 18 elementary school principals in one Colorado school district in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Having only 18 participants in the study is an added limitation. A larger sample size would more likely be more representative of the population; however, in this particular district, there are only 18 elementary schools and the growth of minority and low socio-economic students is increasing at this level. Generalizability of the results will be limited to those elementary schools in this Colorado school district. The study also excluded many other factors that may impact student achievement such as teacher experience, principals' experience, and other instructional programs at individual schools. One more limitation is the use of an instrument from a prior study regarding school-based management. For the purposes of this

study, the survey was revised in its wording, sentence structure and organization of the questions. Additional questions were also added to gather information regarding low socio-economic and minority students. By using a pre-made survey the collection of data could be limited. Another possible limitation is that this particular study is not a longitudinal study but rather a captured moment in time, relating to current challenges in one school district.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are used to describe the sample and answer the research questions. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of school-based management on an administrator's ability to make decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. This study not only identifies the varying definitions and perceptions of SBDM, but also describes the varying degrees of implementation and processes for decision making at the site level and the impact on the scope of an elementary principal's decision-making ability. The study will also describe how the lack of structure and consistency from within central office to the site level, may indirectly promote underachievement for all students and more specifically for the low socio-economic and minority students (Glickman, 1990).

A total of 18 elementary school principals in one Colorado school district completed surveys, for a response rate of 100%. All surveys, including demographic data were completed using *Survey Monkey*. Of these 18 principals, five were selected for face-to-face interviews to answer additional questions regarding SBDM. Of the principals in this sample, 15 (83.3%) are female and 3(16.7%) are male. Three (16.7%) principals are between the ages of 36-45, 13 (72.2%) are between 46-55 and 2 (11.1%) are over the age of 55. Regarding level of education, 14 (76.85%) principals have a Master's Degree and a Master's Degree plus an additional 30 hours. Two (11.1%) are education specialists, and 2 (11.1%) have earned a doctorate degree. To collect the data, the survey was categorized into three areas: (a) perceptions of site-base decision making, (b) implementation of site-based decision making, and (c) area of decision making. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on administrators' perceptions

regarding SBDM as well as the impact on their ability to make decisions regarding student achievement. Included with the survey results, is historical student achievement data that was gathered and analyzed to determine if SBDM could have an impact on student achievement. The first part of the survey was to collect data to identify elementary administrators' perceptions about school-based management and the effects of these perceptions on student achievement. The survey was also used to measure administrator beliefs about the importance of site-based decision making and the work between administrators, teachers, and staff. These measures utilized a Likert-type scale of "1" indicating a strong disagreement to the statement and "5" being strong agreement to the statement.

General Perceptions of Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM)

In Table 1, responses regarding the use of SBDM as a general good practice for school operations and decision making fall predominantly within the mean range of 4.0 or higher. Most of the items had a standard deviation of less than one. By having a standard deviation of less than one, the participants are in close agreement in their general perceptions of SBDM.

The mean score for question 15 was 2.28 (*SD* = 1.274; see Table 1). The score for this particular question appears low or contradictory to the other means scores for several reasons. First the question is constructed in the negative. The item states that SBDM does not allow the principal to make independent decisions for low socio-economic and minority students. With a low mean, the average principal felt that they actually were allowed to make those independent decisions, thus more in-line with the higher means on the other items. Second, the mean score of 2.28 also raises the issue that some principals were in agreement with the statement while others were not.

The two lowest scores were item 5 with a mean of 3.11 (*SD* = 1.278) and item 8 with a mean of 3.67 (*SD* = 1.085). These items refer to the enthusiasm and efficiency of SBDM. Although the standard deviation for each of the questions was less than two, it is interesting to note that the agreement among the respondents was not as high as expected.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Survey Items Regarding General Perceptions of Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM), All Items

Question	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Q1. Good approach for making routine decision regarding school operations.	4.39	0.979	18
Q2. Should be used by school personnel when generating ideas to address unique problems during the school year.	4.78	0.428	18
Q3. Should be used by school personnel when generating ideas to address unique problems during the school year in regards to low SES and minority students.	4.28	0.985	18
Q4. Does not relieve the principal of accountability although decisions making is shared with the staff.	4.83	0.383	18
Q5. My enthusiasm for SBDM in school has decreased.	3.11	1.278	18
Q6. Has resulted in the implementation of different school practices than what would have been possible under traditional methods of school administration.	4.33	0.840	18
Q7. Has resulted in the implementation of different school practices for low SES and minority students that would have not been possible under traditional methods of school administration.	4.11	1.079	18
Q8. Is an efficient means of school administration.	3.67	1.085	18
Q15. Does not allow the principal to make independent decisions regarding the achievement of low SES and minority.	2.28	1.274	18

SBDM Perceptions Regarding Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

Responses in Table 2 reflect the use of SBDM as a method for collaboration and decision making for school operations and student achievement. The mean's range for this table was 3.69 to 4.06. Item 4 had the lowest mean score, and lowest number of respondents. However, based on the standard deviations, items in this table as they relate to collegiality for the operations of the school, had a high level of agreement for the ways in which SBDM is implemented for

decision making. Based on the content of the questions, administrators, teachers and staff believe that SBDM is a way to help promote collegiality, collaboration for decision making regarding school operations and for decisions regarding students. One can assume that theoretically the basis of giving local control to the school sites was for this fundamental purpose as agreed upon in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Survey Items Regarding General Perceptions of Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

Question	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Q9. The collegiality between teachers, staff, and administration has improved since the implementation of SBDM.	3.69	1.014	16
Q10. Should have the option of using SBDM for making decisions regarding school operation.	4.14	0.924	18
Q11. Should have the option of using SBDM for making decisions regarding the achievement of low SES and minority students.	4.06	1.110	18

SBDM Perceptions Regarding Teachers and Staff

Responses in Table 3 reflect the administrators' perceptions of teachers and staff. These questions specifically refer to the administrators' views on how SBDM has impacted a teachers commitment and willingness to take on the additional work and responsibilities created by this type of school leadership. The mean's range for this table was 3.50 to 4.72. Question 12, referring to the willingness of teachers and staff to accept the extra responsibility that SBDM requires, had the lowest mean score. This particular score poses an important issue. The purpose of SBDM is to give local control to stake holders, giving them the power to make the decisions. However, this empowerment comes with the additional responsibilities of seeing those decisions to fruition for the achievement of every student. Are teachers and staff willing to do so?

Administrators may be dealing with a desire to make decisions but a less desire to perform the additional work.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Survey Items Regarding SBDM Perceptions Regarding Teachers and Staff

Question	M	SD	n
Q12. Are willing to accept the extra responsibility that SBDM requires.	3.50	1.043	18
Q13. Shared decision making allows for new ideas to be considered when making a decision.	4.56	0.511	18
Q14. Who are involved in shared-decision making are more committed to school outcomes.	4.72	0.461	18

SBDM Perceptions Regarding Central Office

In Table 4, the mean scores range from 3.11 to 4.28 regarding perceptions of central office support. The highest standard deviation was 1.451, Item 24 regarding the support of central office in relation to staffing to help meet the academic and emotional needs of students. The low agreement level among administrators describes a potential need for a discussion between central office administration and principals to determine if the needs at the local school sites indeed need to be part of local control or if this would be an avenue for central office administration to provide direct support to school sites.

The lowest standard deviation was 0.669 relating to specialized program support. Administrators showed agreement that support for programs that often serve low socio-economic and minority students such as Title 1, Special Education, and Talented and Gifted are well supported by the central office administration. The most interesting aspect of Table 4 is that the questions with the highest and lowest standard deviation scores could be direct contradictions. One would need to understand that staffing and program implementation in this Pikes Peak school district is separate and not one in the same. Support for program implementation of

academic programs is not providing additional personnel but by providing schools information regarding best practices, updates regarding state and local mandates, professional development and student and parent support.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Survey Items Regarding SBDM Perceptions Regarding Central Office

Question	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Q16. Provides professional development to support district initiatives.	3.72	0.826	18
Q17. Provides the necessary resources to support district expectations.	344	1.042	18
Q18. Supports a culture of risk taking.	3.39	1.420	18
Q19. Provides support to meet academic needs of students.	3.67	0.970	18
Q20. Provides support to meet academic needs of low SES and minority students.	3.17	1.043	18
Q21. Buildings receive high level of support from CO regarding district and state initiatives.	3.56	0.984	18
Q22. Supports the implementation of SBDM.	4.06	0.899	17
Q23. Provides support for the implementation of academics programs such as Title 1, Special Education, Talented and Gifted, etc.	4.28	0.669	18
Q24. Provides support for issues regarding staffing, especially to meet the academic and emotional needs of students.	3.11	1.541	18

In the "Area of Decision Making," the respondents were asked to answer the questions twice. This particular section of the survey refers to areas of decisions made within a school that could jointly involve teachers and administrators. The purpose of having administrators answer each of the items twice is to compare perceptions of the elementary school principals' participation of school-based decision making.

SBDM Practices Regarding Administrators

Table 5 shows the results for attitudes towards how these practices are "now" and how they "should be." For how they are "now," the mean range for these questions was from 1.78 to

4.28. The mean scores for questions 5 and 11 appear low due to the presentation of the questions. These questions were stated as opposite constructs to the essence of SBDM, making it appear that there is disagreement. When in fact, the interpretation is the opposite of what the results indicate. The lowest standard deviation was 0.575 and the highest standard deviation was 1.38. In general, principals demonstrated a wide range of feelings towards how SBDM affects administrators "now." Principals agreed that the implementation of SBDM "now" is clearly implemented with parameters. For example, all administrators agreed that matters of personnel should be left to the administrators whereas items with direct impact to a teachers day to day work is more collaborative. Items such as curriculum, discipline, and instruction are direct experiences of all staff.

For how they "should be," the mean range for these responses was 2.00 to 4.39. Items 5 and 11 had mean scores of 2.00 (*SD* = 1.188) and 2.22 (*SD* = 1.114) respectively. These scores appear low as the items were presented as opposite constructs. For item 5, SBDM is not usually limited to curriculum and instructional issues. The basis of SBDM is to empower those closest to the building level to make decisions. These decisions are not limited to curriculum and instruction, but can include other school operations and budgets. Item 11 states that decisions affecting student discipline should be left to the administrators. Although discipline matters may appear to be the responsibility of the administration, most teachers work to solve many behavior problems at the classroom level. Escalated behavior is usually dealt with in collaboration with the classroom teacher. The lowest standard deviation was 0.850, and the highest standard deviation was 1.278.

Upon comparing the means of the "now" attitudes versus the "should be" attitudes, there were no significant differences between the paired means. This finding indicates that most

administrators, for these items, are in alignment regarding what SBDM "now" and "should be." Issues regarding overall school operations such as curriculum, instruction and discipline were identified as areas of collaboration and shared decisions where matters relating to personnel are left to the administrators.

Table 5. SBDM Practices Regarding Administrators

Question	Now		Should		*p*	*n*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Q1. Building administrators share decisions with teachers and staff.	4.28	0.575	4.39	0.850	0.542	18
Q5. Shared decision making is limited tocurriculum and instruction matters.	1.75	0.732	2.00	1.188	0.331	18
Q6. Decision making regarding personnel issues are left to administrators.	4.11	1.231	4.17	1.249	0.331	18
Q11. Decisions affecting student discipline should be left to the administrators.	2.56	1.380	2.22	1.114	0.163	18

SBDM Practices Regarding Teachers and Staff

As shown in Table 6, the mean range for how it is "now" was 2.00 to 4.28. The mean score for question 2 is 2.00 (*SD* = 0.907). This score appears low as the question was presented in a negative construct. Once again, the purpose of SBDM is to build collaboration among all stakeholders for the achievement of all students. It was expected that responses would be low, in alignment with the intent of this type of school reform. The lowest standard deviation was 0.461 and the highest standard deviation was 0.907.

For how it "should be," the mean range for these responses was 2.00 to 4.61. Question 2 is 2.0 (*SD* = 0.188). This score appears low as the question was presented in a negative construct. The lowest standard deviation was .188 and the highest was 0.502 (see Table 6). These results indicate a smaller variation in responses among survey respondents for these items. Some causes

for this difference could be a result of how SBDM is implemented. In this Pikes Peak school district, schools are completely site-based. There are no specific parameters or limits from central office. Therefore, depending on each principal and the degree in which SBDM is implemented at the school site, there would be differences in agreement to the questions presented in Table 6.

The paired samples *t*-test evaluated whether respondents felt that practices regarding teachers and staff should change from how it is now. The results indicated that there was significantly more agreement for giving teachers and staff the opportunity to have input into decisions made at the school (Q3), $t(17) = -2.915$, $p = 0.01$. In addition, respondents felt that teachers and staff should have more input regarding school expenditures (Q10), $t\ (17) = -2.699$, $p = 0.015$. In general, teachers and staff should be included in the collaboration and shared decision making in regard to the general school-based decisions and school expenditures.

Table 6. SBDM Practices Regarding Teachers and Staff

Question	Now		Should be		*n*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Q2. Are seldom consulted before decisions are made.	2.00	0.907	2.00	0.188	18
Q3. Are given the opportunity to have input into decisions made at this school.	4.28	0.461	4.61	0.502**	18
Q10. Have input regarding school expenditures.	3.56	0.705	4.06	0.419**	18

Note: Significant probability levels: **p ≤ 0.01 and *p ≤ 0.05

SBDM Practices Regarding Low Socio-Economic and Minority Students

The mean range for how these practices are "now" was 2.56 to 4.11. The lowest standard deviation was 0.583 and the highest standard deviation was 1.042 (see Table 7).

The mean range for how it "should be" was 2.50 to 4.44. Question 8 appears to have a low mean of 2.50 (*SD* = 1.295). This score appears low as the question is presented in a negative

construct. This score is expected as the purpose of SBDM is to support the academic achievement of all students. It is evident that principals collaborate with stakeholders when making decisions regarding these students. The lowest standard deviation was 0.511 with the highest being 1.295.

The paired samples *t*-test evaluated whether respondents felt that practices regarding low SES and minority students should change from how it is now. The results indicated that there was significantly more agreement for giving teachers and staff the opportunity to have input into decisions regarding low SES and minority students (Q4) $t(17) = -3.757$, $p = 0.002$. Therefore issues regarding decisions and achievement of low socio-economic status and minority students were identified as areas of collaboration and shared decision making with opportunities for input identified as an area that should have higher levels of collaboration.

Table 7. SBDM Practices Regarding Low SES and Minority Students

Question	Now		Should be		*n*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Q4. Teachers/Staff are given the opportunity to have input into decisions.*	3.67	0.840	4.40	0.511	18
Q8. Decisions regarding the achievement of low SES and minority students are left to administrators.	2.56	1.042	2.50	1.295	18
Q9. Teachers/Staff have input into decisions regarding achievement of low SES and minority students.	4.11	0.583	4.44	0.511	18

Note: Significant probability level: **p < 0.01

Area of Decision Making Regarding Teachers and Administrators

As shown in Table 8, the mean range for these areas of decision making "now" was 2.61 to 4.78. The lowest standard deviation was 0.383 and the highest standard deviation was 1.658. For how it "should be," the mean range for these responses was 1.39 to 4.89. The lowest standard deviation was 0.383 and the highest standard deviation was 1.328.

Table 8. SBDM Areas of Decision Making Regarding Administrators and Teachers

Question	Now		Should		*p*	*n*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Q1. Determine activities for grade level teams/dept.**	4.17	0.383	4.56	0.511	0.004	18/18
Q7. Select methods for evaluating curriculum, programs, and professional development activities.***	3.17	1.150	4.17	0.786	0.001	18/18
Q8. Plan for school improvement to address the learning needs of all students.*	4.28	0.958	4.83	0.383	0.014	18/18
Q10. Determine criteria for selecting personnel.	3.78	0.732	4.11	0.758	0.055	18/18
Q11. Select personnel.	4.17	0.838	4.17	0.707	1.000	18/18
Q12. Remove personnel.	1.28	0.752	1.39	0.979	0.168	18/18
Q13. Assign and reassigning personnel.	2.61	1.290	2.78	1.166	0.187	18/18
Q14. Determine school rules.	4.78	0.428	4.89	0.323	0.163	18/18
Q15. Resolve conflicts concerning student behavior.	4.22	0.732	4.50	0.514	0.056	18/18
Q16. Determine how to allocate time (scheduling).	3.94	1.162	4.33	0.767	0.090	18/18
Q17. Determine school calendar.**	3.00	1.658	3.88	1.166	0.009	17/18
Q18. Determine how to allocate resources for school improvement.	3.83	0.924	4.06	0.873	0.104	18/18
Q19. Determine budget.*	2.61	1.195	3.11	1.231	0.015	18/18
Q20. Determine student placement.	4.28	0.958	4.39	0.850	0.542	18/18
Q22. Determine rules for employees.	3.22	1.396	3.67	1.328	0.072	18/18

Note: Significant probability levels: ***p $\leq$ 0.001; **p $\leq$ 0.01; and *p $\leq$ 0.05

The paired samples *t*-test evaluated whether respondents felt that areas of decision making regarding teachers and administrators should change from how it is "now" (see Table 8). The results indicated several significant findings. There was significantly more agreement that

administrators and teachers determine activities for grade level teams/departments (Q1) $t(17) = 3.289$, $p = 0.004$, select methods for evaluating curriculum, programs, and professional development activities (Q7) $t(17) = -4.123$, $p = 0.001$, plan for school improvement to address the learning needs of all students (Q8) $t(17) = -2.755$, $p = 0.014$, determine school calendar (Q17) $t(16) = -2.985$, $p = 0.009$, and determine budget (Q19) $t(17) = -2.699$, $p = 0.015$. In general, areas addressing grade level activities, evaluation, professional development, school improvement, rules and behavior, and student placement were identified as areas of collaboration and share decision making whereas most matter relating to personnel and budget should be left to administrators. Another key point in the differences for how SBDM is "now" and how it "should be" could be a direct result of additional accountability for student achievement, state and federal mandates placed on schools. When a mandate is issued it is evident that minimal input is gathered and teachers in this specific Pikes Peak school district often struggle with required change.

Area of Decision Making Regarding Low SES and Minority Students

Table 9 shows the mean range for these areas of decision making "now" was 3.17 to 1.312. The lowest standard deviation was 0.748 and the highest standard deviation was 1.312.

For how it "should be," the mean range for these responses was 4.24 to 4.63. The lowest standard deviation was 0.493 and the highest was 0.970.

The paired samples *t*-test evaluated whether respondents felt that areas of decision making regarding low SES and minority students should change from how it is "now" (see Table 9). The results indicated several significant findings. There was significantly more agreement that administrators select instructional materials (Q2) $t(15) = -3.569$, $p < = 0.003$, determine curriculum goals and outcomes, (Q3) $t(16) = -3.771$, $p = 0.002$, select curriculum content to

address learning needed (Q4) $t(15) = -4.392$, $p = 0.001$, plan professional development activities (Q5) $t(17) = -4.891$, $p = 0.000$, select professional development activities (Q6) $t(17) = -4.242$, $p = 0.001$, identify resources for school improvement (Q9) $t(16) = -3.392$, $p = 0.004$, and determine local achievement goals for low SES and minority students (Q21) $t(16) = -2.626$, $p = 0.018$. Regarding the area of decisions involving low SES and minority students, areas most identified as collaborative and shared decision were related to instructional materials, student and classroom goals and achievement, professional development, addressing learning needs, and program priorities. This could indicate that although low socio-economic and minority students are not identified directly as part of collaboration and shared decision making, one could infer that such practices are inclusive of all students.

Table 9. SBDM Areas of Decision Making Regarding Low SES and Minority Students

Question	Now		Should		*p*	*n*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Q2. Select instructional materials. **	3.75	1.000	4.56	0.512	0.003	16/18
Q3. Determine curriculum goals and outcomes.**	3.88	0.928	4.59	0.507	0.002	17/18
Q4. Select curriculum content to address learning needs***	3.69	0.946	4.63	0.500	0.001	16/18
Q5. Plan professional development activities to address learning needs.***	3.17	1.098	4.39	0.502	0.000	18/18
Q6. Select professional development activities to address learning needs.***	3.28	1.074	4.33	0.594	0.001	18/18
Q9. Identify resources for school improvement.**	3.29	1.312	4.24	0.970	0.004	17/18
Q21. Determine local goals for achievement.*	3.82	1.237	4.59	0.618	0.018	17/18
Q23. Determine program priorities such as enrichment and after-school programs.	4.06	0.748	4.35	0.493	0.056	17/18

Notes: Significant probability levels: ***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p \leq 0.01$; and *$p \leq 0.05$

Experiences With SBDM

The final part of the online survey included open ended questions to allow administrators the opportunity to share additional information regarding their experiences with site-based decision making (SBDM), perceptions of central office support and any additional comments regarding SBDM. The goal for providing open-ended questions was to solicit more specific feedback from administrators that would provide insight into the real issues and challenges administrators must deal with regarding their responsibilities, decision making and role under SBDM. Below are examples of their responses and interpretation of comments by each open-ended question.

Positive Experiences With SBDM

According to the elementary school administrators, some of the positive experiences regarding SBDM include being able to make decisions that are pertinent to the school, having the ability to be creative with the school budget, curriculum, programs, and staffing design to best fit the needs of the students. Elementary school administrators appreciate knowing that resources can be tailored to meet the unique needs of each school. This is especially important as this particular Pikes Peak school district offers "choice enrollment." Parents have the option of choosing to enroll their children in any school within the district. This process creates competition among schools, therefore having the flexibility with resources allows schools to attract students and increase their enrollment. Because schools have different student populations, varied academic needs and "choice" programs, SBDM allows schools to focus on the solutions for their specific school challenges. As stated by one administrator, "SBDM allows flexibility to address issues that relate to your population or school climate" (Administrator Respondent, 2009). Another administrator added:

> Site-based decision making has allowed me to staff my building to best accommodate the students I serve. I am able to work with my staff and decide with them how we will support one another, our students and our families in very creative ways. This would definitely not happen if central office was mandating decisions for our population. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

Other positive experiences of SBDM are building strong leadership among stakeholders, developing a stronger commitment from teachers, and promoting creativity to meet the specific needs of the school population. As a result of the implementation of SBDM, schools are able to try various approaches to promote student achievement and take responsible risks for supporting students and their families.

Based on the comments made by the administrators relating to their positive experiences with SBDM, it appears that conceptually, the premise of SBDM and its implementation within this district are aligned. Administrators feel that there is flexibility, creativity, and commitment at the school site when it comes to the implementation for SBDM for school administration.

Negative Experiences With SBDM

Administrators express that some of their negative experiences with SBDM involve situations when involvement from central office could have been helpful and supportive. A large amount of time could be saved if central office would be more involved in the planning and programming of specific initiatives such as safety and security, Response to Intervention (RtI), fees, and procedures for extra pay. There are times when administrators just want to be given the directive to carry out the expectations set forth by the state and the district. Implementing decisions that are not related to the uniqueness of a school can result in wasted time that could easily be eliminated if decisions were made by central office personnel. At times, administrators believe it would be more beneficial and expeditious to have decisions made at the central office level to ensure common practices among the schools. An administrator commented:

> There are times when all schools at a level such as elementary need to develop plans, structures, or make decisions that can result in a lot of wasted time that could be eliminated by decisions being made at the central office. (Administrator Respondent, 2009).

A second administrator concurred: “For things like Response to Intervention (RtI) practices and procedures, it should look the same at every building. The school administrators along with district personnel should decide what SBDM is and what it is not” (Administrator Respondent, 2009).

Another example of a negative experience with SBDM is the lack of a clear definition for SBDM. The school administrators along with district administration should be made aware of what decisions fall under SBDM and which decisions should be made at the central office level. Administrators describe inconsistency with SBDM, lack of unison for specific issues, and not enough support or direction from central office. Administrators also express that there are mixed messages in the use of SBDM specifically when high stakes issues are involved. An administrator remarked:

> I feel a lack of support with budget needs to support growth and academic needs. Sometimes I don’t know what is a site-based decision or a district decision. Another is how to deal with the need to support the superintendent’s initiatives if they are not aligned with our building goals. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

Part of the purpose of SBDM is to allow for creativity and autonomy within a school. However, administrators express that at times, SBDM is isolating and working independently can create challenges in knowing best practices and latest trends in education. Many times, a school has specific goals that may or may not align with the goals of superintendent. Often, teachers and parents are not equipped with the skills needed to make educational decisions for the school. One administrator stated, “In hiring, staff may not always want to choose the best

qualified person. They are often looking for personnel connections rather than a strong skill set" (Administrator Respondent, 2009).

Lack of support from central office regarding risk-taking is another negative aspect of SBDM. Schools under SBDM in this Colorado school district are given full autonomy for the operations of the school including budget, staffing, programs, and curriculum. However, with the opportunity to be innovative, schools must support all the costs of implementation. This includes material, staff development, and staffing. All schools are not equal in terms of adding additional staffing or monies for purchasing additional materials. As "choice" creates competition, there are certain schools that attract more students therefore have a higher per pupil funding allocation. To help support school endeavors and initiatives, administrators must run their schools as businesses by renting the school building in the evenings and weekends for additional income to support instructional programs. By working in this manner, inequity appears to exist among the elementary schools. Those that have the resources and the additional funding for higher enrollment can try new things and those that are limited, cannot. One administrator wrote, "It (SBDM) is not always the most efficient use of financial resources and time; some decisions need to be made district wide" (Administrator Respondent, 2009). Another administrator added, "Love SBDM for site level decisions but we could be leveraging our resources more wisely if we had district curriculum. It would alleviate inequities as students move from elementary school to middle school that ultimately impacts student achievement" (Administrator Respondent, 2009).

Although administrators believe in the power of the concept of SBDM it is not without frustration or reservation. Being a SBDM district comes with a price. Schools essentially operate independently and must support all the schools' creativity on their own. For some schools that have declining or low enrollment autonomy creates a challenge. Funding is limited therefore

schools are not truly operating on an even playing field. All schools have different needs, ideas, and students so all though SBDM knocks on the door for schools to be independent, it is the negative experiences such as a lack of resources and central office support that can keep the door shut.

Central Office Support

Most of the time administrators felt supported by central office; a typical comment was:

> Things can be left undone if a person is not vigilant and determined to do things in the right way. Having come into a building where many things were left undone, it put the school in noncompliance in many areas such as Individual Literacy Plans, the (RtI) Response to Intervention process, and curriculum alignment. This made it very difficult for me to move staff ahead quickly when they were locked in the past. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

Some examples of support provided by the administrators included always knowing that someone from central office is willing to lend a helping hand and supervisors that are ready to "back" the school administrators when difficult issues have arisen. Another example is the freedom and support for staffing, budget implementation, and encouragement for risk taking. Lastly, is the autonomy that is given to schools to operate independently sends a message of support to schools.

On the other hand there are administrators that are unsure of the support provided by central office. One administrator admits, "When there are no mistakes with parents, then I am supported. Some principals also believe that some central office personnel use SBDM to 'pass the buck'."

In this Pikes Peak school district, most concerns and questions regarding school practices that are reported to central office are redirected to each school site-based on the implementation SBDM. With the liberties to operate a school independently also comes the responsibilities of accountability to all stakeholders and community members. To this end it is evident that culture

of SBDM contributes to the belief that there is no calibration to align the work of individual schools and the work of the central office. Many times central office does not understand or know the specific operations of each school, the needs of the school, and the community. Depending on the issue and to whom the issue is directed, information and guidance for resolution is inconsistent. Administrators describe this disconnection as a lack of understanding and agreement on how SBDM should be implemented and fostered. As stated by one administrator:

> No, (feeling supported) in many ways. Equal is not equal in a higher needs school. Areas that need more support are special education resources, interventions, varied curriculum, budget for after school programs, budget for assistance for clothes, food, school supplies, and transportation is needed. (Administrator D, 2009)

Another administrator adds, "SBDM has strengths and weaknesses, but overall is very positive. If it is to continue, there must be discussion about what it means" (Administrator Respondent, 2010).

Additional Thoughts About Site-Based Decision Making

This open-ended question provided an opportunity for administrators to openly and honestly comment on their perceptions of SBDM implementation. The comments made resulted in the identification of specific areas of need for the implementation of SBDM including a call for clear parameters of SBDM, a request for SBDM training for principals and central office personnel, and the establishment of guidelines regarding what issues fall under the work of SBDM and which do not. There also appears to be a sense of confusion among administrators when it comes to knowing what should or should not be the responsibility of the schools. I believe these comments reveal much of the frustration, confusion and lack of guidance elementary administrators are experiencing from central office. Although administrators agree that SBDM is a philosophically sound way to implement school administration, not having clear

parameters, definitions, and expectations of the SBDM process, can unintentionally cause a lack of support and inconsistent implementation across the district. As stated by one administrator:

> There has to be a balance between SBDM and top/down. There are times that SBDM makes no sense. For example matters regarding safety procedures and safety equipment. This would be issues that all school would need to follow therefore a specific safety plan needs to be implemented by the district for all schools. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

A second comment noted, "It would be of great worth if administrators were trained in what really is SBDM. What can we make decisions on and what we can't. It is too nebulous as it is now" (Administrator Respondent, 2009). Another comment: "I know it is hard to do both, but I am wondering if we could make some essential agreements about what is centralized and what is to be determined at the school site" (Administrator Respondent, 2010). Lastly, one administrator states:

> Empowering schools to make a decision based on their specific populations and goals creates a climate of trust and positive growth. While SBDM demands a higher level of participation and responsibility, the results are worthwhile when student needs are being addresssed. (Administrator Respondent, 2010)

Overall many administrators do believe in the process and premise of SBDM. Many administrators agree that it is a good practice and that SBDM allows for true autonomy at the local school site. It allows for the freedom and creativity to support the students and community at each school site. Although there is agreement for the use of SBDM for school administration, there is also agreement that there need to have a training and discussion regarding the "what" and "how" of SBDM implementation in this Pikes Peak school district. An administrator explains:

> I feel strongly in the benefits of SBDM because of the direct effect and focus on students, student needs, and interventions that can be implemented. Decisions are made close to the student. SBDM is often a positive given the diversity of school districts. I believe that SBDM and centrally developed decision making are both needed. (Administrator Respondent, 2010)

Principal Interviews

As a follow up to completing the surveys, a sample group of five administrators, were selected for face-to-face interviews (see Appendix D). A convenient sample was selected based on the following criteria: number of low socio-economic students and number of minority students per school. Administrators at schools with the highest and lowest number of the above criteria were interviewed for comparison of their perceptions of SBDM implementation. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain additional information that would offer further explanation regarding the limitations and frustrations experienced by administrators working under SBDM. I selected schools with opposite student populations to determine if their viewpoints were different based on the students and communities they serve. The following is a summary of the qualitative data obtained from the face-to-face interviews. For the purposes of confidentiality, the administrators who participated in the interviews are identified as Administrator Respondents, A-E.

Enthusiasm for Site-Based Decision Making

From the interviews of the five administrators, there is agreement that enthusiasm for SBDM has increased based on the fact that SBDM allows for risk taking, creativity and flexibility at the individual school sites. Administrators commented on how SBDM really allows schools to tailor their educational programs to fit the needs of their unique populations. In this Pikes Peak school district, schools have the autonomy to make all decisions affecting students at the school site. Administrators are given the freedom to create their own staffing design, establish their own budgets, initiate school programs and purchase instructional materials. The goal of each school is to maximize the learning of all students. Administrator A states:

> I think there has been recently (an increase), and I think as we continue to look for ways to help kids increase in their scores, we continually look to see what could make a

> difference, what doesn't make a difference. And this is an area where it's a matter of does that help? Does it make a difference, if so let's try it.

Administrator B also commented:

> I would have to say there's been a slight increase in enthusiasm and I think I attribute that to each of the schools having their own unique populations and a greater component of diversity with their populations. And so they can make choices that reflect their school community. That is why I believe there is a slight increase in SBDM.

Candidates were also asked if there was a decrease in enthusiasm for SBDM. Administrators described specific ways in which their interest in SBDM implementation has been impacted by various obstacles and complications. Through the survey, administrators identified the same areas of increased enthusiasm and these are the same areas of frustration with SBDM. It is evident that these frustrations are congruent with the information obtained from the face-to-face interviews. Areas of dissatisfaction include lack of clear parameters, absence of direction for specific state, resources, district initiatives and isolation.

Administrators have repeatedly stated that there is a lack of understanding and support from central office regarding the direction of state and district initiatives as well when a certain topic or issue is a central office or school site responsibility. In this district it is very easy to get caught in the middle amidst this confusion. With all the responsibilities an administrator has it would be helpful to have more specific guidelines from which to operate. Some examples given by administrators were Response to Intervention a federal and state mandate, improvement to safety and security (a district initiative), and policies and procedures that impact everyday school operations with teachers, parents, and students. Administrator E comments:

> I would say there has been a decrease in enthusiasm towards SBDM and I think a lot of it is because there are so many new federal and state mandates that have to be implemented. Schools are in the process of trying to implement all of these mandates and it hard to do it on your own without a lot of help or guidance. We have to create, reinvent, Response to Intervention is another example of this challenge and cause for decrease in our enthusiasm. (Administrator E, 2009)

Yet for one principal, there is a mix of opinion when it comes to SBDM. Administrator D explains:

> I believe in our Pikes Peak district, there are mixed emotions, and it's not that I'm not willing to commit to an answer. I think there's a decrease for wanting Site-based Management when it comes to certain topics, like Response to Intervention, (RtI), the administrator group collectively said, we want consistency, that's something that we believe we can have if we go with a more centralized approach. Whereas, I don't want to find myself out there and miss some things if I'm doing it just for my own site. So I think when they brought up the other day at our principals' meeting, safety and security initiatives, nobody wanted to say, "Oh, I'll handle that all by myself," that would be foolishness. We want the best minds around and we want everyone to be afforded the opportunity to have safe campuses. If that were the case and we were doing it based on Site-based Management, for example, I would never afford the cameras. I wouldn't be able to have the keyless entry system if I had to pay for it out of my budget. So the fact that they make some decisions around what they (central office) are going to make sure each and every school has, I think was sound thinking.

Impact of SBDM in Principals' Decision Making

Do you believe that Site-Based Decision Making affects your ability as a principal to make decisions? If so, in what ways?

One of the main reasons I focused on SBDM for my research was the inequity and impact it may have on the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. SBDM is thought to be the catalyst for achievement, an expedient avenue for those working closest with the students to make "thing" happened to help all students. As a principal myself for more than7 years, under SBDM, I began to wonder if SBDM really could be the catalyst when working with individuals who are not certain of what the different student populations and high risk students need to be successful. I began to observe patterns in the decision making process. Decisions began to revolve around the "average" student and not on specific groups of students. This is when I began to suspect that SBDM could directly and even indirectly impede the success of low socio-economic and minority students. The responses to question two continue to support the underlying assumptions of the purpose of SBDM, in the Pikes Peak school district.

Some of the positive impacts of SBDM on an administrator's decision making include having rights and responsibilities, doing what is best for the school community, fostering collaborative decision making, allowing for purposeful staff development, and flexibility with staffing. Administrators commented that SBDM gives you decision making rights, but it is also about being able to make the right decisions for the betterment of the students and having that right decision reflecting in test scores. Administrator C states:

> I think SBDM affects my ability to make decisions in a great way, in the sense that I can make decisions that are best suited for my community, best suited for my school needs. For example working with the military community, I can make decisions about a multitude of things about to support families, how to support others military bases, how to support the general military community. It puts me in a unique situation to react to our own community needs and diversity. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

Administrator A comments:

> Well, sure it does. I mean if its site-based then I get to make the decisions. I think the problem comes in as we've grown larger (as a district) and as different issues have come down (from Central Office) it is knowing what is for me to make a decision about and what is not. Often times, I should say there have been occasions where I thought it would be my place to make the decision only to discover it was not my place to do so. (Administrator Respondent, 2009)

Administrators also identified some the negative ways that SBDM impacts their decision making. Some of the comments included a lack of support for decisions make at the site level, extra stress and responsibility for the administrators, poor use of time, and a blurry delineation of what procedures and policies fall under SBDM. Although administrators support the concept of SBDM, there seems to be a need for more clear guidance, support from central office, and training for SBDM operations. Administrator C reiterates:

> SBDM gives you a lot of flexibility to address your own neighborhood, community, military, non military minorities and SES populations. So you can choose to deal with the resources that you're given. The frustration that I have is, if you don't have the resources that are adequate to address those, then you're pretty much just patching up some holes and sailing the boat. An that's one of my frustrations, especially this year as I don't feel I

> have the resources to adequately address some for the issues that I have that from my school population or that reflect my specific school. (Administrator C, 2009)

Administrator B adds:

> I think you are on your own. I think you have to really understand what your choices are in order to make those decisions, and many times you are not supported in those choices because no one else knows what your school needs except for you. You are expected to go out and seek those choices and then implement what you think will help your buildingin the best way. It is a lot of weight on an administrator's shoulders to make those decisions. If you choose something that doesn't work, the expectation is you will know that it doesn't work and you will go find something that does. (Administrator B, 2009)

The next question asked of each administrator pertained to decision making regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. As a current administrator in this district at a school with higher numbers of low socio-economic and minority students, I wondered if my colleagues were impacted in their decision making by the growing numbers of this particular student population. For over 5 years now, the district has been experiencing increasing numbers in low socio-economic and minority students at all levels. I questioned if SBDM impacted the work of each school in helping these specific students be successful as the average majority student.

SBDM and Diverse Student Populations

The summary of their responses was mixed. There is the ability to address special populations or special needs however there is some speculation regarding the resources, delineation of responsibilities, and the lack of support from central office. Administrator D explains:

> We are site-based to a degree. What I mean is that SBDM does all the things that it should, collaboration, involvement etc. However, when we talk about ESL (English as a Second Language or TAG (Talented and Gifted) students, our minority students, who are we serving well? And who we not serving well? What isn't given, are things that are not academic such as support from social workers and psychologists. I cannot influence this allocation; it is based on a formula. So even if my site needs more of this type of resource

> I cannot get more, or I do not have enough. And I cannot influence this as a site-based manager or instructional leader. That comes from above me and what I do know is that the work of my social worker and psychologists is very different at my school than their other school assignment. Why? That is because the needs at my school are greater. I have the most number of low socio-economic and minority students than any other elementary school in the district. So I feel that because they cannot provide the same type of services, my kids who need more get cheated. That is very hard for me and I think there is disconnect between how the district operates and the way we would like to see it translated at the school level. (Administrator D, 2009)

During the analysis of the interviews, it became evident that administrators from schools that have low enrollment of low socio-economic and minority students differed in their comments regarding SBDM. Administrator A admits:

> SBDM does give us flexibility to address the needs of different student populations to an extent. I know the students in my building and we can address their needs. An example is the literacy program. The program allows us to support some of those student groups mentioned, we have the freedom to set it up to best meet the needs of the our students. So that is beneficial. For students in other programs such as SSN, SIED, and Preschool it is kind of blurry as to know who can make decisions for these groups of students. We only have two ESL students with declined services so that piece doesn't impact us too much. (Administrator A, 2009)

When I asked the same question to an administrator from a school with high numbers of low socio-economic and minority students the response was different. Administrator B stated:

> I think that is the whole idea behind SBDM, to give us flexibility to make those decisions for special populations, however I think it takes a pretty strong administrator in order to clear the mud and get rid of all the rest of the things you deal with to see the pockets of need. It is not easy, balancing the needs of those students with those of all the others.

In reviewing the responses of the administrators, it is evident that even the impact of student population creates different issues pertinent to each building and school community. One consistent challenge is the need to address specific needs at each site. The difficulty appears to be the lack of consistency and support from central office. It looks different to each site and to each principal.

SBDM and Teacher Commitment

Part of the underlying assumptions of SBDM is that the decision making occurs at the level closest to the students. By doing this, the theory is that if those stakeholders working closest with the students can make decisions in their best interest, the commitment to the school goals and outcomes will be higher. Administrator E stated:

> You know I think if teachers are included in decisions, through a building leadership team or site council I think it can be very powerful for the staff. But what I think doesn't happen through a district level is I don't think there is really any good modeling of SBDM implementation.

Administrator B believes:

> Overall I think it increase their commitment. I think principals have to wrap them up in the decision making of what the right programs are, what their seeing with their students, what is working and what is not working. They need to be part of that decision making which I think increases their enthusiasm. However, it also paints a big picture for them and I think it is sometimes overwhelming for them to see how much we need to do and how much is on our shoulders. It is not that simple.

Administrator D concurred:

> I think it increases their commitment. Here (school) they have gotten to have a say. Once they understood the work and how to do the work, they know now to move it forward and they know what needs to come next. Their commitment comes in two ways, understanding their purpose, but also understanding what good instruction looks like and having the resources to make it happen.

Administrator C commented:

> I would say it increases their commitment because if they really feel strongly about something that will address our student population from the data, from needs, from surveys, from parent feedback then I think they are more likely to get behind it. Teachers often frown when they hear that it is a district mandate or a state mandate and so they feel like they are doing it for somebody else. Therefore, they may not be totally happy but the might be a little bit happier if they fell like it is something that in our house we want to address and commit to making better.

SBDM and Administrator Commitment

As an administrator of a school building, you are supposed to be the ultimate authority for all the operations of the school. However, you are by default the middle person in this setting. Administrators have to work with many individuals at many levels. They are accountable to central office personnel, teachers, staff, parents and the community. So how does this impact their commitment to school outcomes? Administrator C stated:

> It increases their commitment because it is all on you. You are not following the district policies and procedures to deal with ten situations. You are dealing with maybe one or two issues but the rest of the work is on you. Therefore you need to be really aware of our student population, your data, your strengths and weaknesses. Does our school site plan reflect our building needs and our practices? How do we get better?

Administrator E expressed concerns with SBDM:

> I think there are a lot of positive aspects to it, but I also think that there are drawbacks like anything. I think that there just needs to be a balance between SBDM and what the district wants all schools to do. I think it just needs to be clear, a specific policy with specific examples. The operation of SBDM also needs to be communicated to new principals in the district. When I came to this district over 3 years ago I did not really know much about SBDM. Everything I learned, I learned by fire or by experience. Everyone tells you we are site-based but no one can really explain what that means when working with parents, with staff, curriculum adoption. We need a clearly defined expectation.

Administrator A agrees:

> I think it increases our commitment because it's the decision I made or that my assistant principal made or one we made together. We are really going to be on board with our decisions and be enthusiastic about making sure we are successful. To me I think the frustrating part comes up when there is a lack of support at the district level either financially when we take on our own initiatives or when a parent complains about a decision at the school site. There is a lack of support for the building and many times SBDM is used as a way to shift responsibility. It would be better if we were all on the same page, and that we are supported for the decisions that we make at our individual school sites.

SBDM as an Effective Means of School Administration

Part of the enthusiasm of SBDM includes the belief that SBDM is an effective way of running a school. The principals were asked if SBDM was an effective means of operating a school. At the inception of SBDM, the belief was that by allowing those who work closely with students to decide what is best for the students, their level of commitment and enthusiasm to school outcomes would increase. Although SBDM has its positive aspects in promoting autonomy, it does come with a price. Administrator B states:

> For me, it all boils down to we own it and we being the administrators and we're the instructional leaders. It does get to overwhelming. Once a principal can figure out that this is their "baby," you go out and do it. It is very empowering to the administrator. What gets overwhelming is that you are not just working with instruction you are working with all the operations of a school.

Administrator A shares:

> Oh, I think it's good in that we can specifically address the needs of our kids. But I think the downside is, it increases--I hate to sound like a slacker, but I think we have to manage more. There's more that we're responsible for, versus when it's district-based, there could be one person at the district level that was putting together, for instance, professional development for everyone, versus all of us doing the planning. You know, so I mean it's 50/50. When you do plan it at the district level that might not be professional development that particularly interests us. So, you know, it's a catch twenty two. But I would see that as one benefit and then one cost.

Administrator E concurs:

> I think there are a lot of positive aspects to it, but I also think that there are drawbacks like anything. I think that there just needs to be a balance between SBDM and then also what is--what a school district wants all schools to do. I think it just needs to be very clear. I think there needs to be a very clear policy with examples provided of what it is and what it isn't. And I think it's something that needs to be regularly communicated to new principals. You know, when I started 3 years ago, I really did not have any idea about site-based management. Everything I learned, I learned by fire or by experience.

Administrator D expresses her thoughts:

> I think it is if--I will say this, I think you have to have some things at the district level in order to make sure site-based management is done well. And I think we're entering into those conversations, to say what are our blind spots and what parts of this are we doing

> well, and what should not ever be site-based. And if there is site-based management, how do we make sure that every principal is supported in an equitable manner and that's where our district, I think, struggles, because they think equal is equitable, and that is their biggest blind spot because it isn't.
>
> And I think it's--for example, you say to me, with all the power of Site-Based, I can't do the one thing that is most important for my kids. I have the lowest performing school, I have the most struggling students and I have the shortest day. And I have fought for 4 years to get that changed and it has fallen on deaf ears. Now, I don't even get equal, forget about equitable, my kids should have the longest school day in this district because they need more time on instruction, but do you know what school has the longest day, the highest performing school . But I think it's really important that when new people come in to the system, that there is a lot of time spent on site-based management. You know, everyone--you say, oh, we're site-based, oh, we're site-based, oh, we're site-based, well, what does it mean, you know, what does it mean when you're dealing with parents, what does it mean when you're dealing with staffing, what does it mean when you're dealing with professional development or curriculum adoption or whatever it is. It just really needs to be teased out well and that's what I don't see.

SBDM and Risk Taking

As a member of this school district, being completely site-based does have its benefits. Schools are not locked in to any specific curriculum, means of delivering instruction or day to day operations. Schools can really operate to meet the needs of their students and community. However, individuality does a have a cost. Schools are not given additional funds, staffing or any other type of resources to make it happen. Most administrators are business managers too. They have to be financially savvy and well connected in their community to get what is needed to make new programs and innovations take off. Even with this, there are many other boundaries to the autonomy of SBDM. Administrator E states:

> You know, I think it depends on what the area is with risk taking. If it is in the area of curriculum and instruction and possibly trying a new program, you know, you have to do all the "N plus one" communication piece before you can do anything--it has to be calculated. It's calculated risk taking or communicated risk taking. But I don't necessarily see it in--you know, when you're dealing with other types of situations like with parents or community. I definitely see that the district wants parents to be included in all decisions that are made and so if you were to be a risk taker, you would definitely have to do a lot of communicating first in our district. I think our "N plus one" communication is also a way to say this is what I'm doing and asking permission too, especially when you

have to talk to the person above you. Not necessarily when you're just communicating out to stakeholders. But yes I think that most of the time, they would probably want you to ask for input. I think about my PSSG (supervisor) and how she would lead me back to the questions like is what we are doing at our school aligned to board ends? Is it aligned to our mission and vision? Is it aligned to your site plan? But I do think that in certain areas that you do have to ask permission. I don't think anybody likes surprises.

Administrator A adds:

I don't know if it does because I think that every time we try something, if the minute a parent questions it, then we're called to task and we're called to have to prove or explain why. And--not that we shouldn't have to but yet, I guess there should be a level of trust too, that if you're trusting me to make the decision then there should be a level of trust that what I'm doing is going be the right thing for my building, staff or students. So I mean I guess they promote it just in terms of allowing us to be site-based, but yet, it's a tight-reigned site-based, in that, you know, it's site-based as long as you get our okay first. So in terms of risk taking, I'm not sure how much is allowed.

Administrator B continues:

I think central office promotes risk taking in that it's well known what the outcomes are to be and that's high student test scores, happy parents, happy staff and the risk is in finding all of the things that you can put in place to go make that happen. There's a lot of collaboration that's encouraged, not necessarily by central office but within the administrative ranks, themselves, because that's how we survive, getting ideas from each other, reaching out to people who have done this in the past and doing those kind of things.

So you have to risk take because you can't always try what has always been tried or--I mean you'd be lucky if it worked. You just have to try new things.

I think sometimes--it was well said this morning in our meeting when we talked about, we need at least parameters. We need bottom lines of what--in Site-Based Decision Making, are the necessities. We can do it anyway we want it within our buildings, but what are the outcomes, what are the have-to do's, what are the things that we have to hit in Site-Based Decision Making. The non-negotiable items so to speak.
And then we can work around that or we can work within that, and it will still look very different in every single building but we still need to know what are our bottom lines or what is the outcome.

Lastly Administrator C makes a point:

I think it promotes risk taking by supporting Site-Based Decision Making in that they want you (administrators) to make choices about your school community, which is really, really important right now because of the increasing diversity in the district, we all need to be really cognizant of what our make-up of our community is, what is the make-up of

> our school. Our student population, what our neighborhood is like. What would I be doing differently at a military school that I might not be doing at a different elementary in the district. And so it promotes maybe different relationships, partnerships. I have a lot of partnerships with the Air Force Academy. I do a lot of things with them because that's the culture and the environment with which we are connected. The district has been very supportive lately in looking at different math curriculum, in the sense of having some flexibility in looking, what would be good for highly mobile populations. So our school needs a unique math curriculum based on our mobile population. The fact that I have the flexibility to consider other options really makes me feel like, hey, choose what's going to work for you within the district approved list of options. I like the--again, when you have choice that's good. Having a choice of five gives you some guidance, which is also good too.

Central office does promote some risk taking. Risk taking is acceptable when implementing SBDM, reaching for higher student outcomes, promoting partnerships, but is dependent on clear communication in terms of purpose and outcomes. It is evident that the implementation of SBDM in this Pike Peaks district has some underlying parameters or boundaries when it comes to implementation. Administrators appear to agree that risk taking must be communicated beforehand, risk taking needs to keep scores high, parents happy and keep things positive. Administrators take risks to survive. High needs schools need to find ways to increase achievement do risk taking is a necessity. Is this really SBDM when there are strings? Why are there strings pulled up from central office, and never thrown down to help the schools with additional resources? Could a clearly defined model of what is SBDM and what it is not clarify and set the tone and understanding for SBDM implementation?

SBDM and the Needs of Students

Working in a district that is completely site-based, where programs and innovation are created at the site level, it would be important to know if central office supports the schools to meet the needs of all students. In this particular district there are three highly impacted schools with high numbers of students of low SES and minorities. In reading the responses from the

administrators it is clear that there are differences of opinions in regarding support for all students. Administrator C comments:

> I think for curriculum and being on the cutting edge, this district does an outstanding job. They put up in front of us many things that we should be aware of, conversations we should have amongst ourselves, conversations we should have with our staff and many times these are related to past findings, data and other things. The negative part of that is your bucket's only so full and you can only carry around so much. So at what point do you say, okay, you've got your three initiatives or five initiatives, we're good to go, we're going to support those for the year and we're done. I'm not going to add anything else. Frequently, you feel like you're adding, adding, adding, which is a trickle down to your staff, which you're constantly checking the morale and the burn out of your staff, which typically comes from above and you have to act as a filter for that.

When I asked Administrator A, who is at school with low SES and minority enrollment, the response was:

> I think we've been provided the financial support that we need. I think we've been provided the expertise in terms of some staff at the district level, you know, we have an RtI coordinator, we have an ELL coordinator. We have somebody who kind of supports us with homeless kids. So I mean I think there are those supports in place, so I think that's something that allows me to support those kids.
>
> Giving us choices of curriculum materials. You know, we don't all have to use textbook A to teach math, you know, we can use A, B or C. I think that's a way to support our academic needs. But it's still limited. Whereas, previously when I referred to that I meant if it's a site-based decision, I truly am on my own for finding the funds to do that program, in addition to using the funds for everything else I need to use it for anything new, above and beyond or a risk that you want to take it's yes, but you have to find a way to fund it yourself. There's a lot of professional development involved with it. That training, I don't think the district supports. Teachers--staff or buildings have to find that money within their budget along with everything else that is needed for the building. You know, we're all given the same pot of dollars and to do the general operation of our building, but then also if we want to look at doing these other things.

Administrator D from a highly impacted school with high SES and minority enrollment states:

> Besides ESL? I have problems with the ESL model. I don't necessarily think that it should only be a transition model. We only have one thing, we don't have a maintenance, we don't have an enrichment model. We have one way of doing things in reaching those kids. I don't think that's good. I don't think it does for low SES students. They don't understand low SES students and they don't understand that those students have different needs, like our district does so many wonderful things. I've sat in principals' meeting and heard all the wonderful connections and things that they do for other schools in neighboring districts of poverty. They could adopt all three Title 1 schools and help us out so much. Our students don't have any positive role models. What would it look like if our district said, you know what, for our neediest schools we're going to track those students and get them mentors and other supports that would help them succeed. It would help if the district could do something to support and recognize that these kids need more time, they need relationship, they need to know someone cares in order to stay motivated and engaged. It's hard for me, and if I had the same money at my disposal as other schools that just bought a field for $67,000.00 out of their activity account. Or had a school community where parents every year would send in $100.00 just because, to start the school year, write a check for $100.00 for programs for the year for their child. For those schools that have 250 students, that's $25,000.00 off the bat to support students. If I could even have half of that money that's $12,500.00, there would be many more things we could do to support our students. My school has about 491 kids and we have $4,300.00 in our activity account. There's just such disparity.

From the interviews, there is not a clear agreement on how the district supports school to meet the needs of all students. Administrators expressed support for curriculum and flexibility in using the budget to meet the needs at the school site. What was evident was that schools that have higher numbers of low SES and minorities feel and see the disparity for specific student needs. Equal is not equitable and the highest impacted schools are treated the same at the all other schools when their needs are high and the expectations for achievement are no different than more affluent neighboring schools.

SBDM and Central Office Support

Staffing in this Pikes Peak school district is one example of how extreme SBDM is implemented. Each year, based on school enrollment projections, schools are given a staffing

allotment for their buildings. The thought process behind giving a lump allocation is to promote freedom and flexibility is creating a staff design that reflects the needs of individual schools. Schools can then create positions and allocate staff as needed within the amount allocation. However, some challenges arise when enrollment grows and the need for academic support grows. For high needs schools innovation is a utopian thought when you need more interventionists to help get students back on track in reading and math.

Administrator C discusses:

> I don't feel I have enough staffing and I don't feel I have enough financial resources too. What would be helpful for me is if my building was staffed on my enrollment and not what was available to the district, as I have been told. So if it was a needs and enrollment staffing, I would feel better about it. The other thing is, people have talked about the military population and mobility and even said there should be a special allocation or a special consideration given with that population because we never see kids that come to us in first grade and how they do in fifth grade. We never see the fruits of our labor, and because of that would there ever be a need for consideration of high mobility type school setting. Would we ever consider a small, small contribution to that? And then our enrollment is up 50 kids and we have not been staffed accordingly.

Administrator D explains:

> They provide support in the sense that they give us our TE and allow us to craft our staffing design, and they've given us additional help that other schools don't get, like for example, one school doesn't get any literacy help, whereas they knew that because of our needs, they did add that. So in that sense, I really appreciate it. And I appreciate the work in influencing our district in getting Title funds back. If we did not have Title funds back, then I would be saying no, the district isn't giving us enough. But they knew that we were getting Title and so they relied heavily upon what we were going get from Title. What concerns me is what's going happen in the next year or two as to what they'll pull back and what we'll have to absorb. I think that what we were getting from Title may be impacted. And then they're not going to support the schools with the greatest need with some additional help. I don't think we get support from SPED at all in terms of needing additional resources for social worker, psychologist, and speech language. A lot of our kindergartners in low performing schools have a lot of language issues and we need to have, someone that's working with kids in those groups, improving their language, but we can't afford it out of our regular allocations.
>
> So I don't think they're aware of those kinds of issues that come up because of poverty, that they haven't been considered thoughtfully enough. When I look at the money that goes into InterBaccalaureate classes and what they put in on the other side of the

> continuum for the Talented and Gifted students, as they move up through the varying levels, what they put in on the kids that they're going to get those advanced scores is almost everything. They give--they're going get something back from those students. The students that I'm talking about, you may not see the return on your investment till well after they leave elementary or middle or even high school, but I think the district could definitely do some work in equity and what decision making looks like when it's equitable. And that the decision making should be more collaborative and include us, the instructional leaders at the different levels in those conversations.

Administrator B concurs:

> I don't think they do. And the reason is, is I think the needs of at-risk schools are higher and we need to look at smaller class size, we need to look at what it really takes in order to help move those students along on our continuum, which takes a lot more support. And we are staffed the same ways as the other schools and it's--what looks equal actually sets those kids further apart. I would like to see them not go above 20 students per classroom. I would really like to see a paraprofessional in every single class, an instructional paraprofessional who could help with small groups, who could run the large group while you put the teacher with the lowest kids. I really think that's a necessity. I think the staffing for special education students needs to be higher, particularly kids who can't function in a classroom and are still mainstreamed into a classroom. You just can't expect a teacher to do all of that and raise the scores at the same time.

There is some agreement on the disparity of staffing when it comes to meet the needs of special populations. Administrators agree SBDM gives them flexibility in their staffing design. However this creates a specific limit to what can be done to meet the needs of high needs kids such as low SES, minorities, high mobility, and special education students who demonstrate the greatest academic deficits and need for additional support.

Additional Comments Regarding SBDM

After asking specific questions related to SBDM, this question was an open door to allow me the opportunity to gauge the administrators' overall impressions regarding this long standing school reform effort. Administrator states, "I think the pros of it far outweigh the negatives for me."

Administrator Comments:

Personally, for me as an administrator and I've worked in several districts and I love Site-Based Decision Making. It's a really good fit for me. I like the guidance. I like somebody being above you and telling you to stay on the highway, but I like, you know, I like being able to choose what kind of car to drive and maybe what gas to put in it. I like the flexibility to make choices about what my building needs, what my staff needs and still have the same high expectations and goals as everybody else does. It also depends on the leadership. If the leadership that you work for is really comfortable and can say I trust these people are going to make good decisions, that's really important because you don't want somebody watching over your shoulder the whole time and I don't like anybody watching over my shoulder. I just want them to feel they can trust me to make good decisions. There has to be a superintendent or a higher level of leadership that allows good site, realistic Site-Based Decision Making to occur to feel supported and yeah, I made these choices and they're my choices and here's why, and if you can validate them then you're good to go.

Administrator A adds:

You know, I guess I would say overall I feel fortunate to work in a district that has put some of those decision-making processes in the hands of administrators. I just think as we've gotten larger as a district, it's been harder to delineate what is site-based and what's not and what should continue to be site-based and what shouldn't. I mean I would just say that would be the thing that maybe the district should review. I think we're doing a lot because so much is site-based. I think if some of those things were district-level decisions, then we wouldn't be investing the time to make them happen at the site or there would be someone who would, up at the district level, who would be able to manage them and that would be less.

When everything is site-based, then everything comes down to me taking a risk on how we end up going through with something. Whereas, if there are some things that are district-based, then there's no risk. It's, this is how it will be. So I think then there are fewer things for me to focus on in terms of taking a risk, if that makes sense. Well, I mean I kind of like having the choice of curriculum, but I just think of the time that we, as a staff, put into looking at the different reading curriculum that were available, making our decision, then I had to put together the professional development for my staff rather than it all being done at the district level by one person. So I think that would be a piece.

Administrator E shares:

Well, you know, having worked in three or four other school districts, I definitely think that there are benefits of SBDM. There are areas that, for example, that need to be reviewed. When I came in to the district and had to deal with students being tardy to school. I learned that there is no policy on truancy. For kids that are excessively tardy and you call around to other schools and you find out that issues with truancy or tardiness on

> addressed independently by school. Well, that really doesn't send a message that the district has like a strong stance on truancy or tardies, and that's an important issue.
>
> So it can really--you have to be a really savvy principal, I think, because you can really get burned in Site-Based if you're not careful. And I guess the other thing I would say and I've said it many, many times is that there just needs to be really clear parameters set for principals for what you're going do under SBDM and what the district is going to support you with. And I think right now we're in a state of flux around that.

The comments to question 10 do indicate that although the administrators experience various amounts of confusion and inconsistencies with the implementation of SBDM is well worth it. The autonomy far outweighs any logistical issues. Administrators do agree that some parameters, definitions and procedures regarding SBDM in the district would be most helpful in terms of time and resources.

Changing Student Population

Within the last 5 years, the Pikes Peak school district has been experiencing a demographic change in student population. Tables 10-15 present student demographic information from 2004 to 2009 and are categorized as Math, Reading and Writing. Across the years, the elementary schools have experienced an increase in overall student population and ethnicity. When reviewing the data in the areas of reading, writing and math, it is important to note that the totals vary across the levels and subject areas. Some factors include:

1. Some students took CSAP-A (alternative to the regular CSAP test) in some content areas and the regular CSAP assessment in other content areas.

2. Some students were absent for part of testing window and may have been tested on only some of the content areas.

3. There are parent refusals for testing, so a student would not take any of the assessments to prevent missing additional class time.

4. Some students have one or more test sessions invalidated for myriad reasons and so scores would not be reported for all tests.

5. Finally some students moved in or moved out during the testing window and only tested on some of the content areas. Scores are reported for the tests taken while enrolled in the district.

As will be shown in the following tables, there is an overall increasing trend in the percentage of those on free/reduced lunch as well as an increase in non-White students in the data across all academic areas. Over the years, the district has not had a huge amount of minority students or student of low SES. As more at-risk students enter the district, the more differentiated instruction needs to be to meet the needs of all students. The following tables also describe the changes in achievement levels as the changes in the student population increases.

In Table 10, there was a steady increase in the number of Math students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch from 2004 to 2009. The range of percentage is from 5% to 10%. The average increase for all students eligible for free and reduced lunch from 2004 to 2009 is 8%. The information in the following table represents all students taking the Math CSAP.

Table 10. All Math Students by Lunch Program Type Across All Years

Year	Free lunch	Reduced lunch	Full pay lunch	Total *N* by year	% free/reduced lunch by year
2004	292	197	8,464	8,953	5
2005	455	324	11,374	12,153	6
2006	545	275	11,793	12,613	7
2007	583	417	11,831	12,831	8
2008	716	399	11,850	12,965	9
2009	858	465	11,888	13,211	10

Table 11 represents all students in Math by ethnicity. There was a steady increase in the number of minority students enrolling in the school district from 2004 to 2009. The greatest

increase was in the Hispanic population. The increase of non-White students went from 15% to 19%. The average percentage increase for non-White students for all years was 17%.

Table 11. All Math Students by Ethnicity Across All Years

Year	American Indian/ Alaska	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	White	Total *N* by year	% Non-White students by year
2004	86	392	316	541	7,618	8,953	15
2005	95	506	485	816	10,251	12,153	16
2006	102	624	515	876	10,496	12,613	17
2007	113	625	530	987	10,576	12,831	18
2008	106	662	526	1,022	10,649	12,965	18
2009	105	699	543	1,107	10,757	13,211	19

In Table 12, there was a steady increase in the number of Reading students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch from 2004 to 2009. The range of percentage is from 6% to 10%. The average increase for all students eligible for free and reduced lunch from 2004 to 2009 is 8%. The information for all Reading students is presented in Table 12.

Table 12. All Reading Students by Lunch Program Type Across All Years

Year	Free lunch	Reduced lunch	Full pay lunch	Total *N* by year	% Free/reduced lunch by year
2004	445	283	11,026	11,754	6
2005	458	327	11,368	12,153	6
2006	544	277	11,788	12,609	7
2007	580	417	11,818	12,817	8
2008	718	400	11,835	12,953	9
2009	860	464	11,882	13,206	10

Table 13 represents all students in Reading by ethnicity. There was a steady increase in the number of minority students enrolled in the school district from 2004 to 2009. For non-White students, Hispanic, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander had the steadiest increases from 2004 to

2005. The increase of non-White students went from 15% to 19%. The average percentage increase for non-White students for all years was 17%. The information for all Reading students by ethnicity is presented in Table 13.

Table 13. All Reading Students by Ethnicity Across All Years

Year	American Indian/ Alaska	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	White	Total *N* by year	% Non-White students by year
2004	104	519	439	740	9,952	11,754	15
2005	96	505	487	816	10,249	12,153	16
2006	103	621	513	875	10,497	12,609	17
2007	114	625	527	987	10,564	12,817	18
2008	106	662	524	1,020	10,641	12,953	18
2009	104	697	542	1,104	10,759	13,206	19

In Table 14, there was a steady increase in the number of Writing students that were eligible for free and reduced lunch. The range of percentage was from 6% to 9%. The average increase for all students eligible for free and reduced lunch from 2004 to 2009 was 7%. The information for all Writing students is presented in Table 14.

Table 14. All Writing Students by Lunch Program Type Across All Years

Year	Free lunch	Reduced lunch	Full pay lunch	Total *N* by year	% Free/reduced lunch by year
2004	444	283	11,024	11,751	6
2005	455	325	11,366	12,146	6
2006	545	277	11,796	12,618	7
2007	584	417	11,808	12,829	8
2008	716	400	11,839	12,955	9

Note: Data were not available for 2009

Table 15 represents all students in Writing by ethnicity. There was a steady increase in the number of minority students enrolled in the school district from 2004 to 2009. Among non-

White students, Hispanics, Blacks, and Asian/Pacific Islanders had the steadiest increases from 2004 to 2005. The increase of non-White students went from 15% to 19%. The average percentage increase for non-White students for all years was 17%. The information for all Writing students by ethnicity is presented in Table 15.

Table 15. All Writing Students by Ethnicity Across All Years

Year	American Indian/ Alaska	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	White	Total *N* by year	% Non-White students by year
2004	103	517	440	739	9,952	11,751	15
2005	96	504	485	815	10,246	12,146	16
2006	105	623	515	876	10,499	12,618	17
2007	114	625	530	987	10,573	12,829	18
2008	105	662	522	1,022	10,644	12,955	18
2009	104	698	542	1,104	10,760	13,208	19

Historical Student Achievement Data

The following figures represent data from the Colorado Student Assessment Program, CSAP Total Scale Scores from 2004 to 2009. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the mean differences among years, lunch type groups, and ethnic groups across all academic achievement data.

According to Figure 1, the analysis of variance revealed a significant difference in overall Math scale scores, $F(5, 72322) = 35.782$, $p < 0.001$, and in overall Writing scores, $F(5, 75011) = 2.602$, $p = 0.023$ across years. However, there were no significant differences in the overall Reading scale scores across years, $F(5, 74952) = 1.365$, $p < 0.234$. The post-hoc Tukey HSD test revealed the significant pairs found within the ANOVA analysis for the Math scores. According to this data, there were significant differences between 2004 and all other years, between 2005 and all other years except 2006, between 2006 and all other years except 2005, between 2007

and all except 2008 and 2009, between 2008 and 2004 and 2005 (respectively), and between 2009 and 2004, 2005, 2006 (respectively). According to the data for the Writing post-hoc test, the only significant difference was between 2005 and 2008.

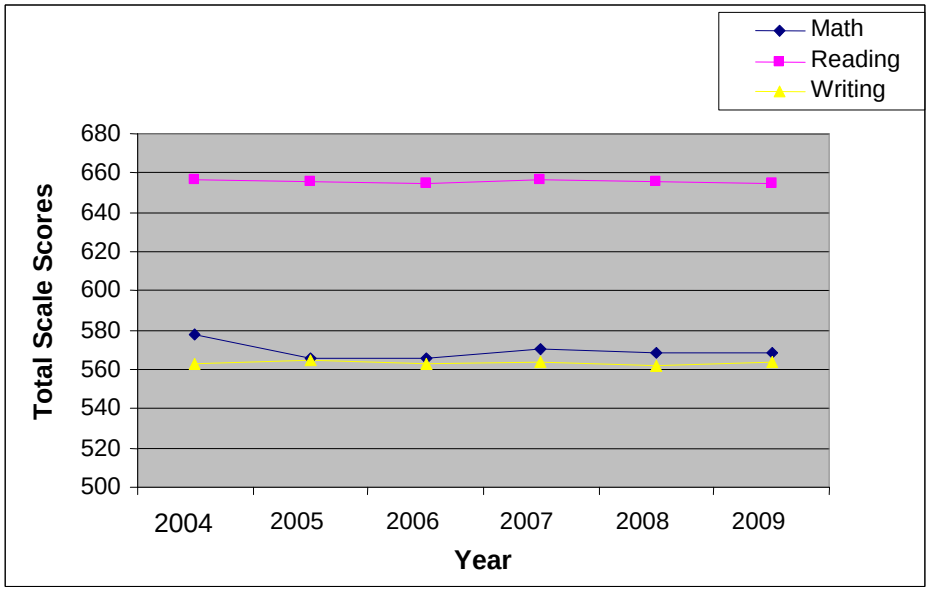

Figure 1. Total scale scores for math, reading, and writing across years for all students.

Figures 2 through 4 represent student achievement data by lunch program. Figure 2 represents the data from a one-way ANOVA for Math by lunch program across year. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences across years for those on the Free Lunch program, $F(5, 3412) = 3.111$, $p = 0.008$, and the Reduced Lunch program, $F(5, 2056)$ 3.502, $p = 0.004$, and for the Full Paying students, $F(5, 66842) = 30.899$, $p < 0.001$.

Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed specific significant pairs among years for each lunch type program. For those receiving Free lunches, there were significant mean paired differences between 2004 and 2005 (M= 18.320, $s = 6.007$, $p < 0.05$), 2004 and 2006 ($M = 20.507$, $s = 5.789$, $p < 0.01$), 2004 and 2008 ($M = 16.441$, $s = 5.545$, $p < 0.05$). For each pair, the

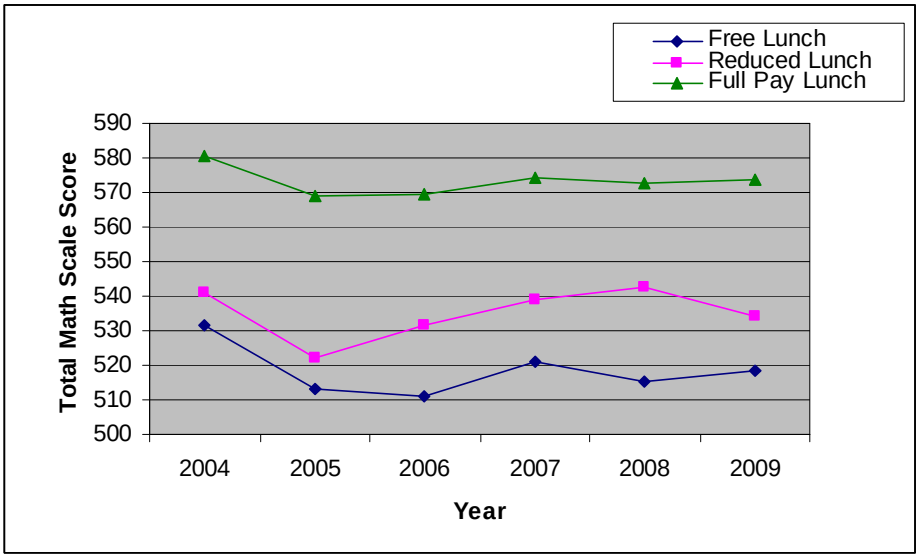

Figure 2. Mean math total scale scores for lunch program by year.

data indicate a decrease in test scores from 2004 to the respective year. For those on Reduced lunches, there were significant pair differences between 2005 and 2007 (M = -16.902, s = 5.453, $p < 0.05$) and between 2005 and 2008 (M = -20.667, s = 5.504, $p < 0.01$). For these two pairs, the data indicate an increase in test scores. Likewise, for those who are full paying students, there were significant pair differences between 2004 and 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 (M = 11.470, s = 1.060, $p < .001$; M = 11.273, s = 1.051, $p < .001$; M = 6.524, s = 1.050, $p < .001$; M = 7.859, s = 1.050, $p < 0.001$; M = 6.723, s = 1.050, $p < 0.001$ respectively). There were significant pair differences between 2005 and 2004 (as shown above), 2007, 2008, and 2009 (M = -4.946, s = 0.968, $p < 0.001$; M = -3.611, s = 0.967, $p < 0.01$; M = -4.747, s = 0.967 respectively). Additional significant pairs exist between 2006 and 2007, 2008, and 2009 (M = -4.749, s = 0.957, $p < 0.001$; M = -3.414, s = 0.957, $p < 0.01$; M = -4.550, s = 0.957 respectively; see Figure 2 for full pay trend line).

Figure 3 shows the ANOVA results for Reading scores by lunch program across years. The analysis of variance revealed a significant difference across years for those on the Reduced Lunch program, $F(5, 2140) = 2.549$, $p = 0.026$. Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed significant paired differences between 2005 and 2008 ($M = -14.820$, $s = 4.908$, $p = 0.031$) indicating an increase in reading scores from 2005 to 2008.

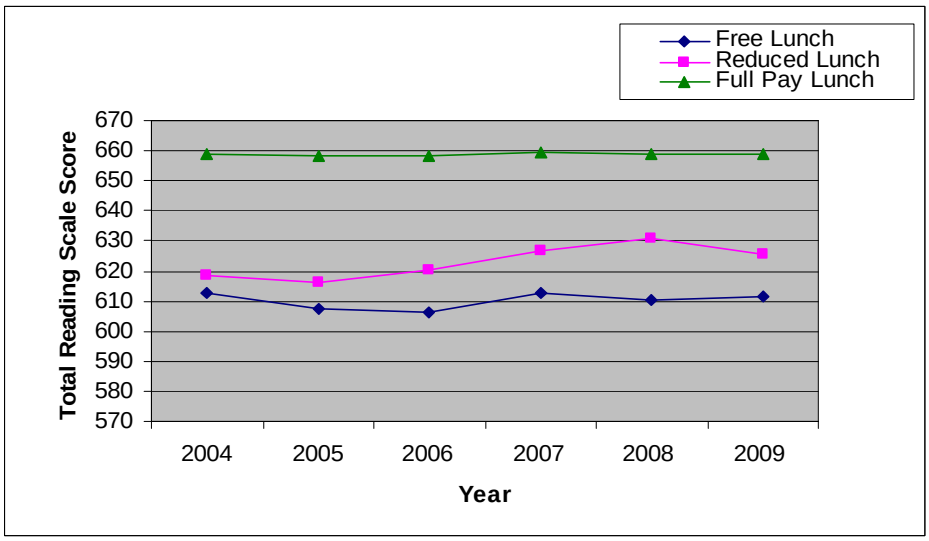

Figure 3. Mean reading total scale scores for lunch program across years.

Figure 4 shows the ANOVA results for Writing scores by lunch program across the years. The analysis of variance revealed significant difference across years for those on the Reduced Lunch program, $F(4, 1678) = 2.693$, $p = 0.03$. Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed significant paired differences between 2005 and 2007 ($M = -13.552$, $s = 4.958$, $p = 0.050$) indicating an increase in writing scores from 2005 to 2007.

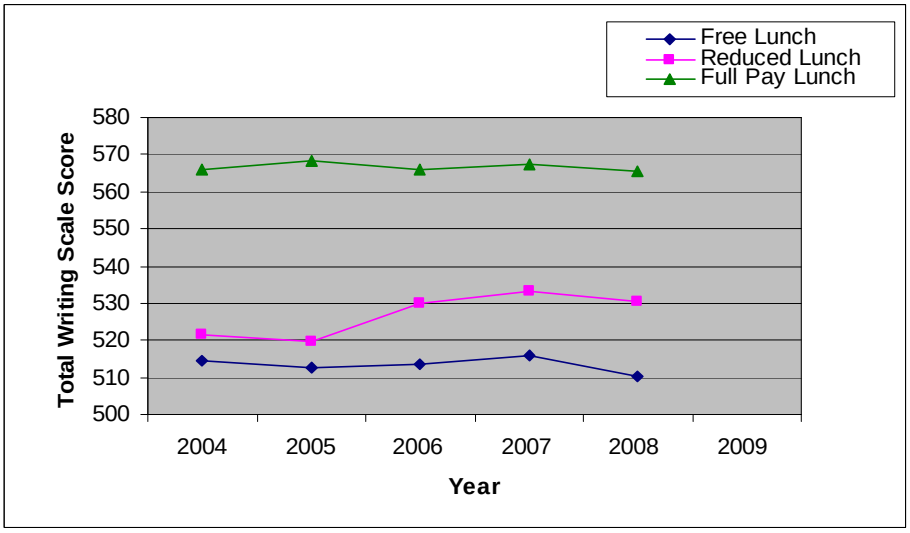

Figure 4. Mean writing total scale scores for lunch program across years.

Figure 5 represents the data from a one-way ANOVA for Math scores by ethnic groups across year. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences between ethnic groups for 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 ($F(4, 8837) = 59.850$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12027) = 105.056$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12578) = 111.487$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12799) = 94.569$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12919) = 108.521$, $p < 0.001$: and $F(4, 13138) = 104.041$, $p < 0.001$ respectively). Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed significant pairs among ethnic groups. Among each year, those identified as Asian and White produced higher math scores than those identified as Black, Hispanic, and American Indian with Asians having the highest math scores for each year.

Figure 6 shows the one-way ANOVA was conducted to look at Math scores within White versus non-White ethnic groups across yeas. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences across years for those on who are White, $F(5, 60028) = 26.316$, $p < .001$, and non-White students, $F(5, 12288) = 8.867$, $p < 0.001$.

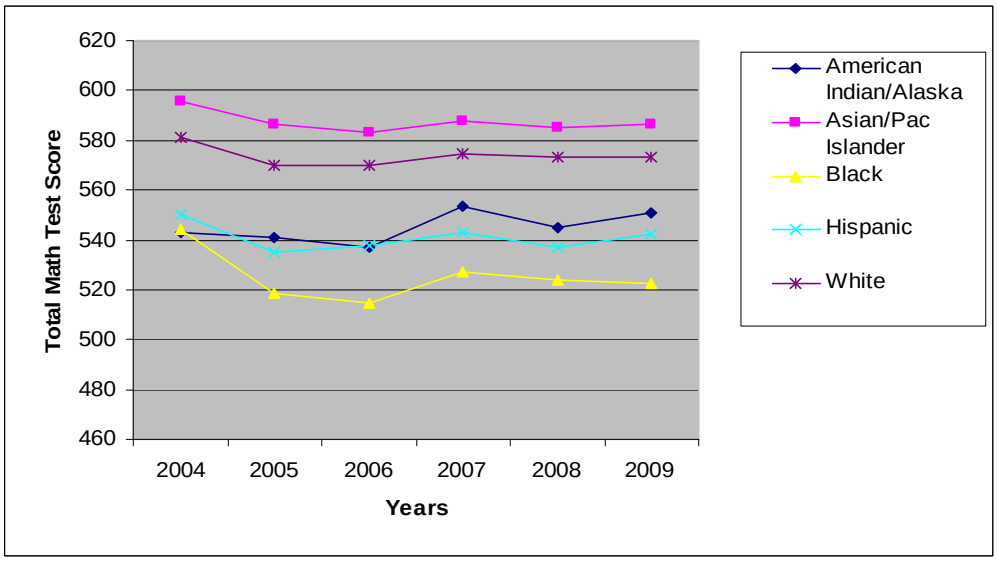

Figure 5. Mean math total scale scores for ethnic groups across years.

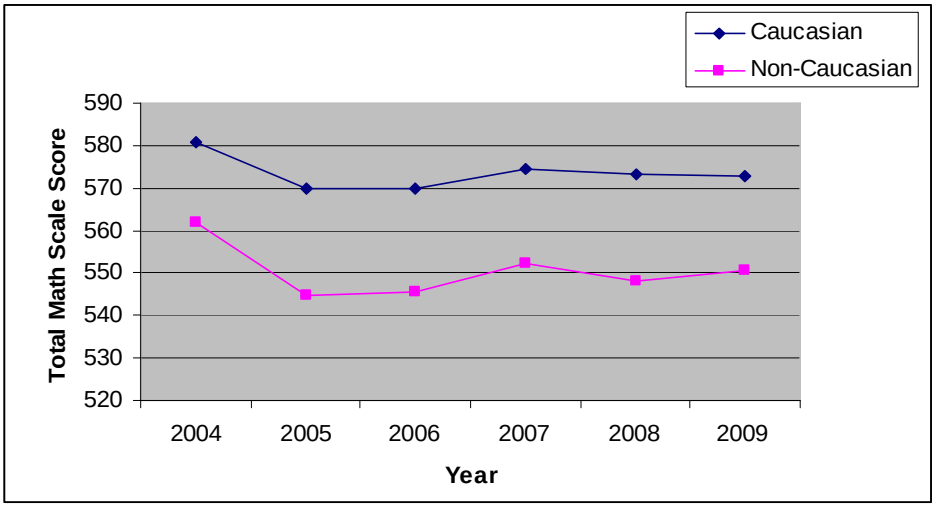

Figure 6. Mean math total scale scores for Caucasian versus non-Caucasian across years.

Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed specific significant pairs among years for each group. For those identified as White, there were significant mean paired differences between 2004 and 2005, 2006, 0207, 2008, and 2009 (M = 16.992, s = 2.929, $p < 0.001$; M = 16.146, s = 2.860, $p < 0.001$; M = 9.450, s = 2.826, p = 0.011; M = 13.434, s = 2.813, $p < 0.001$; M = 10.927, s = 2.785, p = 0.001 respectively). For each pair, the data indicate a decrease in test scores from

2004 to each respective year. Additional significant pairs exist for 2005 and 2007, 2008, and 2009 (M = -4.720, s = 1.013, $p < 0.001$; M = -3.371, s= 1.012, p = 0.011; M = -3.265, s = 1.010, p = 0.015 respectively). Lastly, significant pairs were shown between 2006 and 2007, 2008, and 2009 (M = -4.319, s = 1.006, $p < 0.001$; M = -2.969, s = 1.004, $p < 0.05$; M = -2.864, s = 1.002, $p < 0.05$ respectively). For each of the pairs for 2005 and 2006, the data indicate significant increases in scores from 2005 to each respective year and 2006 to each respective year show above. For those identified as non-White, there were significant paired differences between 2005 and 2007 (M = -7.542, s = 2.541, $p < 0.05$) indicating an increase in test scores.

Figure 7 represents the data from a one-way ANOVA for Reading scores by ethnic groups across year. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences between ethnic groups for 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 ($F(4, 11609) = 50.183$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 11997) = 68.990$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12558) = 71.249$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12769) = 65.540$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12878) = 70.074$, $p < 0.001$: and $F(4, 13121) = 81.732$, $p < 0.001$ respectively).

Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed significant pairs among ethnic groups. Among each year, those identified as Asian and White produced higher reading scores than those identified as Black, Hispanic, and American Indian for all years except 2007 and 2009 with no significant difference between Asian and White for any year. For 2007 and 2009 Whites and Asians were not significantly different than American Indian. Except for 2006, 2008, and 2009, there were no significant differences in the Reading scores between Black and Hispanic students, and except for 2009, there were no significant paired score differences between Blacks, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan students.

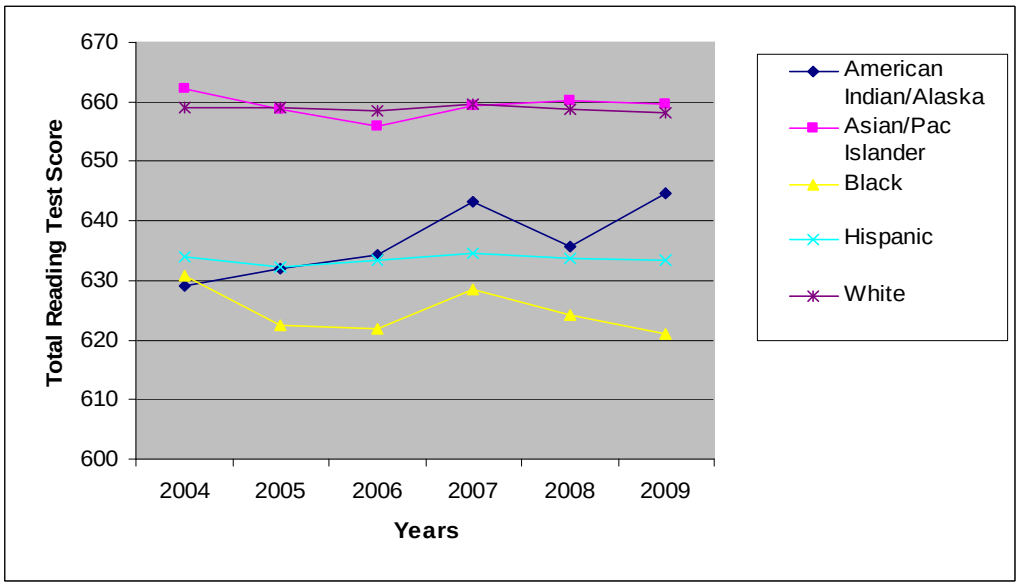

Figure 7. Mean reading total scale scores for ethnic groups across years.

Figure 8 shows the one-way ANOVA results conducted to look at Reading scores between White versus non-White groups across years. The analysis of variance revealed no significant differences for reading scores across years.

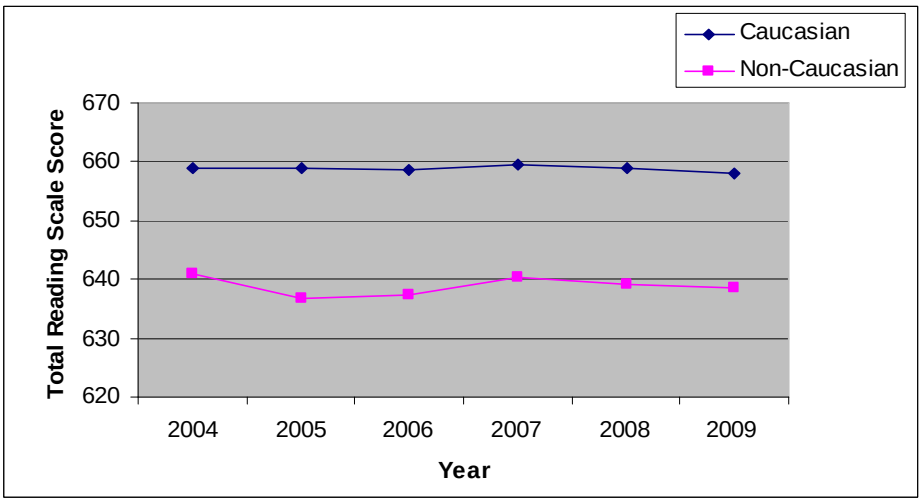

Figure 8. Mean reading total scale scores for Caucasian versus non-Caucasian across years.

Figure 9 represents the data from a one-way ANOVA for Writing scores by ethnic groups across year. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences between ethnic groups for 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 ($F(4, 11611) = 39.139$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12008) = 56.355$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12563) = 65.975$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12788) = 57.189$, $p < 0.001$; $F(4, 12893) = 65.257$, $p < 0.001$: and $F(4, 13124) = 67.398$, $p < 0.001$ respectively).

Additionally, the post-hoc tests revealed significant pairs among ethnic groups. Among each year, those identified as Asian and White produced higher writing scores than those identified as Black, Hispanic, and American Indian for all years except 2008 and 2009. Although there were no years with a significant difference between Asians and Whites, Asians consistently produce slightly higher writing scores than Whites. For 2008, there were no significant differences between Whites/Asians and American Indians, and for 2009, there were no significant differences between Whites and American Indians.

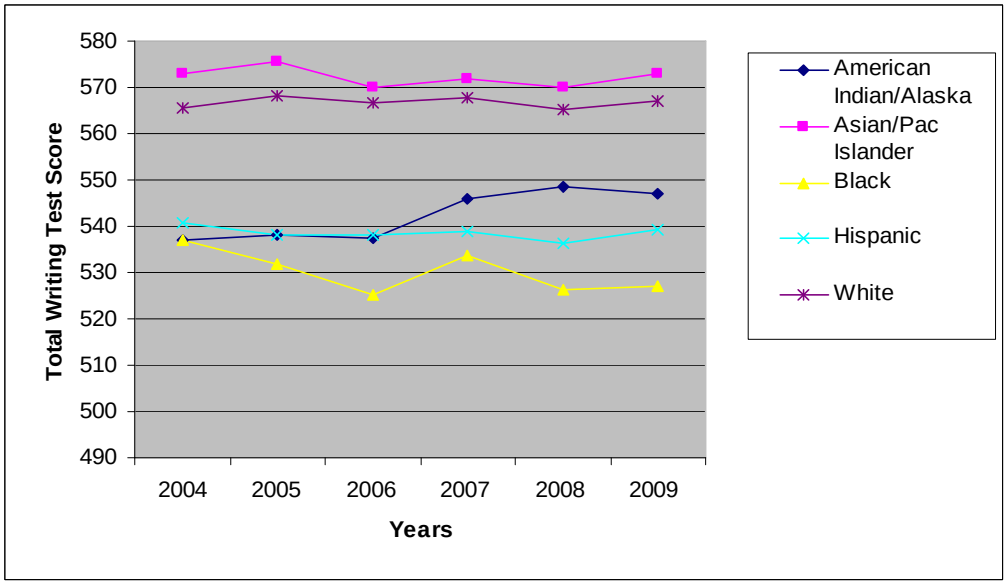

Figure 9. Mean writing total scale scores for ethnic groups across years.

Figure 10 reveals the one-way ANOVA results looking at Writing scores between White versus non-White across years. The analysis of variance revealed a slight significant difference among Whites for writing scores across years, $F(5, 62265) = 2.30$, $p = 0.042$; however, there was no significant mean difference among non-Whites across years. Interestingly, the post-hoc analysis for Whites did not reveal any significant pairs across the years.

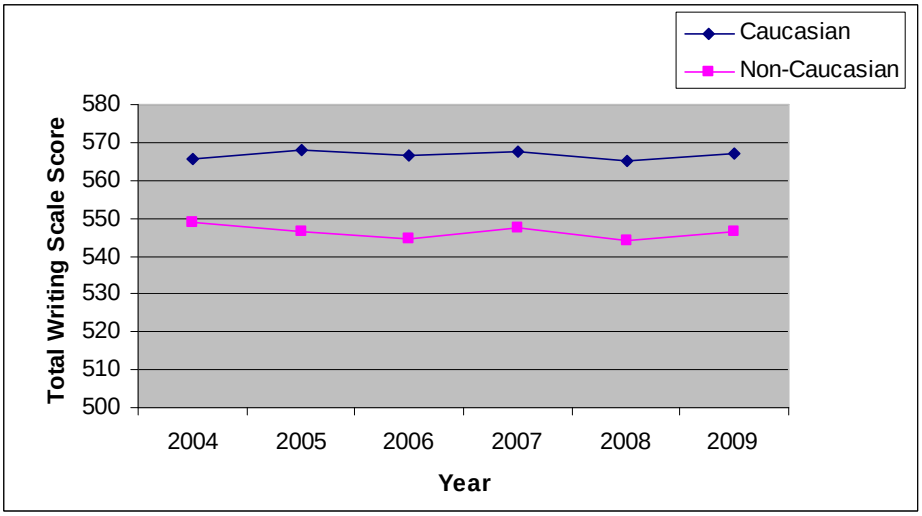

Figure 10. Mean writing total scale scores for Whites versus non-Whites across years.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This chapter will include a description of the findings in response to the research questions addressed in the study. The study focused on the impact of SBDM on an administrator's decision making ability.

A non-experimental design was used for this study. This type of research design is used when the independent variable cannot be manipulated and the researcher is not trying to identify cause- effect relationship.

Data for the study was collected by administering surveys to the administrators in elementary schools implementing site-based management. After analyzing data gathered from the survey data, repeating themes and recurring issues were used to prepare for the face-to-face interviews with administrators. Administrator interviews and student achievement data were also part of the data collection. The use of student achievement data was used for comparison, and focused specifically on student subgroups as defined by the Colorado Department of Education.

Research Questions

The questions of this study addressed the impact of implementation of school-based management on elementary administrators' ability to make decisions regarding the academic achievement of low socio-economic and minority students. It is important to conduct such a study as it will be helpful to administrators at all levels to understand the impact of SBDM on student achievement and administrator decision making.

1. How does the implementation of site-based management affect the decisions of elementary school principals?

Findings: Administrators believe that SBDM allows for the creativity and autonomy to make decisions in the best interest of the students. Survey responses indicated that administrators are operating closely within the definitions of SBDM. They believe that most decisions are made with stakeholders and that their schools are given the autonomy to meet the needs of their school communities. Responses from the survey showed high levels of agreement for the areas in which an administrator should make independent decisions. Those areas included personnel matters, budget allocations, reassigning of personnel, school calendar and rules for employees.

Administrators were also in agreement in the use of SBDM regarding matters that have direct impact on student achievement. These matters included activities for grade level teams, methods for evaluating curriculum, plan for school improvement, selecting personnel, and scheduling.

Conclusions. Based on the information gathered from the survey and face-to-face interviews, an administrator's ability for decision making is not impacted in a manner that would prevent them from making decisions in the best interest of the students. Through the surveys, it was indicated that administrators can and do make decisions with their scope of authority. Administrators also believe that based on the definition of SBDM, stakeholders are involved at the appropriate levels and within the given circumstance. There was no indication that administrators believe that they cannot operate in the best interest of all students with the implementation of SBDM.

Leithwood and Mascall (1988) explained that distributed leadership is about dividing the labor of an organization among stakeholders based on their particular expertise. By doing this, it helps stakeholders to make good decisions based on accurate information and what is best for the students. Hill and Bonan (1991) reiterated that SBDM is about moving decisions to those

stakeholders that work closest with the students as they have specific expertise to do so. The findings for this research question are consistent with implementation of SBDM in this Pikes Peak school district. It is evident that the framework of this school reform effort still exists.

2. How does the implementation of site-based decision making relate to the academic achievement of low socio-economic and minority students as measured by the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)?

Findings. In reviewing the last 5 years of student achievement data, the Pikes Peak school district has experienced a steady increase in students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Since 2004, there has been a steady increase, the total number of students on free and reduced lunch are only a fraction of the total number of full paying students. This information is recorded in the Colorado Student Assessment Program information. The same increases in ethnicity can be noted. Within the last 5 years the school district has also experienced an increase in minority students most significantly are Black and Hispanic students.

While scaled scores indicated that White and Asian students typically outperformed other minority groups, Caucasians as a group outperformed non-Caucasian students in the areas of Reading, Writing and Math.

Conclusions. Based on the achievement data, it is evident that low socio-economic and minority students are outperformed by full paying Caucasian students. The achievement results are typical for these particular subgroups and not necessarily the results of the implementation of SBDM.

The Coleman Report claimed that student backgrounds were directly connected to the level of achievement. Yet given the efforts of compensatory education and popular reforms of the 20th century, low socio-economic and minority students still fail to perform at the level of

their Caucasian peers. What is lacking in the reform efforts is the role of the principal in terms of social justice and equity. Dantley and Tillman (2006) promoted the need for principals to lead the change in marginalization of these students by questions policies and procedures that do not equalize or even the access to quality education. It is important for leaders to understand the growing needs of all student populations and to push for their success.

3. What are the principals' perceptions regarding central office administration support of site-based decision making?

Findings. One of the most repeated themes noted during the face-to-face interviews with administrators was the need for equity, guidance, and support from central office administration. Administrators consistently mentioned the need for guidance and procedures regarding issues that impact all schools. Issues such as safety and security, Response to Intervention (RtI), and extra pay were a few requirements that were mentioned. Administrators at schools with high enrollment of low socio-economic and minority students mentioned the need for additional support for their at-risk populations. They mentioned need for additional staffing, and mental health providers to meet the needs of the students that arise from poverty. Administrators also discussed the need to central office to align some of the expectations for schools to help maximize time and resources. SBDM does give school autonomy and flexibility but at times that opportunity comes with challenges. Many administrators explain that one impact of implementing SBDM is that individual school must find their own resources for implementing creative and innovative programs for their school communities. The Pikes Peak school district cannot afford to support all endeavors at all schools. Therefore many administrators become business managers and seek to raise money to support any additional programs above and beyond the regular education.

Conclusion. As this Pikes Peak school district has grown in student population and school sites, the need to delineate what work is site-based and what work is not site-based is important. There is a need to provide specific information in policies and procedures to assist administrators in their respective schools. To have a set body of policies and procedures in place regarding many of the expectations from central office administration would allow school site administrators to focus on the needs of staff and students.

Gibton, Naama, and Goldring (2000) discussed that current systems, components, and conditions of decentralization need to be considered and studied. It is important for participants to understand the meaning and construction of policies under decentralization. When a system changes such as decentralization, it is important to design some sort of basic and common understandings and mutual discourse among the schools, as well as between schools and authorities about how it will operate (Hannaway, 1993). There needs to be a way to promote the autonomy but to ensure that common goals are established and implemented for the system. This is congruent with the findings regarding central office support. Principals are clearly needing understanding and definitions of expectations, policies, and practices under the SBDM model.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of school-based management (SBM) on an administrators' ability to make decisions regarding the achievement of economically disadvantaged and minority students. Understanding that the goal of SBDM is to increase students' achievement it was evident that this particular study did not reveal an impact of SBDM on administrators' ability to make decision especially regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students.

The study did reveal for this Pikes Peak school district which gives schools complete autonomy, there is a need for communication and delineation of what operations, policies, and procedures fall within the domain of the central office administration and that of the school. Elementary school administrators clearly embrace the implementation of SBDM stating it gives local schools much independence for creativity, innovation and ownerships. Administrators stated that the openness to do what is needed based on the school community needs is helpful to overall student achievement.

Administrators clearly though, are asking for clear definitions of SBDM. It would be important, as a school district goal to find ways of communicating and, with the input from administrators, begin to define what SBDM is, what it is not, and to explain policies and procedures that are not part of SBDM but the general practice and procedures of the school district operations.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations should be considered to extend further research in SBDM and school reform related to student achievement and administrator decision making.

1. Replicate this study to include middle school and high school administrators to determine if their perceptions differ from elementary school administrators regarding decision making and central office support.

2. Examine the differences between building administrators and central office administrators to determine perceptions and understanding of the implementation of SBDM.

3. Implement a longitudinal research design study to determine specifically how SBDM is impacting student achievement for all students.

4. Examine the differences between the perceptions and reality along with the attitudes of the central office administration regarding SBDM and to evaluate their understanding of the implementation of SBDM.

5. With increasing numbers of minority and low socio-economic students, initiate a study to measure if particular students have higher achievement levels in site-based managed schools compared to non-SBDM schools.

6. Given the different forms of SBDM implementation, a study to identify what principals do within a site-based system to promote issues involving social justice and equity.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in evaluation and research efforts pertaining to the research of Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM). This research project is aimed at informing educators about the impact of SBDM on a principal's decision making ability and student outcomes.

As a participant, I may be asked to complete a series of questionnaires, and/or participate in focus groups, and interviews. Your participation is voluntary and choosing not to participate, or withdrawing at a later date, will not affect or hinder my career goals. There are no apparent risks or direct benefits to me by participating.

I understand that the data I provide will be kept confidential. I will not be personally identifiable in any reports or results.

For further information regarding the evaluation, I can contact the University of Texas at El Paso, Educational Leadership and Foundations, College of Education at (915) 747-7614.You may contact the Institutional Coordinator for Research for the Institutional Review Board at 747-7939 if you have any questions about research subjects' rights or the way this evaluation is being conducted.

_____ _____

Participant's Name & Signature Date

Belinda Lujan-Lindsey
Researcher
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT SURVEY

School-Based Management Survey

Directions: The purpose of this survey is to identify elementary administrators' perceptions about school-based management and the effects of these perceptions on student achievement. The survey will also be used to measure administrator beliefs about the importance of site-based decision making. Please respond to the following statements. Your responses are very important therefore try to answer all items of the survey. **NOTE: To protect your privacy, all responses will be coded and grouped so that no individual's responses could be identified.**

Perceptions of the Implementation of SBDM

Place an "x" in the column that most closely matches your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Use the following scale to respond to each of the sentences below.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable

Statement regarding SDBM	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**
1. Site-based management is a good approach for making routine decisions regarding school operations.						
2. Site-based management should be used by school personnel when generating ideas to address unique problems during the school year.						
3. Site-based management should be used by school personnel when generating ideas to address unique problems during the school year in regards to low socio-economic and minority students.						
4. Site-based management does not relieve the principal of accountability although decision making is shared with the staff.						
5. My enthusiasm for site-based management in schools has decreased.						
6. Site-based management has resulted in the implementation of different school practices than what would have been possible under traditional methods of school administration.						
7. Site-based management has resulted in the implementation of different school practices regarding low socioeconomic and minority students that would have not been possible under traditional methods of school administration.						
8. Site-based management is an efficient means of school administration.						
9. The collegiality between teachers, staff, and administration has improved since the implementation of site-based management.						
10. Administrators, teachers, and staff should have the option of using site-based management for making decisions regarding school operations.						

11. Administrators, teachers, and staff should have the option of using site-based management for making decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students.						
12. Teachers and staff are willing to accept the extra responsibility that site-based management requires.						
13. Shared decision making allows for new ideas to be considered when making a decision.						

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable

Statements regarding SDBM	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**
14. Teachers and staff members who are involved in shared decision making are more committed to school outcomes.						
15. Site-based decision making does not allow the principal to make independent decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students.						
16. Central Office provides professional development to support district initiatives.						
17. Central Office provides the necessary resources to support district expectations.						
18. Central Office supports a culture of risk taking.						
19. Central Office provides support to meet the academic needs of students.						
20. Central Office provides support to meet the academic needs of low socio-economic and minority students.						
21. Buildings receive high level of support from central office regarding district and state initiatives.						
22. Central Office supports the implementation of SBDM.						
23. Central Office provides support for the implementation of academics programs such as Title 1, Special Education, Talented and Gifted, etc.						
24. Central Office provides support for issues regarding staffing, specifically to meet the academic and emotional needs of students.						

SBDM Practices

In the columns on the left, indicate your perceptions of how site-based management is presently used in your school. Use the columns on the right to indicate how you would like site-based management to be used in your school. Please respond to each item in both left and right columns.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable

As it is NOW						Place a "x" in the left column that most closely matches your agreement with each of the following statements **as it is now** and in the right column **for how it should be**:	**As it SHOULD BE**					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**
						1. Building administrators share decisions with teachers and staff.						
						2. Teachers and staff are seldom consulted before decisions are made.						
						3. Teachers and staff are given the opportunity to have input into decisions made at this school.						
						4. Teachers and staff are given the opportunity to have input into decisions regarding low-socio economic and minority students.						
						5. Shared decision making is limited to curriculum and instruction matters.						
						6. Decisions making/regarding personnel issues are left to administrators.						
						7. Decisions regarding personnel issues are left to administrators.						
						8. Decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students are left to administrators.						
						9. Teachers and staff have input into decisions regarding the achievement of low socio-economic and minority students.						
						10.Teachers and staff have input regarding school expenditures.						
						11.Decisions affecting student discipline should be left to the administrators.						

Area of Decision Making

Shared decision-making between building administrators and teachers is an evolving process in education. Please check-off the extent to which the following areas of decision-making are shared in your school **NOW** and the extent to which they **SHOULD BE SHARED**. **Please be sure to respond to each item in the table.** Use the following scale to rate each area of decision making.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Never Share	Seldom Shared	Don't Know	Often Shared	Always Shared	Not Applicable

As it is NOW						**Area of Decision Making**	**As it SHOULD BE**					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**
						1. Determining activities for grade level teams and departments.						
						2. Selecting instructional materials for low-socio economic and minority students.						
						3. Determining curriculum goals and outcomes for low-socioeconomic and minority students.						
						4. Selecting curriculum content to address the learning needs of low-socio economic and minority students.						
						5. Planning professional development activities to address the learning needs of low-socio and minority students.						
						6. Selecting professional development to address the learning needs of low-socio economic and minority students.						
						7. Selecting methods for evaluating curriculum, programs and professional development activities.						
						8. Planning for school improvement to address the learning needs of all students.						
						9. Identifying resources for school improvement for low-socio economic and minority students.						
						10. Determining criteria for selecting personnel.						
						11. Selecting personnel.						

As it is NOW						Area of Decision Making	As it SHOULD BE					
						10. Removing personnel.						
						11. Assigning and reassigning personnel.						
						12. Determining school rules.						
						13. Resolving conflicts concerning student behavior.						
						14. Determining how to allocate time (scheduling).						
						15. Determining school calendar.						
						16. Determining how to allocate resources for school improvement.						
						17. Determining budget.						
						18. Determining student placement.						
						19. Determining local goals for the achievement of low-socio economic and minority students.						
						20. Determining rules for employees.						
						21. Determining program priorities such as enrichment and after school programs for low-socio economic and minority students.						

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Principal Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as they relate to you. There are no right or wrong answers and all responses will be confidential. Results will be reported in summarized form, with no individual identifiable information from the findings. Provide a response for each item.

Age	Gender	Level of Education (mark the highest level)
☐ 25 and Under ☐ 26 to 35 ☐ 36 to 45 ☐ 46 to 55 ☐ Over 55	☐ Male ☐ Female	☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐ Masters + 30 hours ☐ Educational Specialist ☐ Ph.D / Ed. D
Years in current school district	Years in present position	

1. What are some of your positive experiences with site-based decision making (SBDM)?
2. What are some of your negative experiences with site-based decision making (SBDM)?
3. Under the SBDM model, do you feel supported by central office? If so, in what ways?
4. Please share any additional comments you have about SBDM.

APPENDIX D

SBDM PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SBDM Principal Interview Questions

1. Do you feel there has been an increase or decrease in enthusiasm for SBDM? If so, what do you attribute this change?

2. Do you believe that SBDM affects your ability as a principal to make decisions? If so, in what ways?

3. Does SBDM give you flexibility to address different student population such as low socio-economic, minorities, limited English proficient, and special education students? If so, in what ways?

4. Does the implementation of SBDM increase or decrease teachers' commitment to school outcomes? If so, in what ways?

5. Does the implementation of SBDM increase or decrease an administrators' (principal or assistant principal) commitment to school outcomes? If so, in what ways?

6. In what ways do you feel SBDM is an effective means of school administration?

7. In what way does central office promote a culture of risk-taking? How does it not?

8. Do you feel central office provides support to meet the needs of all students. And if you do, in which ways?

9. Do you believe central office provides support for issues regarding staffing? If so, how? If not, what kind of support would be helpful?

10. Please share any other additional comments you have about SBDM.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Belinda A. Lujan

Educational Leadership and Foundations

Belinda A. Lujan was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. The fourth child of Francisco and Lydia Lujan, she graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1987. She earned her Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree in 1992 from the University of Texas at El Paso. She also received her Master of Education degree in Educational Administration in 1995 from the University of Texas at El Paso. In 2004, she joined the doctoral program.

While pursuing her degree, Dr. Lujan worked as a bilingual teacher, assistant principal, and principal in the El Paso and Socorro School Districts. She relocated to Colorado Springs, Colorado and is currently working in Academy District 20.