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**AUTHOR** Canner, Jane; And Others  
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**ABSTRACT**

The primary goal of the School Improvement Project (SIP), administered by the central office of New York City (New York) Public Schools, is to improve academic achievement through school-based planning. A planning committee representing the various school constituencies is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to effect changes in administrative style, basic skills instruction, school climate, student assessment, and teacher expectations. During successive years in the project, schools are encouraged to depend less on project direction and support, and to become increasingly self-sustaining. During 1983-84 the Project's goals were the following: (1) to implement improvement plans in 13 second-year ("D") schools; (2) to begin independent institutionalization of improvement planning in four third-year ("C") schools; (3) to maintain institutionalization in eight fourth-year ("B") and four fifth-year ("A") schools; and (4) to continue training project and school staff. After five years of Project implementation, some patterns have begun to emerge identifying school factors that promote or impede success. The most critical factor has been the principal's commitment and backing. Strong, effective committees and school-wide cooperation are also critical factors. Principals, chairpersons, and committees seem to have come to a consensus regarding the definition of school improvement success or failure and their own investment in the process. That the principal can accept and support constituency planning without being threatened by it is a critical criterion. (Author/BJV)

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: 1983-84  
FIFTH ANNUAL PROCESS ASSESSMENT

# OEA Evaluation Report

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O.E.A. Evaluation Report

School Improvement

PROJECT OF  
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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: 1983-84  
FIFTH ANNUAL PROCESS ASSESSMENT

The School Improvement Project  
Rosalyn Oratz, Director  
Anthony Spina, Manager

Prepared by the  
Metropolitan Educational Development and Research Project  
Documentation Unit

Jane Canner, Manager  
Amy Wittman, Evaluation Associate  
Louise Chawla, Evaluation Consultant  
Mary Ann Okin, Office Associate

New York City Public Schools  
Office of Educational Assessment  
Richard Guttenberg, Director  
Terry A. Clark, Assistant Director

## The School Improvement Project, 1983-84 Evaluation Summary

The primary goal of the School Improvement Project (SIP) is to improve academic achievement through school-based planning. A planning committee representing the various school constituencies is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to effect changes in administrative style, basic skills instruction, school climate, student assessment, and teacher expectations. During successive years in the project, schools are encouraged to depend less on project direction and support, and to become increasingly self-sustaining.

The project is centrally administered by the New York City Public Schools. It is funded by Chapter I and by grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation. During 1983-84 its major goals were: to implement improvement plans in second-year schools (13 D-schools); to begin independent institutionalization of improvement planning in third-year schools (four C-schools); to maintain institutionalization in fourth- and fifth-year schools (eight B- and four A-schools); and to continue training project and school staff.

The evaluation of SIP was based on: end-of-year survey data from project staff, principals, and planning committee members; monthly progress reports for each school; committee meeting agendas and minutes; and other project documents. The findings for schools engaged in institutionalization (A-, B-, and C-schools) and for second-year schools (D-schools) are presented separately.

### A-, B-, and C-Schools

Almost all planning committee members believed that committees were representative, meetings were effectively run, and all members had adequate input into decisions. Liaisons, principals, and committee respondents concurred that the functioning of most committees was good or excellent.

Liaisons assumed a progressively less directive, more advisory committee role the longer that schools were in the project. In more than half the schools, however, liaisons continued to organize and supervise implementation regardless of the schools' length of participation.

Most principals, chairpersons, and planning committees were rated committed or very committed to SIP; and most participants contributed actively to plan implementation. Commitment ratings which liaisons assigned to principals, chairpersons, and committees were closely correlated.

Successfully implemented plan components primarily addressed the areas of school climate (over half) or basic skills (about one-third). Schools attempted less activities related to administrative style, and they were overall less successful.

During the phase of institutionalization, most committees and principals maintained a high level of involvement in planning, or increased their in-

volvement. A number of principals, however, were concerned that decreasing liaison services adversely affected planning. Institutionalization was rated successful in almost all A- and B-schools, but it appeared unsuccessful in all but one C-school due to inadequate support from the principal.

### D-Schools

Four D-schools completed plan development in the fall, 1983. Otherwise, schools focused on plan implementation, evaluation, revision, and preparation for institutionalization.

Most planning committees selected a chairperson, but liaisons also served as leaders and facilitators on all committees and often co-chaired meetings. According to team members, all but one committee was representative, meetings were effectively run, all members had adequate input into decisions, and the overall level of committee functioning was good or excellent. Liaisons assessed all chairpersons and most planning committees as committed to the school improvement process.

On the whole, plan implementation was not very successful in its first year, either because the plan had not been completed or because it lacked the principal's support. Components implemented focused on school climate, basic skills, and administrative style. Liaisons noted some positive accomplishments: committees showed increasing effectiveness over the course of the year and more than half of the principals showed increasing receptivity and involvement.

### Discussion

After five years of project implementation, some patterns have begun to emerge regarding school factors that promote or impede success. The most critical factor, as schools have progressed to the phase of institutionalization, has been the principal's commitment and backing. Strong, effective committees and school-wide cooperation are also critical factors. In addition, principals, chairpersons, and committees seem to have come to a consensus regarding the definition of school improvement success or failure and their own investment in the process. Finally, that the principal can accept and support constituency planning without being threatened by it seems to be a most critical criterion.

Although administrative style is a key factor in the school improvement process, schools were notably unsuccessful in implementing administrative style activities. Clearly, one of the challenges SIP must face is how to best approach this area of school improvement.

The major institutionalization problem to be resolved is how to enhance schools' ability to maintain effective planning despite the withdrawal of the liaison. Seventy percent of principals expressed apprehensions regarding the loss of liaison assistance, focusing on their networking, coordination, and focusing abilities.

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The School Improvement Project (SIP) is designed to help schools improve student achievement through a process of self-improvement. School-based planning committees composed of the various school constituency groups, including administrators, staff, and parents, are formed to develop and implement improvement plans which address the school's assessed needs in the five areas identified by Edmonds as characterizing more effective schools.\* The five areas are: administrative style, instructional emphasis on basic skills, school climate, ongoing assessment of pupil progress, and teacher expectations.

SIP is administered by the central office of the New York City Public Schools. The project is currently in its fifth year of operation; 29 schools are participating.\*\* During 1983-84 SIP was funded by a \$791,000 Chapter I grant, an \$87,500 Carnegie Corporation grant, and \$37,500 from the Ford Foundation.\*\*\*

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\* Edmonds, R. "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Educational Leadership, October, 1979, pp. 15-27.

\*\*For detailed accounts of the first, second, third, and fourth years of implementation see: McCarthy, D.P., Canner, J. and Lazarus, A. "The School Improvement Project: First Annual Process Evaluation." MEDARP Documentation Unit, 1980; McCarthy, D.P., Canner, J., Chawla, L. and Pershing, A. "The School Improvement Project: Second Annual Process Evaluation." MEDARP Documentation Unit, 1981; McCarthy, D.P., Canner, J., Chawla, L. and Pershing, A. "The School Improvement Project: Third Annual Process Evaluation." MEDARP Documentation Unit, 1982; Canner, J., Chawla, L. and Wittman, A. "The School Improvement Project: Fourth Annual Process Evaluation." MEDARP Documentation Unit, 1983.

\*\*\*Funds from the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation were rolled over from three-year grants awarded to SIP in 1979. These monies are used to support the technical assistance component of the program, under which instructional resources and consulting services are purchased and allocated to participating schools.

During 1983-84, the project's major goals were to: 1) implement school improvement plans in the 13 second-year schools, the D-schools; 2) begin institutionalization of the SIP process in the schools which are in their third year of project participation, the C-schools; 3) continue institutionalization in the fourth- and fifth-year schools, the B- and A-schools, respectively; 4) continue staff training in reading, writing, mathematics, and ongoing testing of student ability; 5) continue principals' training in basic skills instruction and effective instructional leadership; and 6) design workshops to make parents an integral part of the reading program. No new schools entered the project in 1983-84.



## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The 1983-84 evaluation of SIP, conducted by the MEDARP Documentation Unit in the Office of Educational Assessment,\* focused on institutionalizing the SIP process in the A-, B-, and C-schools, and the planning and plan implementation processes in the D-schools. In examining institutionalization, evaluation questions focused on the extent to which it had taken place (e.g., are meetings still going on?), its level of success (e.g., if the committees are meeting, are they planning?), and school and project level factors that have helped or hindered institutionalization (e.g., a strong principal, reduction of project services). In the D-schools the plan development and implementation phases of SIP and its effects were assessed.

In May and June, 1983, the following survey data were collected: interviews with the project director, project staff and A-, B-, and C-school principals and questionnaires completed by planning committees. End-of-year interviews with the project manager addressed general issues such as project goals and institutionalization and implementation strategies; surveys of project staff, principals, and planning committee members dealt more specifically with institutionalization and project implementation.

Other data collected and analyzed included monthly progress reports for each school completed by the liaisons, agendas and minutes of committee meetings, and other project documents. In addition, members of the evalua-

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\*A detailed discussion of the role and function of the Documentation Unit is included in: McCarthy, D.P., Canner, J. and Lazarus, A. "Project Plan: MEDARP Documentation Unit", 1980, and McCarthy, D.P., Canner, J. and Lazarus, A. "Increasing School Effectiveness Through School-Based Evaluation." MEDARP Documentation Unit, 1982.

tion team attended staff meetings and project-sponsored training sessions.

In this report, results of these interviews and questionnaires will be presented first for the A-, B-, and C-schools as a group, and then for the D-schools. The next section summarizes the staff's assessments of the project's strengths and weaknesses. The final section discusses results.

## RESULTS

### A-, B-, AND C-SCHOOLS

A-, B-, and C-school results are presented together, since all three sets of schools were engaged in the same project phases of plan implementation, revision, and institutionalization. Each set of schools was at a different point in its progress through these phases. The four A-schools had completed revising their original plans in the previous year, so they focused on implementing existing programs. The eight B-schools were actively revising plans. The four C-schools were still implementing their original plans. Institutionalization had also been accomplished to different degrees. Liaisons visited A-schools once a month, B-schools twice a month, and C-schools twice a week.

In the following summary, overall results are presented whenever all three groups of schools showed similar results. When one or two groups proved distinctive, each is discussed separately. Any comparisons should be interpreted with caution, however, since the three groups have been in the project for different lengths of time and project changes have been introduced at different points.

Principals in all but two A-, B-, and C-schools were interviewed. Eleven of 16 planning teams\* completed enough questionnaires to be analyzed. The number of team members responding in the schools analyzed ranged from six to 13; the average number of respondents was nine. Since planning teams average about 12 members, this represents an

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\*This included three of four A-schools, seven of eight B-schools, and one of four C-schools.

average return rate of about 75 percent from the 11 schools analyzed.

### School Improvement Committee

Composition. Planning committees are supposed to represent all school constituencies, including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and auxiliary staff. Almost all liaisons, principals, and planning committee members considered their school's committee to be very representative of these various groups. Almost all committees experienced some minor membership changes during the year. On all committees a core group of members continued to serve over a period of years. Chairpeople also remained generally stable. At least half of all schools, even the fifth-year schools, have had one chairperson or co-chairperson who has served continuously since the committee's formation.

Meetings. In most schools the full planning committee met monthly. A few met less frequently, so that overall the schools averaged seven meetings a year. Meetings were always held after school for two hours. All committee members stated that meetings were effectively run.

In each group of A-, B-, and C-schools, all but one school had functioning subcommittees which were responsible for planning and implementing activities in the five factor areas. Most schools or the majority had subcommittees to address basic skills, school climate, and administrative style. A few schools addressed teacher expectations as part of administrative style or school climate, and ongoing assessment as part of basic skills.

Subcommittee activity varied widely from school to school. According

to principals' and liaisons' estimates, the number of times that individual subcommittees met during the year ranged from four to more than 40. In the majority of schools, subcommittees met about once a month; in several, however, they met every week or every other week.

Roles on committee. The longer schools were in the project, the less directive liaisons became. Liaisons, therefore, never chaired meetings; this role was assumed by chairpersons. Liaisons also ascribed the role of leader and facilitator to the chairpersons more often than to themselves. Chairpersons at half the schools had taken on this combination of roles. In the three A-schools with functioning planning committees, liaisons described themselves merely as active participants. In three-quarters of the B-schools, they saw themselves acting only as participant or as facilitator. Three out of four C-school liaisons said that they served as leader and facilitator. Principals in all schools described liaisons as advisors, facilitators, catalysts, and resources.

Principals said they played an active part in committee functioning. All said that they served as participants or advisors. They mentioned that part of their advisory role was to clarify district and central mandates and to provide information. Most liaisons said principals were active participants. A few felt, however, that the principal showed little or no involvement.

School staff representatives played an active role as participants on all committees. In a few B-schools, however, liaisons observed that some staff members remained uninvolved. Parent representatives were active on only half the committees. Parents often showed little or no

involvement, or were unable to join the committee. Principals said that active staff and parents networked, gave feedback, and generated ideas and recommendations. Team members at all schools felt that they had had input into team activities and decisions.

Communication of committee activities. Most schools used a variety of procedures to communicate committee activities and decisions to other staff and parents in the school community -- informal networking, posting agendas and minutes, distributing minutes in mailboxes, and making announcements at faculty conferences and parent workshops or meetings. Liaisons at the majority of schools considered communication very effective or effective. Almost all surveyed committee members also believed that the school as a whole was kept adequately informed, and that the school community had adequate input into committee affairs.

When liaisons expressed reservations regarding communication effectiveness, they questioned whether notices were really read or messages were really heard and received. In two schools, the planning process was apparently in jeopardy and the school community had lost interest. In several cases, liaisons suggested that a more direct, personal approach would serve better to involve staff and gather feedback.

Commitment to the planning process. In general, according to their own perceptions and the perceptions of liaisons and surveyed planning team members, principals showed a high level of commitment to school-based planning. Liaisons rated three-quarters of the principals as committed or very committed. With only one exception, principals gave themselves similar ratings. According to the liaisons, these principals

believed in the planning process, attended committee meetings regularly, and facilitated committee and plan operation. Several liaisons mentioned that SIP had "proven" itself; the principal had seen positive results and recognized the process as a viable method to upgrade the school.

In explaining their own commitment, principals singled out three primary features of the project: it provided a welcome forum for the exchange of ideas, input, and problem solving; it provided a framework for the discovery of staff talent and delegation of responsibility; and it provided outside training and assistance. Liaisons rated principals in only three schools as slightly or not at all committed, due to poor follow-up and monitoring of the plan, or active resistance. Principals who were resistant spoke of their disillusionment with the process or of difficulty in overcoming school problems.

Like principals, three-quarters of the committee chairpersons were rated very committed or committed. There was a close relationship between ratings given to these two groups. In more than 80 percent of the schools, liaisons gave the principals and the chairperson ratings which were identical or very similar.

An even closer correlation existed between the ratings given to chairpersons and their committees. In more than 80 percent of the schools, they received similar ratings; in the remaining few schools, when the chairperson was considered very committed, the committee was considered committed. With the exception of the one school in which the committee was barely functioning, principals gave the planning teams

high ratings. As in their own case, several principals noted that committee members had begun to see positive effects as a result of SIP, which ensured continuing interest and motivation. At all surveyed schools, most committee members also rated themselves committed or very committed.

In half the schools, liaisons gave principal, chairperson, and the committee the same commitment rating. In the A-schools, which have been in the project for the greatest length of time, this correlation was especially evident. Except for one rating point difference in one case, all groups received identical ratings in all A-schools. After this number of years, all three groups seem to have come to a consensus regarding the definition of school improvement success or failure and their own investment in the process.

Only a few liaisons and principals believed that non-committee staff and parents had demonstrated much commitment to the process. In the few schools in which they were rated committed, they were described as responsive, receptive, and informed, and ready to volunteer time to participate in activities. In most schools, however, they were considered only somewhat committed or less. School staff who received low ratings were described as divided in their interest or generally uninterested. Explanations for low parent commitment were that parents remained uninvolved, there was no Parents' Association support, or parents' own heavy work schedules made participation impossible.

Assessment of overall committee functioning. Both liaisons and principals believed that most planning committees functioned in a good



or excellent manner. Team members gave their committees comparable assessments. Teams had become cohesive working groups which had learned how to address problems creatively but realistically, stay on task, and network effectively. They were described as caring and conscientious. When principals and liaisons rated functioning as fair, they commented that the improvement process had become too routinized and members failed to show real concern and commitment.

Planning committee members were asked to list their committee's major accomplishments, and liaisons and principals were asked to select major subcommittee accomplishments. Each group's selections clustered within the same factor areas. Activities designed to improve school climate accounted for more than half of each group's choices. These activities included communication, morale, building maintenance, security, student discipline and attendance, parent involvement, and special events.

Approximately one-third of the choices addressed basic skills. These accomplishments resulted in curriculum workshops and in new schoolwide programs in math, science, reading, and writing. A few respondents mentioned successful test sophistication programs, particularly in the B-schools. Very few accomplishments focused on administrative style, and none focused on teacher expectations.

### Plan Implementation

Roles. Liaisons continued to play key roles in plan implementation in all schools. According to liaisons' own evaluations, they served

primarily as resources; but more than half sometimes acted more directly. Principals stated that liaisons contributed by bringing in suggestions, ideas, and materials, by helping to define objectives and strategies, by coordinating different school factions, by training teachers, and by keeping the school focused.

Principals played a similar supportive role. Almost all principals said they were involved in implementation, reviewing decisions and steering goal and activity development, securing supplies and information, or carrying out committee decisions. Liaisons reported that three-quarters of the principals were active in implementation; the rest played little or no role.

Liaisons believed that committee chairpersons assisted primarily in organizing and facilitating implementation, but that several took the additional responsibility of supervising and coordinating activities. Only two chairpersons, in schools which consistently had difficulties in committee functioning, took little part. Planning team members participated by contributing ideas and strategies, conducting activities, communicating to other staff, enlisting their support, and gathering feedback regarding plan components. Committee staff played a more active role than committee parents, according to liaisons. Staff on more than two-thirds of the committees were organizers and facilitators whereas parents on only one quarter were. Remaining committee staff and parents took little or no part.

In most schools, the school as a whole gave feedback regarding implementation. Principals described school communities in general as

receptive and cooperative. Liaisons felt that in the majority of schools, school staff had maintained an unchanged level of involvement over the years. In a few schools, they remarked that they had become progressively more involved.

Success of plan implementation. Liaisons, principals, and the majority of surveyed planning team members concurred in their ratings of plan implementation in almost all schools. In approximately two-thirds, implementation was judged successful or very successful; in just over a quarter, somewhat successful; and in the remaining few schools only slightly or not at all successful. Successful plans had drawn staff as a whole into active participation, accomplished all objectives, and created visible signs of improvement. As ratings declined, the most frequent liaison explanation was a lack of full administrative support. In the C-schools, where implementation difficulties were encountered in two of four schools, the project manager also reported that lack of the principal's support was the major cause. In only two cases did the liaison or principal believe that reduced liaison time in the school had obstructed the process.

Assessment of plan components. Liaisons and principals were asked to select the plan objectives which had been most successfully implemented. Basic skills components accounted for 50 and 60 percent of their choices, respectively. Principals were impressed by the success of basic skills components in reading, writing, math, and science. Explanations for achievement in these areas were that they were perceived as important needs by the school as a whole, they enlisted

school-wide commitment, they were accompanied by staff development, and they were closely monitored by the administration or the planning team. Principals often remarked that improvement was also clearly visible in the form of test scores. Under school climate, other successful projects were implemented which addressed discipline, parent involvement, and school morale. A few principals felt that improvement had been achieved in the area of administrative style.

Liaisons were also asked to discuss least successful plan objectives. Almost all answers came under administrative style and school climate. The primary cause for failure was that an activity was designed to improve the attitude or involvement of a school group which was uninvolved in or resistant to school-based planning. In these cases, where a principal was essentially authoritative, teachers had low expectations, or parents were uninvolved, it was difficult to effect change. Other causes for failure were poor initial planning or inadequate follow-up. In a few schools where implementation was proceeding smoothly, projects were all judged successful.

#### Other Committee Activities

Liaisons and principals were asked (1) whether the planning committees became involved in any school activities or projects in addition to the implementation of the plan, and (2) the degree of participation of the school community. A little over half the committees had become engaged in such activities. They initiated social get-togethers, special events and fund raisers, school clubs, a neighborhood clean-up campaign, and some test sophistication activities. In addition, a few

principals had come to treat the committee as a general sounding board regarding school policies. Principals believed that the school as a whole was always supportive of non-plan activities. Liaisons considered school communities divided between those who became actively involved and those who were passive recipients.

According to liaisons, there was an inverse relationship between the number of years that schools had been in the project and their degree of involvement in non-plan activities. From A- to B- to C-schools, they progressively listed more activities in more schools. One explanation may be that over the years, planning became more informal and the difference between committees' plan and non-plan activities became less clearly demarcated, so that almost all activities were classified as plan activities. It is also possible that schools that had been in the project less years had had less time to revise their plans, and therefore they addressed newly discovered needs through non-plan activities.

#### Plan Revision

When assessments of plan revision by different groups were compared, it became evident that there was some ambiguity as to exactly what revision constitutes. Liaisons and principals tended to interpret it as a formal written process, whereas committee members appeared to include informal, unwritten committee discussion and recommendations in their definition. All A- through C-schools were expected to be in a self-maintaining, cyclical process of ongoing planning, implementing, evaluating, and revising. Nevertheless, there were distinct differences in the status of the improvement plans in the three sets of schools, as

they concentrated upon different parts of this cycle.

In 1982-83, A-schools had focused on revising original plans. As a result, principals and liaisons referred to 1983-84 as a relatively static year spent implementing existing programs. Three-quarters of the B-schools, on the other hand, were engaged in active revision. With only one exception, C-schools spent the year implementing their original plans and did not progress to the stage of revision.

Committees used different methods to decide on plan additions or modifications. Some depended primarily on committee members themselves, the liaison, and the principal to carry out plan review, rework problem areas, and recommend new components. On some committees, representatives went to their constituencies to assess problems, needs, and new directions. One school followed a district memorandum regarding district school needs as a guide for revision.

Most liaisons and committee members at all but one school believed that adequate provision was given for review and input by non-committee staff and parents. The most common method that liaisons described was informal networking.

Changes consisted primarily of adding new plan components, updating existing ones, and deleting unsuccessful projects. One plan required modification in conformity with new district curriculum policies. Almost all liaisons and planning team respondents felt that the final plan addressed the school's significant needs. Almost all committee members, in addition, felt that it was an accurate presentation of committee concerns.

## Institutionalization

To begin institutionalization in the C-schools and to continue to encourage it in the A- and B-schools were major goals of SIP in 1983-84. Institutionalization occurs when the school improvement process becomes part of a school's ongoing mode of functioning, so that the cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and revising can continue indefinitely even after the project reduces its input and assistance. Successful institutionalization incorporates three components: 1) maintenance of the planning cycle by the school itself, which requires role changes as the principal, chairperson, planning team, and school community take increased responsibility; 2) a corresponding reduction in project services as the number of liaison days in the school progressively decreases and there is less provision of outside supplies and services; and 3) the viability of the ongoing process, which requires that it continue to address real school concerns and enlist school-wide support.

The institutionalization process. One change which signals a school's progression through different stages of institutionalization is a reduction in the number of days which liaisons spend in the school. In 1983-84, compared to the initial four liaison days a week when SIP entered a school, liaisons' presence decreased to two days a week in the C-schools (three years in the project), two days a month in the B-schools (four years in the project), and one day a month in the A-schools (where institutionalization was expected to be fully in place). Liaisons and principals described the effect which they believed this reduction had had in each school.

In three out of four C-schools, liaisons believed that their decreased presence from four to two days a week had no effect on the momentum of the SIP process. In one school, the liaison felt that there was less school-wide involvement. According to the principal in this school and in a second school, with less liaison input the planning committees had become less coordinated and focused.

In the B-schools, the drop in liaison availability to the level of only two days a month had a noticeable effect. Three out of six liaisons who had been in one school long enough to evaluate change believed that the decrease had a negative effect, either resulting in less committee activity or in a general impairment of the planning process. Most principals stated that planning progressed more slowly, with less schoolwide enthusiasm and involvement.

In all but one A-school, principals felt that the liaison's withdrawal to no more than one visit a month corresponded to a decline in committee functioning. With the liaison no longer there to give outside support and to prod the committee into action, members lost commitment and follow-through. Liaisons, however, felt that in two A-schools institutionalization had adequately taken place.

Some general observations can be made regarding the effect of decreased liaison days in the three groups of schools. Principals were more apt to perceive the effect to be a slow-down in the school improvement process than were liaisons. Overall, more than 70 percent of the principals made this observation, compared to less than 40 percent of the liaisons. When principals attempted to explain this negative effect,



they referred primarily to the loss of the liaisons' ability to network, both among committee members to coordinate and focus committee planning and among administration and staff to spread information, collect feedback, and enlist support.

When schools where both the principal and the liaison reported that the effect of reduced liaison time was negative were compared with those in which both assessed it to be positive, a clear pattern of differences emerged. According to previous ratings, when the planning process continued to progress effectively, committee functioning was described as excellent, the principal, the chairperson, and the committee were very committed to the SIP process, plan implementation as a whole was very successful, and the school committee took an active part in implementation. As a rule, when the quality of planning declined, the committee showed only fair or unsatisfactory functioning, both the chairperson and the committee appeared only somewhat committed to the planning process, overall implementation was only somewhat successful or not successful at all, and the school community, as well as some key members such as the principal, the chairperson, or the committee itself, showed little or no involvement in implementation.

The reduction in liaison days required corresponding changes in the role of the liaison, the principal, and the planning committee. According to the project manager's description of liaisons' goals, liaisons in the C-schools were supposed to have begun weaning schools away from dependency by training committees to be self-sufficient and by offering intensive staff development. In both B- and B-schools, the liaison was

expected to serve primarily as a consultant to the committee and the principal, to offer training, and to generally oversee institutionalization. Liaisons in all three sets of schools described themselves less as leaders and more as consultants.

As liaisons take less of a direct role, the principal and committee need to assume responsibility for the improvement process. Liaisons evaluated this transition in roles. In schools in which either the principal or the committee had already demonstrated full support in previous years, they continued to maintain this level of support in the current year. This consistent role characterized just over one-third of the principals and the committees. As would be expected, after five years in the project both principals and committees in the A-schools showed the least role changes: only one committee became increasingly apathetic as the principal's resistance continued.

Role changes were evident in three-quarters of the B- and C-schools. In these schools, almost all principals and the majority of committees showed greater involvement and participation. There was a strong correlation between the roles taken by principals and by committees. In more than half of the schools, both the principal and the committee maintained support or showed increased interest and involvement. In each group of schools, only one principal remained resistant to school-based planning or uninvolved and ineffective, and only one committee showed declining motivation.

Principals and liaisons assessed the overall effect of reduced project services on the institutionalization of SIP in their school.

Just as principals had been more likely than liaisons to perceive that reduced liaison days had had negative effects, they were also more likely to feel that reduced services impacted negatively. More than one-half of the principals who were interviewed made this assessment, in contrast to only one-quarter of the liaisons. In almost every case, the principal attributed the negative impact to the loss of liaison time. Three-quarters of the liaisons and less than half of the principals believed that the reduction in project services either had no effect on institutionalization, or had the positive effect of providing an impetus for the project.

Readiness for institutionalization. Almost all A- and B-schools were rated ready for institutionalization; with only one exception, however, C-schools were not. Both the project manager and the liaisons attributed failure primarily to resistance by the principal. Principals, when they doubted that SIP could be successfully institutionalized, felt that school improvement required continued liaison support or that the staff had never fully understood and internalized the process. In successful schools, liaisons, principals, and the project manager alike referred to the commitment and involvement of the committee and the school as a whole. The principal's interest and willingness to accommodate suggestions was also mentioned in the majority of schools.

Factors helping or hindering institutionalization. Factors within the school which enhanced institutionalization were shared interest and involvement by the administration, the committee, and the school community, according to survey respondents. When the committee was hard-

working and effective, staff and parents were receptive and supportive, and the administration facilitated planning, institutionalization was said to be successful. A few respondents also mentioned the advantage of a small cohesive school size and open communication channels. In schools where liaisons described institutionalization as unsatisfactory, either no school group or only one group demonstrated commitment.

When the project manager, liaisons, and principals evaluated project design and management, they emphasized different project factors which had helped schools incorporate SIP. More than half of the principals who answered this question spoke of liaisons' high professional quality and the overall soundness of project philosophy and leadership. Adoption of schoolwide reading, writing, and math programs, which project staff encouraged, was noted in particular as contributing to institutionalization. Several principals also referred to the advantages of receiving outside resources and staff development workshops.

The project manager stressed factors which strengthened committee functioning: stipends, the training given to the chairperson and recorder, and experience working together. Liaisons mentioned the training given to committee chairpersons, recorders, teachers, and principals as successful in more than half of the schools. Other elements of the project which liaisons believed furthered institutionalization, in order of the frequency of their mention, were the contribution of the liaison, the support and cooperation which liaisons themselves received from the project manager and from their colleagues, and the provision of outside materials and resources.

The project manager and most liaisons, principals, and planning team members also listed factors within the school and within the project which they believed hindered institutionalization. Just as the project manager had named commitment from the principal and strong leadership by the committee chairperson and recorder as key factors for successful institutionalization, he considered the lack of these advantages to be critical handicaps. Several liaisons also named the principal's resistance as a negative factor. Half or more of each group of respondents spoke of low morale, inadequate understanding, or resistance on the part of the staff. A few principals spoke of the difficulty of scheduling meetings during the school day which could accommodate all staff.

In the area of project design, more than one-half of the principals and close to one-half of the liaisons could not identify any negative factor. A number of liaisons, however, considered the loss of liaison time a handicap. The project manager and several liaisons also found the withdrawal of the liaison to be the most problematic part of institutionalization; some committees had become too dependent on the liaison. A few principals and liaisons stated that unstable funding threatened the smooth incorporation of SIP in the schools.

Because the principal played a key role in the success of institutionalization, his or her initial reaction to the project, length of service in the school, and tenure status were assessed. Most principals had been in the school since the project entered, and all but one had already been granted tenure. (In this one school, tenure had no effect

upon the principal's level of support.) In the few schools in which a new principal came in during implementation, liaisons judged that it either had no effect upon institutionalization or that possibilities for institutionalization improved. These principals entered either with positive expectations or with an initial reluctance which quickly gave way to acceptance once the project was better understood.

Another factor whose influence upon institutionalization was assessed was the rate of staff turnover in a school. In two-thirds of the schools, staff had remained relatively stable since the beginning of the project. One-third of the schools had experienced a high rate of turnover. Liaisons felt that staff continuity had helped to further institutionalization. The large number of new teachers required that time be diverted into training and acclimating them to the project. New staff also tended to have less commitment to the project, unless they had been especially recruited by the principal because they believed in school-based planning.

In general, the district office had little direct involvement with the functioning of SIP in the schools. As schools moved through the phase of institutionalization in 1983-84, only a few districts provided services which had previously been provided by the project. Three districts paid committee members' stipends. A few arranged for additional staff development workshops or duplicated test sophistication materials. Despite this lack of direct involvement, liaisons, principals, and the project manager assessed most district superintendents as either very committed or committed to the SIP process, and to have maintained their

commitment since the project's inception. Although this support may have primarily taken the form of verbal encouragement, the project manager felt that it was important for the principal to know that the district superintendent supported the project.

#### Additional Project Services/Resources

SIP offered almost all schools additional services and resources which were not directly related to plan implementation, particularly professional training. The project manager and liaisons described the additional services which the liaisons contributed. The project manager and planning team members discussed the training which the committee and other school constituencies received.

Almost all liaisons had performed other functions in the school in addition to committee and plan implementation activities. More than two-thirds had offered in-school training in the form of test sophistication workshops, curriculum workshops, or parent workshops. A few liaisons also helped organize special events and fund raisers, acted as consultants to the principal or assistant principal regarding curriculum review, or served as general intermediaries between the staff and the principal. In support of non-plan activities, the project provided one-half of the schools with special funding or supplementary materials.

Very few surveyed planning team members reported participating in SIP training sessions in 1983-84. According to the project manager, the major professional development goals for the year were conferences for the principals and committee chairpersons and some conferences and publishers' workshops for the liaisons. The primary focus of these

efforts was the implementation, management, and evaluation of a structured schoolwide reading program. The project manager considered these conferences very successful or successful. During 1984-85, professional development plans include more process skills training for chairpersons and more conferences based on topics generated by principals.

#### Project Assessment by Participants and Project Staff

Liaisons, principals, and planning team members assessed the impact of SIP upon their schools. Along with the project manager, they evaluated the success and failures of project implementation in the schools, and the strengths and weaknesses of the project in general. Principals and planning team members also shared their personal responses to participation.

In all surveyed B- and C-schools, more than 80 percent of the planning committee members who completed questionnaires thought that project participation had been a positive experience for their schools, and had decided to continue to serve on the committee in the coming year.

Responses in the three surveyed A-schools were divided. In one school which had consistently received high ratings regarding committee functioning and project implementation, all committee members gave positive responses. In another A-school, however, more than one-third of the surveyed committee members declined to answer this question; and a significant proportion of respondents in this school and a second school had either chosen not to continue to serve on the committee or remained undecided.

When committee members were questioned regarding SIP strengths and



weaknesses, positive responses significantly outnumbered critical responses. Committees listed an average of 12 strengths compared to seven weaknesses.

More than half of the positive responses related to the school-wide communication and shared decision-making made possible by school-based planning. Team members repeatedly remarked that the improvement process created a discussion forum through which administrators, staff, and parents could share goal setting, policy making, and problem solving. With regard to other strengths, a number of respondents referred to increased cohesion and cooperation among staff and leadership on the SIP committee. The most common weaknesses cited by committee members related to the school itself: not all teachers were cooperative, involved, or well-informed; there was inadequate time for meetings and committee work; and the administration failed to follow through or give support. The most frequently named problems inherent within the project were insufficient or unstable funding and the withdrawal of the liaison.

The project manager made a few general observations regarding aspects of project implementation which most concerned and pleased him during 1983-84. His primary concern was whether institutionalization would proceed as planned. The primary accomplishments which he observed were that liaisons were able to divide their time among several schools and that schools showed growth in math and reading achievement.

Liaisons and principals agreed about project benefits. In all but one school, both believed that SIP had a positive impact. Administrative style, basic skills, and school climate were repeatedly stated as having

improved. As in the case of committee members, numerous answers related to the experience of school-based planning itself, which brought all school constituencies together to effect positive change. Principals also believed that participation had been of personal benefit, by increasing communication with the staff, by teaching better management techniques, and by creating opportunities to share ideas with other administrators. In only one school, which had been characterized by difficult administrator-staff relationships, both the principal and the liaison believed that SIP had had a negative effect by deepening a sense of hopelessness when the improvement process did not succeed.

Liaisons and principals, like the project manager, described what most concerned and pleased them during implementation. Almost all liaisons spoke of the support which they received from SIP management and colleagues. Several also spoke of SIP's emphasis on curriculum improvement through staff development, funding, the effect of decreasing liaison services during institutionalization, and the need for more professional training and revitalization for the liaisons themselves.

Liaisons and principals shared the same dominant concern regarding the progress of implementation in individual schools, i.e., whether school-wide staff would accept and support the project. In addition, a number of liaisons had concerns regarding administrative support and a few principals stated they had been initially apprehensive that their authority might be eroded by the liaison's presence and by constituency planning.

Liaisons and principals expressed particular satisfaction with dif-

ferent aspects of implementation. Liaisons were pleased by the committee's effectiveness, by evidence of institutionalization of the improvement process, and by administrative support. Principals spoke most frequently of curriculum improvement, increased teacher participation, and the committee as a forum for school-wide communication, cooperation, and problem-solving.

## D-SCHOOLS

### The School Improvement Committee

Twelve D-schools entered the project at the beginning of the 1982-83 school year and one near the end; thus there were 13 D-schools in 1983-84. Most schools had completed committee formation and plan development during their first year. Four schools, which entered late, did not begin plan development until the fall, 1983. The following summary presents plan implementation results, along with information about plan evaluation and revision, and preparation for institutionalization. Results are based on interviews with the project manager and the liaisons and on questionnaires completed by a sample of five planning committees.\*

Composition. Most D-schools formed planning committees during 1982-83. Membership remained generally constant in these schools in 1983-84. Almost all committees retained the same chairperson or co-chairpersons and all kept a core group of members. Except for one school which had

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\*Questionnaires were distributed to six committees; one did not return enough to be analyzed. The number returned from each of the five schools ranged from six to eleven. The average number returned was eight; this represents about two-thirds of the average planning committee.

to replace half of its members due to a high staff turnover, changes consisted of only one or two new additions or replacements. Three D-schools did not form their committees until the end of 1982-83 or the fall, 1983, so they experienced no membership changes. Except in one school where there was a low proportion of classroom teachers, liaisons and all planning committee respondents believed that the committees adequately represented the various school constituencies.

Meetings. On the whole, D-school committees were more active than A-through C-school committees. Like A- through C-schools, most D-schools held meetings once a month for two hours after school. A few committees, however, met twice a month. D-schools therefore averaged 11 meetings a year. Meetings in all schools were considered effectively run.

All D-schools had functioning subcommittees, which met before, during, or after school and which focused on developing and implementing activities in basic skills, administrative style, and school climate. In almost half the schools, subcommittees met once every week or every two weeks. In the remaining schools, they met monthly or irregularly, as needed.

Roles on committee. Because D-schools were in their first year of plan implementation and plan revision, liaisons still took an active part in committee affairs. They chaired almost half the committees and were leaders and facilitators on all.

In most D-schools, the chairperson chaired meetings or co-chaired with the liaison. According to liaisons, the majority of these chair-

persons had also begun to take responsibility for leading and facilitating committee activities. In the majority of schools, principals participated. Only two had taken a leadership role. Several showed little or no involvement.

According to liaisons' assessments, school staff representatives participated actively on all but one committee. On the 12 D-school committees with parent representatives, parent groups were evenly divided between those who played an active part and those who remained passive observers. The majority of committee members at all sampled D-schools felt that they had input into team activities and decisions.

Communication of committee activities. A greater variety of communication methods and more procedures per school were used in D-schools. Like other project schools, D-schools usually relied on committee members' networking among their constituents, posting agendas and minutes, distributing them in mailboxes, and making announcements at faculty and parent meetings. Almost half of the D-schools, however, also made other efforts such as newsletters and questionnaires, notices in the P.A. bulletin, social breakfasts, and early morning, open meetings.

Most liaisons believed that these procedures were effective. At all but one surveyed school, however, a significant number of committee members felt that the school community was not adequately informed about committee work. Between a quarter and a half of all respondents at all schools also stated either that the school community did not have adequate input into activities and decisions, or that they did not know whether they did. It is possible that because D-schools were holding

more frequent meetings and were often simultaneously planning, implementing, and revising, committee members may have felt an especially acute need for communication.

Commitment to the planning process. According to liaisons' ratings of commitment to the school improvement process, there was variation between the commitment of principals and that of chairpersons and their committees. All chairpersons were described as very committed or committed. With the exception of only two committees which were considered only somewhat committed, all committees received comparable ratings. Similarly, almost all surveyed committee members divided their self-assessments between very committed and committed. Chairpersons were said to be energetic, enthusiastic, and hardworking, and to follow up on activities. Committee members attended meetings regularly, networked, involved other school staff, and followed through.

The commitment of principals, on the other hand, varied widely. The majority were believed to be very committed or committed. They saw SIP as a resource and encouraged the planning process. The remainder, however, showed less commitment. They either did not seem to fully understand the project, failed to find time for it or to follow up on plan implementation, or resisted change.

Most noncommittee staff were assessed as committed or somewhat committed. In several cases, the liaison believed that there was a communication problem and that other staff did not yet know much about the project. Other staff in several schools showed only slight commitment, because they felt overburdened or resisted change.

From school to school, parents who were not on the committee ranged from actively supportive, to receptive, to unaware of the improvement process.

Assessment of overall committee functioning. Liaisons at most schools and the majority of planning team members at all sampled schools considered overall committee functioning as good or excellent. Members demonstrated sincere commitment; they worked hard, stayed on task, and organized the participation of other staff members. The functioning of two committees was hampered by a lack of strong chairperson leadership or principal's support.

D-schools entered SIP at different times during 1983-84. As a result, some had completed their plans the year before and spent 1983-84 implementing them. Some did not begin implementation until midway through the year and some spent the entire year writing their plans.

Accordingly, when committee members listed what they considered their major accomplishments and liaisons listed major subcommittee accomplishments, the number of activities already in place varied widely from school to school. Among schools that had begun implementation, the most intensive work was in school climate, followed by basic skills and administrative style, a few test sophistication activities which addressed ongoing assessment, and an occasional activity designed to raise teacher expectations. It is noteworthy that whereas liaisons named very few accomplishments under administrative style in A-, B-, and C-schools, this factor accounted for almost one-quarter of the activities named by liaisons in D-schools.

## Plan Implementation

Roles. Since the D-schools were implementing plans for the first time, liaisons played an important role. In every school, they served at once as supervisors, coordinators, organizers, facilitators, and resources.

Principals' involvement varied. Sixty percent actively helped by supervising and coordinating the plan or by organizing and facilitating activities. The rest remained uninvolved or, in one case, attempted to supervise but failed due to ineffectual follow-up.

In almost all schools that had begun implementation, committee chairpersons assisted by organizing and facilitating activities, with a few playing a more supervisory role. Committee staff at all of these schools helped organize and facilitate. Committee parents' roles varied from actively helping to coordinate the plan and to move it along, to primarily networking, to minimal involvement. The school community as a whole cooperated by providing feedback. In half of the schools, they sometimes showed more active participation. Liaisons in a few schools felt that they could already detect a change in the school community's role since implementation had begun: in each case, they had become more receptive and involved.

Success of plan implementation. Liaisons and planning team members felt that success of plan implementation was generally limited. Half or more of the members on three out of five sampled teams stated that they did not consider it successful or declined to answer this question. Liaisons at the majority of schools rated implementation as somewhat



successful or only slightly successful. They referred to a lack of principal's support or said that implementation was gradually getting underway and that not all objectives had been addressed yet. The project manager felt that overall plan implementation in the D-schools was successful; although it was slow in starting, no major problems had arisen.

Assessment of plan components. In schools which had already accomplished a number of implementation objectives, liaisons were asked to select those which had met with the greatest success. They emphasized two main areas of achievement -- reading and school climate. To ensure reading improvement, new materials were made available and staff development was provided. Successful climate activities addressed discipline, attendance, and building maintenance. Test sophistication was also mentioned in a few schools. All successful objectives were characterized by good organization and planning, school-wide support, follow-through, and visible signs of improvement.

Administrative style and school climate activities were considered the least successful by liaisons. In both areas, the most frequently cited cause for difficulties was administrative, due to the principal's unwillingness to delegate authority or to a lack of follow-through.

#### Other Committee Activities

Liaisons described non-plan activities which committees had undertaken and the contribution of the school as a whole. Only five out of 13 committees became involved in activities or projects which were not listed in their plan. They consisted primarily of fund-raising events

and special events, but they included some curriculum planning, establishing a student council, and a teacher exchange program. In three schools, the rest of the school showed occasional involvement in organizing these activities.

### Plan Revision

Four D-schools (late entrants into the project) spent part of 1983-84 writing a first plan. All other D-schools were already engaged in implementation; the majority had begun revising simultaneously. At this early stage in implementation, most reported revisions were minor. Some activities were changed as committees reevaluated their strategies to address identified needs. In one school, however, the original plan was abandoned after a change in principals made it necessary to re-set priorities and write an entirely new plan.

The problem of adequately communicating committee activities to non-committee staff appeared again in connection with staff review and input during revisions. In two of the five sampled schools, a significant portion of the planning committee indicated that the plan had not been shared with the school as a whole; and between 25 and 60 percent of the committee members at all schools either stated that the school as a whole did not have adequate input into the plan, or refused to answer this question.

In all D-schools, liaisons believed that the plan addressed the significant needs of the school. In four out of five sampled schools, most committee members agreed. All committees were able to affirm that the plan was an accurate presentation of committee concerns.

### Readiness for Institutionalization

D-schools were occupied with plan writing, implementing, and re-vising during 1983-84 and had not yet entered the phase of institutionalization. Nevertheless, liaisons in some schools were able to make projections regarding their schools' readiness for this phase.

Preparation for institutionalization. In the majority of cases, schools had already experienced some reduction in the number of days which liaisons spent in the school: as a rule, from four liaison days a week in 1982-83 to three in 1983-84. Because the reduction in the liaison's presence was minimal, little or no effect on the SIP process was noted. Between the first and second year, however, changes in the role of the liaison and the principal were often described.

Liaisons in the majority of schools noted that their own role changed as the school progressed from plan writing to implementation. They became more actively involved with the staff and administration as they gained school members' trust. At the same time, they prepared committee members and staff to assume more responsibility for school improvement by training chairpersons, by guiding committees into more effective functioning, and by engaging in more staff development. In six schools in which the committee had already begun active functioning in 1983, liaisons remarked that commitment had become more knowledgeable, involved, and responsible.

In more than half the schools, liaisons observed that principals became more receptive and involved. They were repeatedly described as having become more open to listening, to entertaining committee ideas,

and to sharing responsibility. In all but one remaining school, liaisons were not yet able to identify change. In one school, the principal had become less involved.

Factors influencing readiness. Almost all D-school principals had been with the project since its entry, and almost all had received tenure before the project was introduced. The one new principal who had had no part in the initial introduction of the project showed a willingness to participate, and growing receptivity as his understanding of school-based planning grew.

A few schools had experienced a high rate of staff turnover since the project was first introduced. In each case, the liaison observed that staff changes slowed up the planning process. It was necessary to work harder to inform and train the new people and to gain their support.

In the D-schools, less than half of the districts had demonstrated firm enough support that liaisons could describe them as very committed or committed to the SIP process. The districts that had shown support had offered staff training, duplicated materials, altered guidelines to accommodate the project, or promised assistance when needed. In the majority of schools, liaisons considered the district to be only slightly committed, since they showed little interest and had not offered to provide services otherwise provided by the project.

#### Additional Project Services/Resources

The project manager, liaisons, and planning team members were questioned regarding materials, services, and resources which D-schools received from SIP in addition to committee and plan activities. As in

the A-through C-schools, emphasis was placed on professional development. The main services provided consisted of leadership training conferences for the principals and chairpersons, publishers' conferences for the liaisons, and workshops for teachers and parents. Since the focus of committee training was the development of chairperson skills, most sampled planning team members did not receive SIP training. D-schools also participated in test sophistication programs and in piloting a program integrating learning and testing.

During their first phase of plan implementation, D-schools also received funds for basal readers or additional reading resource materials. Several schools received test sophistication packages.

Every D-school liaison engaged in non-plan activities. Along with staff development, which each liaison reported providing, liaisons helped to organize special events, consulted with administration, staff, and parents, and occasionally covered classrooms, lunch periods, and the school yard.

#### Project Assessment by Participants and Staff

Liaisons described strengths and weaknesses both with regard to project implementation in individual D-schools and project design in general. Surveyed planning team members also made observations about the project. In addition, committee respondents evaluated the overall impact of the project on their schools and whether or not they would like to continue on the planning committee during the coming year.

The majority of committee respondents in all surveyed D-schools believed that project participation had been a positive experience for

their school and intended to continue to serve on the committee. Approximately one-third of the committee respondents in several surveyed schools, however, either declined to answer these questions or gave negative responses.

Planning committee members listed what they considered to be the strengths and weaknesses of SIP. Just as A- through C-school committees had done, D-school respondents more readily noted strengths than weaknesses (an average of 11 strengths compared to seven weaknesses per committee). D-school committees also focused on the same positive factors as A- through C-school committees. Almost 40 percent of the respondents referred to the opportunities for school-wide communication and input fostered by the school-based planning process. Increased staff cohesion and committee dedication were other frequent responses. In contrast to A- through C-school committees, however, D-school committees were more likely to mention central involvement and liaison support as project strengths. This difference is to be expected, since SIP played a more active part in the early stages of project implementation in the D-schools.

Committee respondents listed a lack of involvement and cooperation from all teachers, inadequate time for committee meetings, and poor administrative backing as project weaknesses in the D-schools, as they had also done in the A- through C-schools. Other weaknesses which several D-school respondents mentioned were a low level of parent involvement and declining school-wide enthusiasm for planning.

Liaisons also evaluated the success of project implementation. In

all but one school, they believed that SIP had had a positive impact. The most frequently described area of improvement was school climate, particularly with regard to increased staff morale, professionalism, and communication. Liaisons also spoke of basic skills improvement. Only two liaisons noted an improvement in administrative style.

With regard to aspects of project design and management which most pleased and concerned them, D-school liaisons made judgments similar to those of A- through C-school liaisons. They were most pleased by the support which they received from the project manager and from colleagues. Aspects of the project which caused concern were the effect of decreased liaison time in the schools, the uncertainty of funding, and the liaisons' own need for professional development and motivation.

With regard to project implementation in individual schools, D-school liaisons' responses again compared closely with those of liaisons in A- through C-schools. Their major concerns were whether the administration and staff would accept SIP and give it full support. Correspondingly, they were pleased that the administration and staff in many schools did give the project their backing. The majority of liaisons also remarked that the committee learned to function effectively and that some plan components were highly successful.

## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT BY PROJECT STAFF

### Project Strengths

In the project manager's view, SIP accomplished all of its major goals in project schools: it saw improvement plans implemented in the D-schools; it began institutionalization in the C-schools and continued it in the A- and B-schools; it coordinated test sophistication programs; and it offered training programs for principals, teachers, and parents. Project implementation was considered most successful in the A-, B-, and D-schools. In the C-schools, lack of principals' support impeded planning progress in three out of four schools.

Liaisons believed that SIP had had a positive impact on almost all schools. Both the project manager and liaisons noted that reading and math scores had increased in many project schools. Liaisons also noted numerous accomplishments in the area of school climate.

With regard to institutionalization, the project manager was pleased to find that each liaison was able to divide his or her services among four or five schools. Project factors that he believed furthered institutionalization were the training of the committee chairperson and recorder, the provision of stipends, and the committees' stability and growing expertise.

Liaisons stressed the importance of the professional development that SIP offered to all school groups. Project staff concurred that institutionalization was most successful in schools which combined school-wide receptivity to SIP, strong committee leadership, and full administrative support. Liaisons observed that this combination of



positive factors was evident in many A- to C-schools, and that it was beginning to form in many D-schools.

Most liaisons spoke warmly of the project backing that they received. They could depend upon the project manager's assistance and on their colleagues to share their expertise.

### Project Concerns

The project manager's major concern at the outset of 1983-84 was whether institutionalization would proceed effectively. Schools that lacked effective chairperson and recorder leadership and principal's commitment encountered difficulties in this phase. Gaining school-wide acceptance and commitment was a concern for both the project manager and liaisons. Another aspect of institutionalization that concerned project staff was the effect of decreasing liaison time within schools. Because liaisons were so active and provided so many resources when the project was initiated, some schools had become too dependent on them.

Several liaisons were concerned about unstable project funding. Some also expressed their need for additional professional training and fresh motivation.

## DISCUSSION

The fifth year of SIP's functioning in New York City schools was a year of consolidation, when the project did not enter any new schools but concentrated upon preparing D-schools for institutionalization and securing this phase within A-, B-, and C-schools. After five years, some consistent observations can be made regarding factors which influence schools' acceptance and incorporation of school-based planning. Although different groups of schools have revealed somewhat different responses to SIP, generalizations across schools are possible regarding project and school factors that have helped or hindered the progress of school improvement.

### Commitment

In the initial years of project involvement, principals, planning committees, and school staff increased their commitment and involvement. A number of liaisons and principals noted that SIP proved its viability over time, as participants discovered the benefits of constituency planning and as achievement scores rose. Success in implementing the project tended to strengthen commitment and increase the likelihood of further success.

A close correlation existed among the commitment ratings of principals, chairpersons, and planning committees. This correlation was high between principals and chairpersons, but even higher between chairpersons and their committees. It increased among all three groups the longer that schools had been in the project. According to the project manager's and liaisons' assessments, C- and D-school chairpersons and committees demonstrated generally greater commitment than principals. In the A-schools, all three groups received almost identical ratings. As project implementation con-

tinued, participants showed increasing consensus regarding its success or failure and their investment in it.

The project manager, liaisons, planning committee members, and principals alike considered the shared commitment of the administration, the committee, and staff to be critical to a school's successful implementation and maintenance of the project. Whether the principal offered support and follow-through or resistance was pivotal. The importance of school-wide cooperation was also frequently noted. In the D-schools, effective communication of SIP activities was an issue; inadequate understanding of the project was associated with low commitment. How to increase the involvement of non-committee staff and parents remained a problem in all schools.

### Planning

The nature of planning changed as schools remained in the project. D-schools averaged more full committee meetings and subcommittee meetings than A- through C-schools. A- through C-schools, on the other hand, engaged in more non-plan activities than D-schools. After writing and implementing their original plan, committees often responded to additional school needs through less formal involvement. Time is required for SIP to take full effect within schools. A- through C-schools had implemented their plans more successfully than D-schools, where implementation was incomplete.

In all schools, planning most effectively addressed the factors of basic skills and school climate. These areas accounted for most activities implemented and most successful activities. One activity under the factor of ongoing assessment, test sophistication, was also generally rated as successful. Schools conspicuously avoided addressing the administrative

style factor, although more D-schools had activities under it. A major challenge that SIP faces is whether it can approach problems in this area, and how it can best be done.

Both principals and liaisons believed that one of the project's greatest strengths is its emphasis on implementing school-wide curriculum programs, accompanied by staff development. These programs were perceived as important needs by staff as a whole, and they yielded clearly visible signs of improvement in the form of test scores. Improved achievement scores validated the project for many participants.

When liaisons and principals described their schools' most successful plan components, common characteristics were good organization and planning, school-wide cooperation, effective monitoring and follow-through, and measurable improvement. The most frequent explanation that the project manager and liaisons gave for unsuccessful implementation was inadequate administrative support.

### Institutionalization

School and project factors which furthered implementation of the plan also furthered the institutionalization of the planning process: strong leadership; good organization; the shared commitment of all participants; and a focus on curriculum development and staff development. Additionally, stable staff made institutionalization easier in that participants did not need to divert time to training new staff and gaining their support.

As schools assumed increasing responsibility, continued progress depended on the effectiveness of the committee. According to liaisons, principals, and committee respondents, the functioning of most committees was good

or excellent. B-school committees showed particular distinction. They set and followed their own agendas and worked unstintingly. They also benefited from the backing of very committed chairpersons and principals. According to the project manager, the critical factor that determined successful institutionalization was this combination of principal's backing and strong committee leadership.

Both the project manager and liaisons believed that the major factor leading to the failure of institutionalization was continuing principal's resistance to constituency planning. Three out of four C-schools encountered difficulties for this reason. Several D-schools, in which the principal has shown little or no involvement in committee work or in plan implementation, may encounter this hurdle in the future.

The most problematic part of institutionalization, from the principals' point of view, was the effect of decreasing liaison services. The majority of principals felt that loss of the liaison as a leader, coordinator, resource, catalyst, and networking agent impaired their schools' ability to maintain effective planning. Several liaisons also expressed concern on this point. Although liaisons reported taking less directive roles each year, they continued to play an important part in plan implementation in A-, B-, C-, and D-schools alike. Their withdrawal appeared to have been felt most acutely in schools' fourth year of project involvement, when liaison time dropped from an average of two days a week to two days a month. Several B-school principals and liaisons assessed this abrupt decrease as having had a negative effect upon planning.

The original conceptualization of SIP did not require active district

support for the project. Accordingly, few liaisons or principals reported that the district had demonstrated commitment to its success or had assumed the provision of services previously supplied by the project. District involvement was least evident in the D-schools. Nevertheless, the project manager believed that it was important for the principal to have the district superintendent's approval and encouragement.

### Future Needs

Most participants judged SIP as having had a positive impact in their school. Liaisons, principals, and planning committees reported that one of its major benefits was the effect of school-based planning itself. Not only did planning result in the successful accomplishment of many goals, but on a school-wide basis it increased communication, cohesion, and morale. The project's sound philosophy and the high level of leadership offered by its management and the liaisons, to which participants repeatedly referred, promise its continuing viability.

According to the project manager's outline, during 1984-85 SIP is entering new schools and is withdrawing from schools in which it has met with little success. One of the major challenges facing the project is to develop guidelines for selecting schools to ensure that project efforts will not be wasted where deep tensions and resistance prevent effective implementation. That the principal can accept and support constituency planning without being threatened by it seems to be the most critical criterion. Guidelines must be sensitive to schools' prospects for change, however, in the past principals, committees, and staff have revealed a trend toward increasing commitment to the project during the first few years of imple-

mentation.

Committees showed a notable lack of success in undertaking activities under the factor of administrative style; on the whole they avoided this area of planning. How SIP can best approach problems in this area requires further consideration.

Principals were reluctant to see the relationship that liaisons had established with their schools come to an end. Liaisons acted as a communication channel both within the school and from one school to others, were catalysts for change, gave encouragement and motivation, guided curriculum development, and put schools in touch with resources. Because these services often began to appear indispensable for schools' optimal functioning, different means must be found to transfer more of the liaison's role among school staff as part of institutionalization. In addition to the committee chairperson, other school staff need to be trained to assume the liaison's different functions.

Staff development in general proved to be one of SIP's most effective contributions. It alerted school staff to better management and teaching methods. City-wide conferences provided opportunities to make contact and exchange experiences with colleagues from other schools. The success of these activities suggests that SIP, other Central Board offices, and district offices need to continue to offer these services, even after institutionalization has been achieved.